

# The Inevitable Apostasy and the Promised Restoration

by Tad R. Callister

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## Introduction

Not all questions are of equal import. Some are amusing; some lead to the discovery of trivial insights; others open doors to significant discoveries in fields such as science, history, and music; and yet others are of such a deep and soul-searching nature that, if explored, they not only inform us, but they change us. One such question has been asked with recurring frequency in modern Christianity: "What happened to Christ's Church?"<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this book is to assist those who earnestly seek an answer to that inquiry.

Since God loves all his children in all ages, his gospel was introduced to the earth in the beginning of time.<sup>2</sup> Adam taught this gospel to his children, but eventually it was rejected due to the wickedness of his posterity. When the people softened their hearts and again became receptive to the truth, the gospel message was restored. This pattern repeated itself in the days of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses (Mark 12:1–9). Each period when the gospel was committed to the earth is called a dispensation, and each period when it was rejected and ultimately lost from the earth is called an apostasy. In the meridian of time our Savior, the greatest prophet of all, Jesus Christ, restored the gospel to the earth, only to have it subsequently rejected and perverted, as in past dispensations, thus bringing about what is known as the great apostasy. This book focuses on the evidences of the great apostasy and the gospel restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith in what is known as "the dispensation of the fulness of times" (Ephesians 1:10).<sup>3</sup>

Both the great apostasy and latter-day restoration were inevitable, not in the sense that man's agency was restrained, but in the sense that they were events foreseen in the premortal councils of heaven, and prophesied of by God's "holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21).

In presenting this material I have relied first and foremost upon the testimony of the scriptures and prophets, and, second, upon the writings of early Christian writers. Many of these early Christian writers are known as the Ante-Nicene Fathers, because they lived after the ascension of Christ but before the Nicene Council was held in A.D. 325.<sup>4</sup> A significant portion of their writings is contained in a ten-volume set known as *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*; it is frequently referred to throughout this book. While some might be unfamiliar with such names as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Origen, these are some of the prominent men who were writers and/or leaders of the church in the wake of the apostles' death. A list of many of these writers and related background information is found in Appendix A. The first time each of these is mentioned in a given chapter, the writer's birth and death dates are cited, as far as these are known.

In most cases the early Christian writers appear to have been good and bright men, but they were not prophets. As a result, even though they present an invaluable historical perspective of the early church and offer many insights into its theology, their writings are not the equivalent of scripture.

Years ago my father, an attorney, tried a lawsuit in which he presented only one case to defend his position—an old case issued by the Supreme Court. The opposing attorney presented a number of more recent cases from the appellate and trial courts. Finally the judge asked my father, "Mr. Callister, don't you have a more current case than this to support your position?" My father replied, "Your Honor, may I remind you that when the Supreme Court speaks on a subject, it only needs to speak once." The judge nodded with approval.

The words of the prophets are the "Supreme Court" on spiritual matters. Any other opinions of men—whether they be that of the early Christian writers, theologians, ministers, psychologists, or otherwise—are of little or no worth if they contradict the scriptures in any way. Thus, the writings of the early Christians help us better understand the scriptures, but they do not overrule them.

Experience has taught us that some Christian historians and theologians will lock on to a particular scripture or a quote of an ancient Christian writer that supports their point of view, while others will lock on to an opposing scripture or quote to sustain their viewpoint. In order to present the truth, and not just a viewpoint, I have earnestly sought to present a *pattern* of scriptures supported by a *pattern* of writings from the early Christian writers, so that no single scripture and no single statement of an early Christian writer is controlling. This seems consistent with the Lord's test for truth, that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

I recognize that this book will likely be read principally by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("LDS"). I have many good friends, however, who are not of the LDS faith, and for whom I have the greatest respect. They love the Savior and strive to keep his commandments. While we have doctrinal differences, as discussed in this book, many of our mission goals are similar. Their churches are also active in providing for the homeless, caring for the elderly, encouraging morality, and sponsoring humanitarian aid on a worldwide basis. Accordingly, I hope I have said nothing in this book that would offend my non-LDS friends or others of similar beliefs. While I have attempted to speak candidly and truthfully on doctrinal and historical matters, it has not been my intent to disparage in any way their exemplary lives or Christlike service.

On one occasion a friend asked me if Mormons believed they were better than other people. I responded that I thought there were many people of other faiths better than I was, including him, but I did believe he would be an even better man if he had the truths I had, and I should be less of a man if they were absent from my life. Hopefully, this book can add to the light and truth which my non-LDS friends already possess in part.

Paul gave the admonition to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). In that spirit, the reader is invited to test this book with an open mind, to analyze its historical accuracy, to verify its scriptural authenticity, to contemplate its underlying rationale, and, most of all, to sincerely ask God for a spiritual confirmation as to whether or not there was an apostasy of Christ's Church, followed by a restoration in modern times. As I personally exercised that prerogative, the answer was clear and profound. I pray it will be likewise for the reader.

## Notes to Introduction

1. The reader will notice that sometimes in this book the word *church* is capitalized and sometimes it is lowercased. When capitalized, *Church* refers to the true Church of Jesus Christ in any dispensation; when lowercased, the word refers to any other church.
2. See Moses 5:58–59.
3. The Bible Dictionary in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible ("LDS Bible Dictionary") refers to additional dispensations: "In addition there were dispensations of the gospel among the Nephites, the Jaredites, and the Lost Tribes of Israel. Melchizedek could also be included, as well as John the Baptist" (LDS Bible Dictionary, 657).
4. The Nicene Council (held in Nicaea, northwest Turkey) was called by Constantine in A.D. 325 to settle, among other things, a dispute on the nature of God. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, taught that Jesus was of lesser divinity than the Father. He preached that God the Father was self-existent and uncreated, but the Son was created out of nothing and, therefore, could not be a god equal to the Father. The Council declared that

Arius was wrong—that God and Jesus were of the same essence or substance, and thus of equal divinity. As a result, the council issued the Nicene Creed, which codified the church's theological stand on the Father and the Son. For further information on the Nicene Council, see the subsection "Nature of God" in chapter 14.

# 1

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## Thinking the Unthinkable— Could Christ's Church Have Been Lost?

### The Storm of Truth

The earth is the *center* of the universe, and the sun and moon revolve around it. Such was the authoritative pronouncement of Ptolemy about A.D. 150. He was a renowned astronomer of ancient time. He was in accord with the thinking of Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> He had all the intellectual credentials. His declaration was universally accepted. But there was one major problem: he was wrong—absolutely wrong. Nonetheless, this theory of an earth-centered universe flourished for fourteen hundred years as "gospel truth" in both the scientific and religious communities.<sup>2</sup> To think otherwise was to think the unthinkable.

It was not until 1543 that Copernicus, followed some years later by Galileo and Kepler, challenged this seemingly ironclad "truth." In direct opposition to Ptolemy, these independent thinkers taught, and ultimately proved, that the earth was *not* a stationary body at the center of the universe, but rather, a moving planet that revolved, like all other planets, around the sun.

Such a disclosure sent a shock wave through the civilized world. Long-accepted assumptions began to be undermined. The underlying rationale of the cosmos and its orbital movements was being challenged and compromised. The seemingly rock-solid foundation for an earth-centered universe was disintegrating with each new discovery. The storm of truth had hit, and the façade of falsehood could not withstand its onslaught.

Nonetheless, the reaction to the truth when it was finally proposed by courageous men was violently opposed and rejected by many. That reaction was reflected in the attitude of a friend of Galileo who refused to look through Galileo's telescope "because he really did not want to see that which he had so firmly denied."<sup>3</sup> These errant believers were being told that their precious gold was fools' gold; their diamonds, quartz; their foundation of rock, a quagmire of quicksand. It was not easy to swallow. Falsehood never flees easily. It does not give up ground without a fight. After fourteen hundred years, its roots were deep-seated. It would take more than a small tug to uproot it. It would take men who were bold and honest and tenacious.

One such man was Galileo. With his newly discovered telescope, he charted the skies and learned for himself that the earth was not a stationary body at the center of the universe, but rather a planet that revolves around the sun. For his adherence to the truth he was brought before the Inquisition. Under threat of torture, he recanted his belief in an orbiting earth, but as he exited the proceedings, he was heard to mutter, "And yet

it does move."<sup>4</sup> The truth had surfaced, never again to be silenced.

In like manner, most theologians and Christian historians have for centuries taught that Christ's Church survived without interruption since the meridian of time. They acknowledge it confronted some embarrassing, regrettable, and even tragic mishaps, but nonetheless, they insist, the Church marched on. Such proponents have been clothed with the finest of academic regalia. Their underlying assumption of church perpetuity has been accepted almost universally by the Christian world. But there is one major problem with that proposition: like the theory of an earth-centered universe, it is wrong, absolutely wrong. LDS scholar Hugh Nibley accurately observed that the function of the Christian historian relative to the viability of the primitive Church has been "to describe it—not question it."<sup>5</sup>

Belief in the perpetuation of the Church *at any cost* seemed the only safe ground for the Christian historian. To consider that Christ's Church might have fallen away and ceased to exist at some point in time was to think the unthinkable. But history is filled with the unthinkable.

In 1908 Wilbur Wright reflected: "I confess that in 1901, I said to my brother, Orville, that man would not fly for fifty years." Two years later Wilbur and Orville's plane took flight. On February 25, 1967, Dr. Lee De Forest, inventor of the Audion tube and a father of the radio, predicted: "Man will never reach the moon, regardless of all future scientific advances." Two years later man landed on that "unreachable" orb. In 1977 the president and founder of a large computer equipment company stated, "There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home."<sup>6</sup> Soon thereafter the unthinkable became the ordinary.

For some it was unthinkable that anyone could reject the numerous and powerful miracles of the Savior, yet the majority of his contemporaries did. For others it was unthinkable that Christ, who was omniscient, would have wept, yet it was so. For some it was unthinkable that Christ, who was perfect, would have selected Judas to the holy apostleship, yet with his omniscience it was done.

In each of the foregoing cases the "unthinkable" was the truth. One might be reminded of the Lord's observation to Isaiah: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (Isaiah 55:8). For centuries Christian historians believed that the only tenable position concerning the status of Christ's Church was to advocate its uninterrupted continuation—albeit battered, bruised, and broken. To contemplate that Christ's Church had ceased or been taken from the earth would be an admission that the Church was not on the earth today—unless, of course, there had been a divine restoration, a proposition that was simply unthinkable.

Fortunately, Joseph Smith, with his spiritual telescope, charted the "celestial skies," and in so doing discovered the truth. He announced to the world that the doctrine of a continuous church was wrong; instead, he asserted, the Church of Jesus Christ had been taken from the earth, and a restoration was necessary. It was a bold and startling statement, but it was true.

### The Strength of Our Position

Elder Orson F. Whitney, an apostle of the restored Church, once told of a learned Catholic theologian who spoke to him as follows:

You Mormons are all ignoramuses. You don't even know the strength of your own position. It is so strong that there is only one other tenable in the whole Christian world, and that is the position of the Catholic

Church. The issue is between Catholicism and Mormonism. If we are right, you are wrong; if you are right, we are wrong; and that's all there is to it. The Protestants haven't a leg to stand on. For, if we are wrong, they are wrong with us, since they were a part of us and went out from us; while if we are right, they are apostates whom we cut off long ago. If we have the apostolic succession from St. Peter, as we claim, there is no need of Joseph Smith and Mormonism; but if we have not that succession, then such a man as Joseph Smith was necessary, and Mormonism's attitude is the only consistent one. It is either the perpetuation of the gospel from ancient times, or the restoration of the gospel in latter days.<sup>7</sup>

That, indeed, is the issue: Did Christ's Church continue uninterrupted for two thousand years since the meridian of time, or was there a cessation of that church followed by a restoration? In our search for the truth we will examine the evidence—the testimony of the scriptures, the witness of the early Christian writers, the records of history, the power of logic, and the whisperings of the Spirit. Occasionally in isolation, but most often in unison, these witnesses will weave a consistent and compelling tapestry of the truth, however unthinkable it may seem.

#### Notes to Chapter 1: Thinking the Unthinkable

1. Dava Sobel wrote, "The cosmology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, founded on the fourth-century B.C. teachings of Aristotle and refined by the second-century Greek astronomer Claudius Ptolemy, made Earth the immobile hub. Around it, the Sun, the Moon, the five planets, and all the stars spun eternally" (*Galileo's Daughter*, 49).
2. Pope Paul V declared, "That the earth moves daily is absurd, philosophically false, and theologically considered at least erroneous in faith." J. Reuben Clark added, "This decree of Paul V was confirmed by Pope Urban VIII (1623–1644)" (*On the Way to Immortality and Eternal Life*, 337). Even Martin Luther opposed Copernicus and supported the Catholic viewpoint: "People give ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves, not the heavens or the firmament, the sun and the moon. . . . This fool wishes to reverse the entire scheme of astrology; but sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, not the earth" (Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 89).
3. Maxwell, *A More Excellent Way*, 66. This is reminiscent of the Israelites who were unwilling to look at the brazen serpent and, because they "were so hardened that they would not look, therefore they perished" (Alma 33:20).
4. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 117.
5. Nibley, *When the Lights Went Out*, 1.
6. In *Newsweek*, January 27, 1997, 86.
7. Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, 3–4.

## 2

# A Formal Church or an Informal Body of Believers?

Did Christ establish a formal church on the earth, or did he merely teach an informal body of believers? Some religions teach that Christ did not organize a temporal church, but only a spiritual one. They acknowledge that he taught doctrines of salvation through divinely appointed servants, but they assert a formal organization was not necessary for such purpose. Others teach that Christ did not personally organize a church, but that his disciples did so.<sup>1</sup> Of course, if Christ's disciples did so under his direction, then the resulting organization would have his stamp of approval. Lest there be a question, the scriptures confirm there was a formal church and that Christ was its founder. The following are evidences of its formal existence.

## References to the Church in the Early Christian Era

The Savior himself made reference to the Church. While speaking to Peter he said, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). Furthermore, Paul declared that Jesus was "the head of the body, the Church" (Colossians 1:18). The word *church* comes from the Greek word *ecclesia*, which means "an assembly called together."<sup>2</sup> It is mentioned more than thirty times in the New Testament—most of those times in the context of an organized congregation. The Savior and his apostles made multiple references to "the Church," and they took numerous steps to formally organize it. In fact, the apostles established branches or congregations of the Church and appointed leaders wherever they proselytized. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230), an early Christian apologist (one who wrote in defense of Christianity), spoke of the apostles preaching the gospel throughout the world, and then observed: "They then in like manner founded churches in every city, from which all the other churches, one after another, derived the tradition of the faith."<sup>3</sup>

Clement (A.D. 30–100), the third bishop of Rome (and thus referred to as Clement of Rome), observed: "So preaching everywhere in country and town, they [the apostles] appointed their first-fruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe."<sup>4</sup> *The Shepherd of Hermas* (A.D. 90–150), a collection of visions and writings by an early Christian that was widely read and valued, makes reference to "the elders that preside over the Church."<sup>5</sup> Paul and Barnabas are known to have "ordained . . . elders in every church" (Acts 14:23). The epistle written to Titus reminds him that he was left in Crete so as to "set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city" (Titus 1:5). Such a command to "set in order" and "ordain elders in every city" hardly seems apropos unless the Church was an organized, formal institution.

Letters or epistles were written to the various organized congregations of the Church, such as Paul's letters, which were addressed "unto the Church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2),<sup>6</sup> and "unto the churches of Galatia" (Galatians 1:2).<sup>7</sup> John the Revelator wrote "to the seven churches which are in Asia" (Revelation 1:4).

This formal church organized by the Savior and his apostles was not an end in and of itself, but rather the organization through which God chose to save souls and build his kingdom. The scriptures and early Christian writings are a clear testament and historical record that Christ's Church was not an amorphous group of believers but an organized body of Saints that was established in each city where the gospel was preached and accepted.<sup>8</sup>

## Formal Method of Entry and Exit



One did not become a member of Christ's Church by intellectual assent alone. There was a formal method of membership or entrance into Christ's Church known as baptism and, likewise, a formal method of exit or expulsion, known as excommunication,<sup>9</sup> both of which evidenced that Christ's Church constituted a formal body of believers. When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, the Savior gave him the means by which he might be saved: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). On the day of Pentecost, Peter gave the same instructions to the body of believers who had been "pricked in their heart." He told them to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37–38). Three thousand souls heeded his message. This scriptural account then concludes with this observation: "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

Baptism was the gateway to membership into Christ's Church. Excommunication was the exit. In Matthew 18:15–17, the Savior gave the process by which action should be taken against a member who transgressed Church law. If the transgressor were unwilling to solve the problem on an individual basis, then the issue was to be taken "unto the Church." If the transgressor would not "hear the Church," the scriptures direct that he was to be made "an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:17), meaning that he should be excommunicated and thus removed from the formal body of believers. If the Church were not a formal institution, then why and how was the aggrieved party supposed to take his problem "unto the Church," and from what was he being excommunicated? Eusebius (A.D. 270–340), the bishop of Caesarea and the first major Christian historian, recognized excommunication as a duly authorized procedure in the Church: "Many of these [heretics], indeed, have already been expelled [or excommunicated], when they were caught in their wickedness."<sup>10</sup>

If there merely existed an informal group of believers, it would be inconsistent to have a formal method of entry (baptism) and a formal method of exit (excommunication). The scriptural and historical references to baptism and excommunication are positive indicators of an organized body of Saints that constituted the Church of Jesus Christ.

### An Organized Body of Officers

At the commencement of his ministry, Christ "ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils" (Mark 3:14–15).<sup>11</sup> So essential were the twelve apostles that Paul said the Church was "built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20). Once the apostles were chosen, the Lord called other officers entitled "seventy," whom he sent "two by two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come" (Luke 10:1). The Savior also "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). Later, other officers such as bishops (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1; Titus 1:7), elders (1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14), and deacons (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8) were called.

Paul knew that there was an organizational structure of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:28). On one occasion he compared the members of the Church to the human body. In like manner, the organization of the Church was like the human body. One member of the body, or officer of the Church, could not say to another, "I have no need of thee"

(1 Corinthians 12:21). In other words, the apostles could not say to the deacons or bishops that they were unnecessary, or the reverse, because, in truth, all the officers, from the "highest" to the "lowest," were

essential components of Christ's Church. Paul not only made reference to these officers, but in some cases he discussed their qualifications and duties (1 Timothy 3:1–7). In other words, these officers were not just figureheads; they had substantial duties to perform and spiritual qualities to attain. They were an integral part of Christ's Church. They were another evidence of its formal and organized nature.

Why was it necessary for the Church to be an organized body? Because organized goodness consistently outperforms random goodness. Christ's Church is not just a code of beliefs; it is a body of believers that is divinely organized in such a synergistic manner as to keep the doctrines pure, the ordinances correct, and the membership growing. It is this divine institution that becomes the kingdom of God on earth.<sup>12</sup>

### A Divine Institution

What were the hallmarks of this divine institution known as Christ's Church?

*First*, the teachings and doctrines were perfect because the Savior was their source—the fountain from which they sprang. This does not mean that Christ revealed all religious truth at one given time, for he did not. Instead, he revealed line upon line, precept upon precept, predicated upon the spiritual receptivity of the people.

*Second*, the Church provided the ordinances necessary to save and exalt man. These ordinances included baptism, confirmation of the Holy Ghost, receipt of the priesthood, and participation in divinely appointed temple ceremonies.

*Third*, the Church possessed the priesthood—the power and authority to act in God's name. With that authority men had the right and capacity to teach the truths of Christ's gospel with a penetrating power, to perform the ordinances with divine sanction, and to otherwise bless mankind. When the Savior finished the Sermon on the Mount, the scriptures record that his listeners were "astonished at his doctrine." Then the scriptures tell us why: "For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:28–29).<sup>13</sup> It was not just *what* he said, but *how* he said it that caused them to marvel. Paul himself acknowledged this demonstrable power of the priesthood: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4).

*Fourth*, the Church was a divinely organized institution that was designed to be the most effective and efficient way to (a) disseminate Christ's teachings, (b) perform and monitor his sacred ordinances, and (c) regulate his priesthood authority in an orderly manner. It seems unrealistic to suppose that God would attempt to administer his Church in some random, unstructured fashion. Paul reminded the Saints that "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Rather, he is a god of order. That is why Paul instructed the Saints to "let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Christ's Church was a formal, organized institution. It had deacons, teachers, priests, bishops, elders, seventies, high priests, apostles, and evangelists,<sup>14</sup> all of which are mentioned in the New Testament and all of which contributed to the order of the Church.

Christ placed his name upon this divine institution in the meridian of time because it was his Church. The hallmarks that distinguished Christ's Church remained for a short season after his ascension, but then, one by one, they disappeared. Most of the teachings became corrupted or lost;<sup>15</sup> the ordinances lost much of their simplicity and symbolism,<sup>16</sup> and eventually the priesthood vanished until the Church leaders could no longer say with authority, "thus saith the Lord."<sup>17</sup> An organized church did continue for a while, but it was no more

than a mere shadow of Christ's original Church. Yes, there were some similarities, some truths that remained. An external framework was still visible. But the internal structure—the heart and soul of Christ's Church—was gone.

#### Notes to Chapter 2: A Formal Church or an Informal Body of Believers?

1. Howells, *His Many Mansions*, "A Comparative Chart of 10 Christian Religions on 23 Doctrinal Subjects."
2. LDS Bible Dictionary, 645.
3. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:252.
4. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 31.
5. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 169.
6. See also 2 Corinthians 1:1.
7. See also 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1.
8. Will and Ariel Durant observed that these early Saints "met in private rooms or small chapels, and *organized* themselves on the model of the synagogue" (*Caesar and Christ*, 596; emphasis added).
9. For further information on excommunication in Christ's primitive Church, see chapter 19.
10. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2:50.
11. See also Matthew 10:1–5.
12. The Church is, as B. H. Roberts said, "the medium through which the gospel is promulgated, . . . the government of God on earth pertaining to religious affairs" (*Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 364–65).
13. See also Mark 1:22.
14. See D&C 107:36–39.
15. See chapter 14.
16. See chapter 15.
17. See chapter 21.

## 3

# What Happened to Christ's Church?

## It Flourishes for a Season

What happened to Christ's divinely organized church after his ascension? For a season it flourished. Luke wrote that "the Lord added to the church daily" (Acts 2:47), and on another occasion that "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). So rampant was the spread of the gospel in the Holy City that the scriptures record: "The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).<sup>1</sup>

The headquarters of the Church remained in Jerusalem for ten to twelve years after the Savior's ascension, but in the interim the persecution had become intense. As a result of this persecution, the Saints were "scattered abroad" and "went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:1, 4). Of this scattering, Elder B. H. Roberts noted "that great good came out of what was intended to be an evil, as the gospel was more widely preached."<sup>2</sup> This dispersion also occurred because faithful Saints left the confines of Jerusalem, knowing of the imminent destruction of the holy city as prophesied by the Savior himself.

After the stoning of Stephen and the accompanying persecution of the Saints, the scriptures record that those disciples "which were scattered abroad" preached the gospel "and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:19, 21). After Peter received his marvelous vision, he announced the opening of the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 11:17–18), and thereafter Paul became the mighty messenger to them—a "teacher of the Gentiles" (2 Timothy 1:11). The scriptures denote the tenor of the times: "The word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24).<sup>3</sup> So expansive and explosive was the spread of the gospel that the scriptures record, "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. . . . So mightily grew the word of God" (Acts 19:10, 20).

In A.D. 64 Paul declared that the "gospel . . . was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Colossians 1:23). This was in fulfillment of the Lord's mandate to his apostles, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100) observed that Paul "taught righteousness unto the whole world" and "reached the farthest bounds of the West."<sup>4</sup> The author of *The Shepherd of Hermas* (A.D. 90–150) was of a similar understanding. He referred to the "apostles and teachers, who preached unto the whole world."<sup>5</sup> These references to "the whole world," of course, mean the world as it was then known to them.<sup>6</sup>

The Church was no longer a local institution; it was fast becoming a "worldwide" force. But there was a price to be paid—it was quickly adopting the ways of the world.

## The "Lights Go Out"

While acknowledging the rapid growth in Christ's Church following his ascension, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nonetheless makes a bold and startling statement. It declares there was a turning point that occurred shortly after the death of the apostles—an apostasy or falling away that eventually resulted in a total loss of Christ's Church from the earth. While an apostasy *of* the Church is not the same as an apostasy of individuals *from* the Church, the former cannot occur without the latter. Individual members of Christ's Church may reject its teachings and ordinances without affecting the authority and integrity of the Church. When, however, a sufficient number of persuasive individuals apostatize, and in the process the

official Church doctrines and ordinances become perverted, then, inevitably, the priesthood or divine power that sustains and sets the Church apart from all other worldly organizations is lost. That constitutes an apostasy of the Church. From that point forward the ongoing institution may propagate some truths; it may be a fraternity of sorts; it may render service and satisfy certain social needs. All this is good. But it will lack the prime reason for its existence—the power to save and exalt man. Elder Boyd K. Packer described the apostasy in the meridian of time as follows: "The Apostles were martyred, and in time, an apostasy took place. The doctrines of the Church were corrupted and the ordinances changed. The keys of the priesthood authority were lost."<sup>7</sup> As unthinkable as that proposition may be to some, the evidence of its occurrence is overwhelming.

This apostasy was not a straight-line descent. Things seldom happen that way in real life. For a time following the death of the apostles, there were isolated islands of righteousness among certain congregations. There were devoted members of the Church, some of whom became righteous martyrs, but the overall level of righteousness was quickly waning. Spirituality was succumbing to secularity, and the pure doctrines of the kingdom were being overrun by heresy. The gospel lights were dimming. William Manchester, a noted author and historian, observed: "Christ's missionary commandment had been clearly set forth in Matthew (28:19–20), but in the early centuries after his crucifixion the flame of faith flickered low."<sup>8</sup> Hugh Nibley observed that the Church at this time was "fast falling asleep; *the lights [were] going out.*"<sup>9</sup>

Was the Demise of Christ's Church  
Known in Advance?

Did the Lord know in advance of this apostasy, this spiritual blackout, or did it catch him by surprise? Such a question would be tantamount to asking—did the Lord know Eve would partake of the forbidden fruit or did her transgression put a "wrench" in the divine plan? Did Jesus know Judas would betray him or was he somehow caught off guard? Did the Savior anticipate his crucifixion or did it unexpectedly come upon him? Of course the Lord knew Eve would partake of the forbidden fruit, that Judas would betray him, and that He himself would be crucified. Likewise, he knew the apostasy would occur. Both he and the prophets testified of it.<sup>10</sup> It came as no surprise whatsoever. In this regard it was inevitable. While God did not dictate it or desire it, he did allow for the agency of man and thus accounted for it in his master plan. Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165), one of the first church apologists who ultimately gave his life for the cause, understood this principle:

For what things He [the Savior] predicted would take place in His name, these we do see being actually accomplished in our sight. For he said, "Many shall come in My name, clothed outwardly in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." And "There shall be schisms and heresies." And "Beware of false prophets." . . . There are, therefore, and there were many, my friends, who, coming forward in the name of Jesus, taught both to speak and act impious and blasphemous things. . . . So that, in consequence of these events, *we know that Jesus foreknew what would happen after Him.*<sup>11</sup>

Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) made a similar observation: "The character of the times in which we live is such as to call forth from us even this admonition, that we ought not to be astonished at the heresies (which abound) neither ought their existence to surprise us, for it was foretold that they should come to pass."<sup>12</sup> A scholar of early Christianity, A. Cleveland Coxe, who provided editorial notes to *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, observed: "If it shocks the young student of the virgin years of Christianity to find such a state of things [the proliferation of heresies], let him reflect that it was also foretold by Christ himself, and demonstrates the malice and power

of the adversary."<sup>13</sup>

Lehi, a Book of Mormon prophet,<sup>14</sup> put things in their eternal perspective when he observed: "Behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things" (2 Nephi 2:24).<sup>15</sup> Christ and his apostles knew of the apostasy, they prophesied of it, and God in his wisdom provided for a remedy through the glorious restoration of his Church.

Notes to Chapter 3: What Happened to Christ's Church?

1. See also Acts 2:41; 5:28.

2. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 81; see also Acts 9:31, 42.

3. See also Acts 11:24; 13:49; 16:5.

4. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 15.

5. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 236.

6. Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) wrote of the tremendous growth of Christ's Church during the first decade after the Savior's ascension, "Thus, then, under a celestial influence and co-operation, the doctrine of the Savior, like the rays of the sun, quickly irradiated the whole world. Presently, in accordance with divine prophecy, the sound of his inspired evangelists and apostles had gone throughout all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. Throughout every city and village, like a replenished barn floor, churches were rapidly found abounding, and filled with members from every people" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 2:52). A. Cleveland Coxe, who provided editorial notes to *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* series, added, "Making all allowances, however, I accept the conjecture of some reputable authorities, that there were 2,000,000 of Christians, in the bounds of the Roman Empire at the close of the Second Century" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:58).

7. Boyd K. Packer, in First Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting, January 11, 2003, Satellite Broadcast, 2.

8. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 8.

9. Nibley, *When the Lights Went Out*, 9; emphasis added.

10. See chapter 11 for further discussion.

11. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:212; emphasis added.

12. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:243.

13. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:309.

14. Hereafter, other Book of Mormon prophets, such as Nephi, Mosiah, Alma, Mormon, and Moroni, will also be quoted without further identifying them as Book of Mormon prophets.

15. See also 1 John 3:20.

## External Persecution

### Judaic Persecution

Although external persecution was a historical reality that had a substantial impact upon the early Church and its members, it was *not* the cause of the great apostasy. Such external persecution was leveled by both the Judaic religions of the day and by the Roman government.

In discussing persecution by Jewish leaders, Elder Talmage made this helpful observation:

The conflict was between systems, not between peoples or nations. Christ was a Jew: His apostles were Jews, and the disciples who constituted the body of the Church at its establishment and throughout the early years of its existence were largely Jews. . . . When therefore we read of the Jews opposing the Church, we understand that Judaistic Jews are meant—defenders of Judaism as a system, upholders of the law and enemies of the gospel.<sup>1</sup>

Judaism, in all its various forms, was a rival religion to Christianity—competing for converts and power. It had no tolerance for this upstart religion that claimed the Mosaic law was fulfilled and sacrificial ordinances were obsolete. Its leaders knew that Christianity, if allowed to prosper, would dilute their following and erode their power base. Worse yet, if Christianity prevailed certain Jewish leaders would be recognized as the assailants of the only true Messiah.

The scriptures tell us that scribes and chief priests "feared him [Jesus], because all the people were astonished at his doctrine" (Mark 11:18). After Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, the chief priests and Pharisees counseled: "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:48). With respect to that confession, B. H. Roberts rightly observed: "It was religious jealousy that dictated the first half of the sentence; and political fear the rest."<sup>2</sup>

The parable of the wicked husbandmen was directed to the Pharisees and chief priests. The vineyard (meaning the kingdom) was temporarily in the hands of the husbandmen (the Jewish leaders). The Lord sent his servants (the prophets) on repeated occasions to receive the fruits of the field. Each time they were stoned or wounded or killed. Finally, he sent his son (the Savior) thinking, "They will reverence my son" (Matthew 21:37).<sup>3</sup> But it was not to be. Instead they conspired: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours" (Mark 12:7).<sup>4</sup> How shortsighted could they be?

Such a state of affairs is reminiscent of the trial of Sir Thomas More, as recounted in Robert Bolt's famous play, *A Man for All Seasons*. Sir Thomas would not take the oath of allegiance to support King Henry VIII in his desired divorce from Queen Catherine. More held great sway with the people, and More's approval was the last obstacle to the king's remarriage. The king knew he must convince Sir Thomas; otherwise, he would never win the hearts of the commoners. But there was a problem—More could not be bought at any

price. Finally, the king resorted to perjury. Richard Rich was the "Judas" of the hour. A mock trial was held. Sir Thomas was convicted on the perjured testimony of Richard Rich.

At the conclusion of the trial, Sir Thomas noticed a medallion hanging about Rich's neck. Sir Thomas asked the bench if he might inquire as to the nature of the medallion. He was told that Rich had been appointed Attorney-General for Wales. In a moment of climax, Sir Thomas looks into Rich's face and asks in dismay, "For Wales? Why, Richard, it profits a man nothing to give his soul for the whole world. . . . But for Wales!"<sup>5</sup>

The Pharisees and chief priests were of the same mettle. They were willing to perjure their testimonies, abandon the true faith, and trade their souls, even their eternal inheritance, for the local vineyard.

So evil was this body of Pharisees that they were willing to stop Christianity at any cost. After Christ healed the man with a withered hand, the Pharisees "held a council against him, how they might destroy him" (Matthew 12:14). After Christ raised Lazarus from the dead, an incontestable miracle witnessed by "many of the Jews" (John 11:45), the Pharisees met as a body. The scriptures read, "From that day forth they took counsel together for to put him [Jesus] to death" (John 11:53).<sup>6</sup> But this alone did not satisfy their insatiable obsession to eradicate Christianity. They must silence every miracle, stamp out every divine witness, bury every heavenly clue. And so Lazarus—a living, walking, talking witness of Christ's healing powers—created a disturbing presence in their kingdom. The scriptures reveal their sinister solution: "The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus" (John 12:10–11). In a moment of agonizing frustration the Pharisees admitted that in spite of their opposition, "Behold, the world is gone after him" (John 12:19).

So desperate were the Judaic leaders to destroy Christianity that the watch guards at Christ's tomb were paid large sums of money if they would falsely testify that Christ's "disciples came by night, and stole him away" (Matthew 28:12–13). The scriptures thoroughly document the fact that certain Jewish leaders sought to take the Savior's life on multiple occasions (John 8:37, 40).<sup>7</sup> Once the blood of Christ was upon their hands there was no turning back from their evil designs.

In a further attempt to thwart the growth of Christianity, these antichrists actively persecuted the apostles and prophets. Clement, the bishop of Rome from about A.D. 88 to A.D. 97, well understood the reason the apostles met such bitter persecution from the Judaic leaders: "By reason of jealousy and envy the greatest and most righteous pillars of the church were persecuted, and contended even unto death."<sup>8</sup> This was the same conclusion reached by Luke when "almost the whole city" went to hear Paul and Barnabas preach the gospel. Under such circumstances Luke records, "When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy" (Acts 13:45).<sup>9</sup>

Christ prophesied that his disciples would be delivered up to councils, "and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake" (Mark 13:9). After Peter and John had been placed in prison (Acts 5:18) they were brought before the Sanhedrin, which "took counsel to slay them" (Acts 5:33). When Paul converted to Christianity "the Jews took counsel to kill him" (Acts 9:23).<sup>10</sup> In order to appease the Jews, James (the brother of John) was slain by order of Herod (Acts 12:1–2). Paul spoke of the Jews "who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us" (1 Thessalonians 2:15). These were treacherous times for the Church and its leaders. The Judaic rulers had no tolerance whatsoever for Christianity. For them Christianity was a burgeoning threat to their religious and political survival. From their perspective, it had to be stamped out at any cost.



## Roman Persecution

The Judaic leaders, however, were not alone in their efforts to persecute the Christians. It is an uncontested historical fact that bitter persecution was heaped upon the Christians by the Romans, beginning about the time of Nero in A.D. 64 and generally concluding with the Diocletian reign about A.D. 305.<sup>11</sup>

The persecution ebbed and flowed, depending on the Roman ruler at the time and the region in which Christians lived. Firmilian, the bishop of Caesarea (about A.D. 250), wrote to Cyprian (the bishop of Carthage): "But the faithful being set in this state of disturbance, and fleeing hither and thither for fear of the persecution, and leaving their country and passing over into other regions . . . for the reason that their persecution was not over the whole world, but was local."<sup>12</sup> While there were temporary times of peace and temporary havens of safety, the persecution was nonetheless so intense at times, and so widespread, that martyrdom was a real threat to many Christians.

Tacitus (c. A.D. 56–after A.D. 113), a Roman historian, wrote of the brutal deaths met by some of the early Christian martyrs: "Some were nailed on crosses; others sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs; others, again, smeared over with combustible materials, were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of the night."<sup>13</sup> Frederic W. Farrar, a highly respected Church of England minister and author of a book about Christ's life and early Christian times, recounted the tragic, brutal tortures which occurred in the gardens of Nero:

Along the paths of those gardens on the autumn nights were ghastly torches, blackening the ground beneath them with streams of sulphurous pitch, and each of those living torches was a martyr in his shirt of fire. And in the amphitheatre . . . in sight of twenty thousand spectators, famished dogs were tearing to pieces some of the best and purest of men and women, hideously disguised in the skins of bears or wolves. Thus did Nero baptize in the blood of martyrs the city which was to be for ages the capital of the world.<sup>14</sup>

Reading the litany of tortures, insults, and torments heaped upon the early Christian Saints is almost more than one can bear. Eusebius spoke of "the holy martyrs" who "endured tortures, beyond all description." So depraved were these satanic tormentors that Eusebius commented of one martyr "that when they had nothing further they could inflict, they at last fastened red hot plates of brass to the most tender parts of his body." "Others," he said, had "masses of melted lead, bubbling and boiling with heat, poured down their backs."<sup>15</sup> He continued by describing "the iron chair upon which their bodies were roasted" and one who was "bound and suspended on a stake, and thus exposed as food to the assaults of wild beasts."<sup>16</sup>

Diocletian, the Roman emperor who reigned from A.D. 284 to 305, ordered a general destruction of all Christian books and decreed the penalty of death against any found with such books in their possession. So bitter and exhaustive was the Diocletian persecution that monuments were raised to him commemorating his termination of the Christian church. Elder James E. Talmage noted that "on one of them is an inscription extolling the mighty Diocletian '*For having extinguished the name of Christians who brought the Republic to ruin.*' A second pillar commemorates the reign of Diocletian, and honors the emperor '*for having everywhere abolished the superstition of Christ; for having extended the worship of the gods.*' A medal struck in honor of Diocletian bears the inscription '*The name of Christian being extinguished.*'"<sup>17</sup> Will Durant noted that in A.D. 303 the Roman rulers "decreed the destruction of all Christian churches, the burning of Christian books, the dissolution of Christian congregations, the confiscation of their property, the exclusion of Christians from public office, and the punishment of death for Christians detected in religious assembly."<sup>18</sup>

Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) believed that the martyrs to the cause were many: "The kindled flame of persecution blazed forth mightily, and many thousands were crowned with martyrdom."<sup>19</sup> Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200), an eyewitness of such events, wrote, "We have exhibited before our eyes every day abundant sources of martyrs that are burnt, impaled, beheaded."<sup>20</sup> Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) referred to "a multitude of martyrs."<sup>21</sup> So noble were many of these martyrs that Eusebius recorded: "They received, indeed, the final sentence of death with gladness and exultation, so far as even to sing and send up hymns of praise and thanksgiving, until they breathed their last."<sup>22</sup>

On occasion I found myself unable to finish reading the accounts of these martyrdoms—the persecution was so depraved, so satanic, so inhumane. These noble martyrs deserve our highest respect and our most profound reverence. While many of them did not have the full gospel truth, they nonetheless riveted themselves to the light they did have. They believed in Jesus Christ, they worshiped him as their Savior, and regardless of the most barbaric atrocities thrust upon them, they would not recant. John saw in prophetic vision these faithful men and women who laid their all on the sacrificial altar: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Then he described their celestial reward in these terms: "And white robes were given unto *every one* of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Revelation 6:9, 11).<sup>23</sup> Joseph Smith also paid tribute to these early Christian martyrs: "Many of those who suffered death at the fiery stake were honest, true Christians according to the light they possessed." Then he added: "I have seen those martyrs by aid of the Urim and Thummim; God has a salvation for them."<sup>24</sup>

### Why Such Persecution?

The Jews, Romans, and others had their professed reasons for persecuting the saints—blasphemy, insubordination, disloyalty to the crown, treason, and the like—but in most cases these reasons were merely smokescreens. There was no blasphemy, little if any insubordination or disloyalty or treason among a sect that had been taught to be peaceful and law-abiding citizens. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) wrote of the early Christians: "We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority."<sup>25</sup>

Nonetheless, Tertullian offered this reason for such persecution: "This is the reason, then, why Christians are counted public enemies: that they pay no vain, nor false, nor foolish honours to the emperor."<sup>26</sup> In the year A.D. 112, Pliny the Younger, the governor of a Roman province, wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan requesting his input on how to treat Christians: "I have hesitated a great deal on the question . . . whether those who recant should be pardoned, or whether a man who has ever been a Christian should gain nothing by ceasing to be such; *whether the name itself even if innocent of crime, should be punished*, or only the crimes attaching to that name." Pliny explained that he gave the accused three opportunities to recant, but if they persisted he sentenced them to death. He then added, "For I do not doubt that, whatever kind of crime it may be to which they have confessed, their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy should certainly be punished." Those who denied their Christian beliefs were released, provided they paid homage to the Roman gods and to the emperor himself, and further provided they "cursed Christ."<sup>27</sup> Human nature being what it is, some recanted, while others sealed their testimony with their blood. No doubt this was a recurring theme during the years of Christian persecution.

The unknown author of *The Epistle to Diognetus* (c. second century)<sup>28</sup> could see no underlying reason for the persecution: "War is waged against them as aliens by the Jews, and persecution is carried on against them

by the Greeks, and *yet those that hate them cannot tell the reason of their hostility*."29 Cyprian (A.D. 200–258), the bishop of Carthage, offers this reason, which seems to include all others: "For both Gentiles and Jews threaten, and heretics and all those, of whose hearts and minds the devil has taken possession, daily attest their venomous madness with furious voice."30

Satan always wages war against righteousness, "he being an enemy to all righteousness" (Mosiah 4:14). There is never a good reason underlying his diabolic designs—that is why reason is one of his worst enemies. Does he want people to reason out in advance the consequences of revenge or immorality or war? To the contrary, Satan would rather ignite the emotions of anger, jealousy, pride, and selfishness. These are his fiery darts, his lethal anesthetics to numb the powers of reason. The "reasons" which Satan enunciates through the lips of his mortal pawns are transparent—they are no more than cheap charades. After Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with the costly ointment, Judas complained: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" With spiritual discernment, John saw through the spiritual hypocrisy and gave the telling response: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief" (John 12:5–6).

B. H. Roberts observed that the student who wonders "why the mild and beautiful Christian religion was alone selected to bear the wrath and feel the vengeful power of Rome, must look deeper than the reasons usually assigned for the strange circumstance." He then gave this added insight: "The true cause of the persecution was this: Satan knew there was no power of salvation in the idolatrous worship of the heathen, . . . but when Jesus of Nazareth and his followers came, in the authority of God, preaching the gospel, he recognized in that the principles and power against which he had rebelled in heaven. . . . This was the real cause of persecution, though it lurked under a variety of pretexts."31 Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200) made a similar observation when writing to the Roman emperors and pleading for mercy: "But for us who are called Christians you have not in like manner cared; but although we commit no wrong—nay . . . are of all men most piously and righteously disposed towards the Deity and towards your government—you allow us to be harassed, plundered and persecuted, *the multitude making war upon us for our name alone*."32

The ultimate reasons of Satan are always devious and duplicitous. When all the camouflage is removed, his reasons are centered in jealousy, power, fame, promotion of false ideology, and a love for evil over good. The Jewish leaders could offer no legitimate reason to crucify the Savior. Was he really treasonous who only days before his crucifixion had counseled his followers: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21)? Even Pilate declared of Christ: "I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man" (Luke 23:14).33 After Peter and John healed the impotent man, the frustrated Sadducees could find "nothing how they might punish them" (Acts 4:21). Agrippa declared of Paul, who had been charged with sedition, "This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds" (Acts 26:31). Again and again the truth surfaced—there was no legitimate reason for the persecution of Christ and the early Saints. All the trumped-up charges with their pseudonyms were authored by the Evil One. All the clues led back to Satan. Nonetheless, God allowed man's agency to prevail, and for a time persecution ran its course. But this was not the cause of the apostasy.

Notes to Chapter 4: External Persecution

1. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, 57.
2. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 54.
3. See also Mark 12:6; Luke 20:13.

4. See also Matthew 21:38; Luke 20:14.
5. Bolt, *A Man for All Seasons*, 158.
6. See also John 11:57.
7. See also John 8:44; 4 Nephi 1:31; Mormon 3:21.
8. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 15.
9. See also Acts 17:5.
10. On one occasion, more than forty Jews "bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul" (Acts 23:12; see also John 16:1–2; Acts 7:54–59; 2 Peter 1:14).
11. Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) noted: "Thus Nero publicly announcing himself as the chief enemy of God, was led on in his fury to slaughter the apostles" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2:80).
12. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:392–93.
13. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1:457.
14. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:69. Elder James E. Talmage and Elder Bruce R. McConkie revered Frederic Farrar (also known as Canon Farrar) as a noble writer about the Savior's life. Elder McConkie quoted him extensively in his work *The Mortal Messiah* and at one point commented, "No man of whom I know has written so consistently and so well—in such shining English prose—about the dramatic and miraculous happenings in the life of our Lord as has Canon Farrar. . . . It is my observation that when either I, or Elder Talmage, or Edersheim, or other authors—and all of us have done it—when any of us put the thoughts of Farrar in our own words, however excellent our expression may be, it loses much of the incisive and pungent appeal found in the language of our British friend from the Church of England. . . . By way of addendum may I express the hope—nay, offer the prayer—that both Farrar and Edersheim . . . now that they are in the world of spirits where Elder Talmage continues his apostolic ministry, may have received added light and knowledge and will have pursued that strait and narrow course that will make them inheritors of the fulness of our Father's kingdom. Truly they were Eliases of a greater day and harbingers of a greater light" (*The Mortal Messiah*, 4:180–81, note 1).
15. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 8:334.
16. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5:176. Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) told of a pious woman, Potamiaena, beautiful in mind and appearance, who suffered the severest of tortures, and finally, because she would not yield her faith, had "boiling pitch poured over different parts of her body, gradually by little and little, from her feet up to the crown of her head" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 6:224).
17. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, 74–75.
18. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 3:651.
19. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:218.

20. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:374.

21. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:508. While most of the eyewitnesses refer to many martyrs, Origen (A.D. 185–255) observed, "A few engaged in a struggle for their religion . . . and these individuals who can be easily numbered, have endured death for the sake of Christianity" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:468). Such a statement by Origen, however, was made about A.D. 248, two years before the great persecution of Christians. This persecution was brought about by Decius, the Roman emperor, who issued his infamous edict requiring all citizens of the empire to make public sacrifice to the state gods. The *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* notes the consequences of this imperial order: "Rigorous enforcement yielded a number of martyrs and a far greater number of apostates" (pp. 324–25). In A.D. 257 the Roman Emperor Valerian issued a similar order requiring pagan sacrifice. On another occasion, Origen expressed an opinion that was consistent with his contemporaries: "Many also of our contemporaries, knowing well that if they made a confession of Christianity, they would be put to death . . . despised life and voluntarily selected death for the sake of their religion" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:439; emphasis added).

22. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 8:328.

23. Whenever italic type has been used in quoting scripture text, it has been added by the author for emphasis

24. Cited in McConkie, *Remembering Joseph*, 112.

25. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:46.

26. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:43. Others believed that Christians were persecuted because they were antisocial, or due to their strict moral standards or their unwillingness to hold public office or participate in public festivities. Frederic W. Farrar suggested the following reason for such vehement and zealous persecution of the Christians: "There was a Satanic plausibility which dictated the selection of these particular victims. Because they hated the wickedness of the world with its ruthless games and hideous idolatries, they were accused of hatred of the whole human race" (*The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:66).

27. Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 3–4; emphasis added.

28. Although some conjecture has been made as to who Diognetus was, there exists no positive identification to date.

29. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 254; emphasis added.

30. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:339.

31. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 118–19.

32. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:129; emphasis added. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) wrote similarly, "It becomes evident that the crime laid to our charge consists not of any sinful conduct, but lies wholly in our name. . . . No name of a crime stands against us, but only the crime of a name. . . . What crime, what offence, what fault is there in a name?" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:19). Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165), writing to the Roman emperor and to the Senate, argued, "If no one can convict us of anything, true reason forbids you, for the sake of a wicked rumour, to wrong blameless men. . . . Again, if any of the accused deny

the name, and say that he is not a Christian, you acquit him, as having no evidence against him as a wrongdoer; but if any one acknowledge that he is a Christian, you punish him on account of this acknowledgment. Justice requires that you inquire into the life both of him who confesses and of him who denies, that by his deeds it may be apparent what kind of man each is" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:163–64).

33. See also John 18:38.

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# The True Cause of the Apostasy

## The Enemy Within

External persecution of the early Christians was intense. Such persecution, however, did not cause the demise of Christ's Church any more than the crucifixion of the Savior ended Christianity.<sup>1</sup> It was not external evil or persecution that destroyed Christ's Church, but rather internal wickedness—the enemy within. That is what proved its downfall.

The author of *The Epistle to Diognetus* (c. second century) referred to the widespread persecution of the Saints, but recognized that such persecution alone would not bring about the collapse of Christ's Church—to the contrary, it might even strengthen the very organization it was trying to destroy: "Dost thou not see that the more of them are punished, just so many others abound?"<sup>2</sup> Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) also commented: "For it is plain that, though beheaded, and crucified, and thrown to wild beasts, and chains, and fire, and all other kinds of torture, we do not give up our confessions; but the more such things happen, the more do others and in larger numbers become faithful, and worshippers of God through the name of Jesus."<sup>3</sup> Origen (A.D. 185–255), considered one of the brightest minds of his day and one of the most prolific of early Christian writers, made a similar observation: "For the more that kings, and rulers, and peoples have persecuted them [the Christians], everywhere, the more have they increased in number and grown in strength."<sup>4</sup>

There is no external force, however powerful it may be, that can destroy Christ's Church. Ultimately, destruction comes only from within.<sup>5</sup> Elder James E. Talmage taught this confirming principle:

The question as to whether persecution is to be regarded as an element tending to produce apostasy is worthy of present consideration. Opposition is not always destructive; on the contrary it may contribute to growth. . . . Undoubtedly the persistent persecution to which the early Church was subjected caused many of its adherents to renounce the faith they had professed and to return to their former allegiances, whether Judaistic or pagan. Church membership was thus diminished; *but such instances of apostasy from the Church may be regarded as individual desertions and of comparatively little importance in its effect upon the Church as a body.* The dangers that affrighted some would arouse the determination of others; the ranks deserted by disaffected weaklings would be replenished by zealous converts. *Let it be repeated that apostasy from the Church is insignificant as compared with apostasy of the Church as an*

Hugh Nibley spoke similarly: "The apostasy described in the New Testament is not *desertion* of the cause, but *perversion* of it, a process by which 'the righteous are removed, and none perceives it.' The Christian masses do not realize what is happening to them; they are 'bewitched' by a thing that comes as softly and insidiously as the slinging of a noose."<sup>7</sup> Durant made this astute observation with regards to the fall of the Roman Empire: "A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself within."<sup>8</sup>

There are certain scriptures that are doctrinal anchors—in a sense they are our gospel compass, pointing the way we should follow. In one such scriptural reference the Lord revealed the *only way* his Church could be destroyed from the face of the earth: "This is my church, and I will establish it; and *nothing* shall overthrow it, *save it is the transgression of my people*" (Mosiah 27:13).<sup>9</sup> That scripture is a doctrinal keystone—it teaches a central truth upon which we may build—namely, that only transgression or wickedness from within will bring about the downfall of Christ's Church. God will protect his Church against all external influences as long as the Church is pure and righteous. But if his people become wicked, then, even though God's power remains intact, he seems unwilling to give divine sanction and protection to a church filled with iniquity. Otherwise, the integrity and purity of his Church would be compromised.

If God were to give his divine stamp of approval and lend his name to a church filled with wickedness and heresy, people might seek excuse for their wicked behavior on the grounds that such wickedness was condoned by the Lord. For example, during the time indulgences were sold, members of the church might have said, "I can sin with impunity, because I bought an indulgence to absolve my sins. Indulgences are sponsored by the church, and the church is headed by Christ; therefore, Christ must sanction it." That is why the Lord does not give his name and priesthood to a church that does not hold to his standards and keep his doctrines pure.

What, then, was the wickedness that brought about the downfall of Christ's Church? It is hard to pinpoint a single source. Satan uses his entire arsenal to combat the Church, just as an army uses its entire military force—navy, infantry, air force—to confront the enemy. Every tactical and strategic weapon at Satan's command—immorality, lethargy, covenant breaking,<sup>10</sup> pride, heresy, and the like—is and was deployed. Perhaps it is for this reason that the Lord refers to Satan's artillery in broad terms such as transgression or wickedness.

However, wickedness in the early Church seems to have manifested itself in two principal forms, both of which are related: first, individual disobedience to the commandments, and second, heresy. Unfortunately, both "cancers" began spreading shortly after the ascension of the Savior. When disobedience among the members became so widespread and the heresies so profound, the Lord finally withdrew his authority so that his name and power would no longer be associated with the corrupt behavior and perverted teachings of men. The following are examples of the widespread disobedience and heresies that quickly infiltrated the early Church.

### Disobedience

The apostles spoke of wickedness that was occurring in their day and of further wickedness that would yet come to pass. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth" (Galatians 3:1). To Titus he spoke of those who professed God (those who were members of the Church), but were "abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). Peter spoke of those "which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray" and "who loved the ways of

unrighteousness"

(2 Peter 2:15), and then warned the Saints: "Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3:17). These were perilous times and Paul affirmed that some Saints had "already turned aside after Satan" (1 Timothy 5:15).

Paul saw it all unraveling before his eyes and could hardly believe it: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6). He saw that some were idlers and gossipers: "There are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (2 Thessalonians 3:11). James reprimanded the members for neglecting the needy: "But ye have despised the poor" (James 2:6). John records the Lord's condemnation of those who were casual in their commitments: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, *I will spue thee out of my mouth*" (Revelation 3:15–16).

However, the overwhelming evil that infected the Church was immorality. It is mentioned again and again by the apostles. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you" (1 Corinthians 5:1). He then reprimanded them, but evidently unsuccessfully, for he later wrote to the same Saints: "I shall bewail *many* which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed" (2 Corinthians 12:21). James spoke to the Saints in reproving terms: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (James 4:4). Peter spoke of those "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls" (2 Peter 2:14).<sup>11</sup> Jude noted that "there are certain men crept in unawares, . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:4), and further spoke of "filthy dreamers" who "defile the flesh" (Jude 1:8). Lest there be any question about the multiple warnings of these decadent conditions, Jude reminded the Saints: "But, beloved, *remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts*. These be they who separate themselves, *sensual*, having not the Spirit" (Jude 1:17–19).

And finally John, the last known apostle, reprimanded the Saints at Thyatira because they had allowed a woman called Jezebel (some believe she was the wife of the local bishop)<sup>12</sup> "to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication" (Revelation 2:20). Clearly, there was widespread disobedience in the Church, acknowledged by the apostles in frequent warnings and reprovings.<sup>13</sup>

## Heresy

In addition to disobedience, another form of wickedness evolved that was so devastating it eventually undermined and eroded the doctrinal foundations of the Church. It was heresy. Satan is like an octopus with its many tentacles. He does not care which tentacle entangles us, just as long as he ensnares us. C. S. Lewis so noted, from Satan's point of view: "It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick."<sup>14</sup> For Satan's purposes one heresy may be as good as another—any teaching that dilutes or alters the word of God has his endorsement. One man may be tricked by the falsehood that there is no further revelation after the Bible, another by the allegation that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was a "one time" body, another by the mistaken notion that Christ was resurrected without a body and that all flesh is evil, another by the misconception that baptism is a suggestion, not a commandment. Satan did not care whether the bait was Gnosticism or Neoplatonism or Mosaic formalism,



or mysticism or mythology or traditionalism or pure folly. What difference did it make to the Evil One? As long as the bait lured and hooked its prey, he was satisfied. And so the onslaught of heresies began, even festering and growing while the apostles were alive. As described by one scholar, A. Cleveland Coxe: "The heresies . . . came in, like locusts, to devour the harvests of the Gospel."<sup>15</sup> Some appealed to one man, others appealed to another, but each was common in its cause—to sway men from the truth.

## A Return to the Mosaic Law

In the early days of the Church the membership was largely composed of Jews, and hence the critical issues centered around the law of Moses. As a result, the initial heresies were prompted by those Jews who had joined the Church, but who could not seem to free themselves from the formalistic law under which they had previously been bound. One case in point was the law of circumcision. Certain Jewish converts taught the Gentiles, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." In response, Paul and Barnabas had "no small dissension and disputation with them." Finally after "much disputing" on the subject, the apostles announced the will of the Lord, namely, that circumcision (a ritual of the Mosaic law) was not required under the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 15:1–2, 7, 25–28).<sup>16</sup>

One would have thought that this apostolic decision would have settled the matter, but it was not so. At least ten years after this historic decision, Paul returned to Jerusalem and discovered "many thousands of Jewish" converts who were still "zealous of the law" of Moses (Acts 21:20).<sup>17</sup> No doubt this was one reason the epistle to the Hebrews was written—to help the Jews understand that the law of Christ was superior to the law of Moses and, in fact, had superseded it.

Paul warned the Saints at Galatia: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements [meaning, the lesser law of Moses], whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" (Galatians 4:9). Bible scholar Adam Clarke gave an insightful commentary on this verse: "After receiving all this [the gospel], will ye turn again to the ineffectual rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law—rites too weak to counteract your sinful habits, and too poor to purchase pardon and eternal life for you?"<sup>18</sup> So widespread and pervasive was this return to former traditions that Paul lamented: "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:11). In other words, Paul was worried that all his teachings in Galatia were for naught because the Saints had so seriously backtracked to the law of Moses.<sup>19</sup>

So grievous was this backlash of Mosaic formalism that Paul both lamented and warned Titus that "there are *many* unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, *specially they of the circumcision*: whose mouths must be stopped, *who subvert whole houses*, teaching things which they ought not" (Titus 1:10–11). Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) spoke of false apostles who "crept in . . . insisting upon circumcision and the Jewish ceremonies."<sup>20</sup> Origen also acknowledged the seriousness of this heresy in his day: "Let it be admitted, moreover, that there are some who accept Jesus, and boast on that account of being Christians, and yet would regulate their lives, like the Jewish multitude, in accordance with the Jewish law."<sup>21</sup>

Many of the early Saints could not let go of the traditions of their forefathers. Unfortunately, they could not let go of Moses to take hold of Christ. But what of the Jewish converts who did not fall prey to this trap, or the Gentiles who were not riveted to the law of Moses? Were they free of heretical doctrines? Unfortunately not. New waves of heresy pounded the doctrinal foundations of the Church with unrelenting fury.

## The Heresy of Hedonism<sup>22</sup>

Some heresies, such as hedonism, embraced immorality and worldly pleasure as an acceptable form of worship to God. It was but another tentacle of the adversary—another arrow in his quiver of lethal darts. As hypocritical as this philosophy was, it nonetheless found audience among those who wanted to rationalize their immoral deeds under the cloak of a religious veneer. Accordingly, it flourished in certain Church circles.

To the Saints at Pergamos, the Lord said through John: "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, *which thing I hate*" (Revelation 2:15). To the Saints at Ephesus, he gave a similar condemnation: "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Revelation 2:6). Adam Clarke interpreted the phrase "the deeds of the Nicolaitans" as follows: "These were, as is commonly supposed, a sect of the Gnostics, who taught the most impure doctrines, and followed the most impure practices. . . . The Nicolaitans taught . . . that adultery and fornication were things indifferent . . . and [they] mixed several pagan rites with Christian ceremonies."<sup>23</sup>

John's rebuke continued against the Saints at Pergamos: "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac . . . to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Revelation 2:14). Not only were isolated individuals engaged in serious immorality, but even worse, there were whole groups advocating it as religious doctrine. Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202), the bishop of Lyons, attacked with great fury the heretical uprisings in his day. In doing so, he wrote of the heretical group known as the Simonians (followers of Simon Magus the magician): "The mystic priests belonging to this sect both lead profligate lives and practise magical arts."<sup>24</sup> As to another heretical group which followed Carpocratis, Irenaeus wrote, "But they lead a licentious life, and to conceal their impious doctrines, they abuse the name [of Christ], as a means of hiding their wickedness."<sup>25</sup> Surely, these must have been some of the "grievous wolves" whom Paul prophesied would "enter in among you [the Saints], not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). Evidently their numbers were not few, for Paul wrote, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:18–19).

### Heresies of Gnosticism and Other Greek Philosophies

As the Church expanded to outlying areas and encompassed a burgeoning Gentile population, the influence of Greek philosophy became profound. Paul specifically warned the Saints: "Beware lest any man *spoil you through philosophy* and vain deceit, after the tradition of man, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). In this regard President Ezra Taft Benson taught: "From the time of Christ's heaven-heralded birth, heresies have crept into Christianity intended to dilute or undermine the pure doctrines of the gospel. These heresies, by and large, are sponsored by the philosophies of men, and in many instances, advocated by so-called Christian scholars. Their intent is to make Christianity more palatable, more reasonable, and so they attempt to humanize Jesus."<sup>26</sup> Edwin Hatch, noted Oxford historian of early Christianity, wrote of the mass infusion of Greek philosophy into Christianity: "It is therefore the more remarkable that within a century and a half after Christianity and philosophy first came into close contact, the ideas and methods of philosophy had flowed in such mass into Christianity, and filled so large a place in it, as to have made it no less a philosophy than a religion."<sup>27</sup>

Adolf von Harnack, a highly respected theologian-historian, saw the assimilation of Hellenism (Greek philosophy), particularly Gnosticism, into Christian doctrine: "The influx of Hellenism, of the Greek spirit, and the union of the Gospel with it, form the greatest fact in the history of the Church in the second century, and

when the fact was once established as a foundation it continued through the following centuries."<sup>28</sup> While Gnosticism was seemingly overcome by Christianity, Adolf von Harnack made the following assessment: "We may almost say that the vanquished [Gnostics] imposed their terms upon the victor. . . . *It [the ongoing church] takes the form, not of a Christian product in Greek dress, but of a Greek product in Christian dress.*"<sup>29</sup>

Will Durant wrote of this tragic transformation: "Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated life in the theology and liturgy of the Church. . . . The Greek mysteries passed down into the impressive mystery of the Mass. . . . Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world."<sup>30</sup> William Manchester made a similar observation: "Christianity was in turn infiltrated, and to a considerable extent subverted, by the paganism it was supposed to destroy."<sup>31</sup> Durant added: "Greek Christianity in particular was destined to a flood of heresies by the metaphysical and argumentative habits of the Greek mind. Christianity can be understood only in the perspective of these heresies, for even in defeating them it took something of their color and form."<sup>32</sup> On another occasion Durant made this sad observation: "While Christianity converted the world, the world converted Christianity, and displayed the natural paganism of mankind."<sup>33</sup>

Why would historians such as Durant and Manchester (as well as many others) suggest that Christianity adopted paganism? For two or three centuries following Christ, Christians paid a great price to bear his name. The threat of martyrdom was real, and persecution was intense. When Constantine (c. A.D. 275–337) adopted Christianity as a quasi state religion, the majority of the Roman empire was comprised of pagans. Many of these pagans became nominal Christians in order to avail themselves of the benefits and preferred status offered Christians. These pagans worshiped idols honoring their gods, such as Zeus, Mercury, or Diana. Unwilling to abandon their idols, these "converted" pagans merely switched to idols of Jesus or Mary or one of the martyrs. They likewise continued to burn incense in their worship services, just as they had done in their pagan rituals. In addition, many of these pagans brought with them their Greek culture and philosophical background, which only enhanced the Hellenization process that was already in effect.

Gnosticism was one of those Greek philosophical heresies that infiltrated the Church and manifested itself in many forms. Its name is derived from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means knowledge. For forty days following his resurrection, Christ privately taught his apostles sacred truths. As might be expected, people sought for these treasured teachings, but with the loss of the apostles such knowledge in its pure form soon vanished. Heretics filled the void and claimed they were the ones who were the messengers of this "true knowledge," hence the spread of Gnosticism, as it came to be known in the early Christian era.

Many of these apostate groups of alleged Christians were categorized under the "catchall" term *Gnostics*. So numerous had these groups become that Irenaeus noted: "A multitude of Gnostics have sprung up, and have been manifested like mushrooms growing out of the ground."<sup>34</sup> James L. Barker, an authority on the early Christian church, estimated there existed "some sixty Gnostic sects."<sup>35</sup> Professor Francis A. Sullivan, a professor emeritus of theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, observed: "The greatest threat to the unity of the Church in the second century came from the spread of Gnosticism."<sup>36</sup>

These Gnostic sects believed that they alone had the understanding of the scriptures that would lead them to salvation.<sup>37</sup> At the heart of their philosophy was the following troubling issue: How could a perfect God create a world filled with evil? In response, they generally taught that an inferior God (the God of the Old

Testament), who was subordinate to the God of the New Testament (the Father of Jesus), created this material world without divine approval. As a result, they claimed it was a degenerate world and, therefore, all matter was evil. From this, they concluded that the human body was evil and, therefore, man was depraved. As a next logical step, they believed that the works of this corporeal body were evil, and thus no man could perform any works that were good or perform any works that would assist in his salvation.<sup>38</sup> In order to remedy this dilemma, the higher God, the God of the New Testament, sent his Son Jesus Christ to the earth to bring salvation to depraved man. Since matter was evil, however, the Son could not have a body of flesh and bones and, therefore, Jesus only *appeared* to have a mortal body.<sup>39</sup> Some taught that Christ merely deceived those who viewed him as being of a corporeal nature. Tertullian wrote of one such heretic, named Marcion (A.D. 110–165): "Marcion actually chose to believe that He [Christ] was a phantom, denying to Him the reality of a perfect body,"<sup>40</sup> and that Christ "was not what he appeared to be, and feigned himself to be what he was not—incaruate without being flesh, human without being man."<sup>41</sup>

John spoke harshly of those who denied the corporeal nature of Christ: "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is the spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it shall come; *and even now already is it in the world*" (1 John 4:3). Later he again addressed the same topic: "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (2 John 1:7).

The Gnostics believed that ultimately their spirits would be freed from their bodies, and thereafter all material things, including the earth and their mortal bodies, would be annihilated. Such a belief denied the reality of a bodily resurrection, but the Church had many firsthand witnesses of Christ's physical resurrection. Likewise, there were ample witnesses of the Saints who arose from their "graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:53). In spite of these events, which were central to the doctrine of Christianity, there were some who doubted the resurrection as an ongoing event. Paul wrote to Timothy of those who "have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:18). Amazingly, there were even some Corinthian Saints who did not believe in any resurrection whatsoever. Likely these naysayers were echoing the philosophical tenets of their day. Paul had previously confronted the philosophers of Athens who "mocked" the possibility of a resurrection from the dead (Acts 17:18, 33). He wrote to the Corinthians: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, *how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?*" (1 Corinthians 15:12).

Justin Martyr spoke of certain heretics "who say there is no resurrection of the dead." Justin, however, confirmed the true doctrine: "But I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection."<sup>42</sup>

Obviously the spread of Gnostic doctrines struck at the very core of Christianity. LDS scholar Kent Jackson has observed, "It does not take much imagination to realize the consequences of this kind of belief. . . . This doctrine denies the reality of Christ's mortal experiences, his suffering and death in the Atonement, his physical resurrection and ours as well."<sup>43</sup> Even during the ministry of the apostles, the spread of Gnosticism was a concern, as evidenced by the warnings of John and Paul. Frederic W. Farrar believed the apostles were fully aware of the devastating Gnostic influence that was beginning to put down roots in their day, and would permeate the Church when they were gone:

It is said that when Charlemagne first saw the ships of the pirate Norseman he burst into tears, not because he feared that they would give *him* any trouble, but because he foresaw the miseries which they would inflict

upon his subjects in the future. So it was with the Apostles. The errors of which others only saw the germ, loomed large on the horizon of their prophetic insight, although it was not until after their death that they assumed their full proportions as the perilous heresies of Gnostic speculation.<sup>44</sup>

Some Christian writers, and even the scriptures, say that many took Gnosticism and other philosophical doctrines to such an extreme that they even denied the divinity of the Savior. Peter warned of such: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, *even denying the Lord that bought them*, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And *many* shall follow their pernicious ways" (2 Peter 2:1–2).

A. Cleveland Coxe noted that Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200), in order to thwart the Gnostic movement, wrote his *Stromata* "to prevent [the Christian follower] from being led astray by the representations of the Valentinians and other gnostic sects."<sup>45</sup> Some years before, Justin Martyr had similar concerns. While speaking of the "many false Christs and false apostles [that] shall arise" and those who should follow them, he said:

And these are called by us after the name of the men from whom each doctrine and opinion had its origin. . . . We know them to be atheists, impious, unrighteous, and sinful, and confessors of Jesus in name only, instead of worshipers of Him. . . . Some are called Marcians, and some Valentinians, and some Basilidians, and some Saturnileans and others by other names; each called after the originator of the individual opinion, just as each one of those who consider themselves philosophers . . . thinks he must bear the name of the philosophy which he follows.<sup>46</sup>

But Gnosticism, manifested in its myriad forms, was not the only philosophy to interweave itself into and poison the pure doctrines of the kingdom. Others included Montanism,<sup>47</sup> Manichaeism,<sup>48</sup> and many that overlapped with Gnosticism, such as Neoplatonism.<sup>49</sup> For every man who was unwilling to hold to the iron rod, Satan had a heresy customized for that man's spiritual shortcoming. With a crafty and chameleon-like skill Satan molded his doctrines to satisfy every desired philosophy of man.

### A Multiplicity of Heresies

Christian historians and early Church leaders have acknowledged the multiplicity of heresies that confronted the Church. The attempts to prevent these heresies is reminiscent of the boy who plugged the hole in the dike with his finger. Unfortunately, as the heresies flourished, there were more holes than fingers. When the magnitude of heresies exceeded the "apostolic reach," a flood of heresy was unleashed upon the Saints. Divisions and splinter groups sprang up everywhere. President Gordon B. Hinckley noted: "Some scholar or otherwise came along with a new bit of philosophy that did not square with the pure doctrine. In some instances from that small beginning grew a body of doctrine and an order of practice far from the original truth."<sup>50</sup>

Paul cautioned the Romans: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned" (Romans 16:17). To the Corinthians, he sadly noted that "there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions" (1 Corinthians 3:3), and then further observed: "When ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you. . . . For there must be also heresies among you" (1 Corinthians 11:18–19).<sup>51</sup> To the Saints at Thessalonica, Paul warned, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). As to this verse, Adam Clarke commented: "There is a system of corrupt doctrine, which will lead to the general apostasy, *already in existence*."<sup>52</sup>

The apostles were fervently doing their best to warn the Saints and hold back the flood of heresy, but the "holes in the dike" were appearing with astonishing rapidity. Paul knew this would be the case: "But evil men and seducers *shall wax worse and worse*, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). On another occasion, Paul expressed fear, "lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Unfortunately, human nature yearned for something more than faith in Christ and observance of his simple but sublime ordinances. That is why Paul warned Timothy that "some having swerved [Greek alternative: missed the mark] have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (1 Timothy 1:6–7). In other words, not only was their apostate doctrine spiritually in error—it was not even rational, perhaps being based on pagan beliefs, folklore, tradition, or superstition; but whatever it was, Paul warned Timothy to avoid "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (1 Timothy 6:20–21). Paul further warned Timothy to "refuse profane and old wives' fables" (1 Timothy 4:7).

Paul prophesied of the time when the Saints "will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; *and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*" (2 Timothy 4:3–4). Paul clearly stated that "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:1–2).

The number of deceivers was not small. This was not a minor, passing problem. The survival of the Church was on the line. Paul noted, "There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" (Titus 1:10). At one point, he gave this staggering statistic: "*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ*<sup>53</sup> [meaning those who profess to teach Christianity], yet *have ye not many fathers* [those who would spiritually lead you to Christ]. . . . Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." Whether the number ten thousand was meant to be literal or figurative, the message was clear—there were many hirelings, but not many shepherds. Paul then referred to some of these pseudo-instructors as "puffed up" and informed the Saints that they "will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power" (1 Corinthians 4:15–16, 19).<sup>54</sup>

Peter echoed similar warnings of "false prophets" and "false teachers" and then added that "*many shall follow their pernicious ways*"

(2 Peter 2:1–2).<sup>55</sup> John wrote of ecclesiastical counterfeits who claimed "they are apostles, and are not, and [thou] hast found them liars" (Revelation 2:2).

The great tragedy was that many of the heresies and much of the corruption had arisen from within. John recognized that "even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). Durant suggested that these antichrists might be certain Roman emperors, namely "Nero, Vespasian, Domitian."<sup>56</sup> Certainly these men opposed Christianity with a vengeance, but the scriptures make it clear that the antichrists of whom John spoke were insiders: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have *continued with us*" (1 John 2:19). Obviously they could not have gone out from them unless they had first been part of them. Paul warned that "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30), and spoke of "false brethren unawares brought in" (Galatians 2:4).

Irenaeus made reference to a multitude of heretical groups, and then named their leaders as Valentinus, Ptolemy, Colorbasus, Marcus, Simon Magus, Minander, Carpocrates, Nicolaitanes, Tatian, and many

others. At one point he observed: "Many offshoots of numerous heresies have already been formed from these heresies we have described." Rather than continuing with his list of heretics, it is as though he finally throws up his arms in despair and says: "*But why continue? For it is an impracticable attempt to mention all those who, in one way or another, have fallen away from the truth.*"<sup>57</sup>

The apostles could not stop talking about the apostasy that was sweeping through the Church. Their epistles are saturated with warnings, cautions, and prophecies about the growing apostasy. There were widespread disobedience, divisions springing up, and heresies being propagated with alarming frequency. Tertullian listed at least six heresies exposed by the apostles: "These are, as I suppose, the different kinds of spurious doctrines, which (as we are informed by the apostles themselves) existed in their own day."<sup>58</sup>

Shortly after the ascension of the Savior, the waves of apostasy began pounding the shore of the kingdom mercilessly; the apostles could see the tidal wave of heresy on the horizon. It was gathering speed and size. It would not be stopped.

### Reasons for the Heresies

What were the reasons for such widespread heresy? For some it was money. Paul spoke of those who were "teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus 1:11). Peter, recognizing this was a problem, commanded the Church leaders to teach "willingly; not for filthy lucre" (1 Peter 5:2). Money was one of the prime reasons for the downfall of Simon of Samaria (known as the magician), who had joined the Church. Upon witnessing the apostles' bestowal of the Holy Ghost upon new members, he "offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." In response, Peter gave this stinging rebuke: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter" (Acts 8:18–21). In *The Didache* (A.D. 80–140), a Church manual of instruction on moral issues and ordinances, the warning was given: "Let every apostle, when he cometh to you be received as the Lord; . . . but if he ask money, he is a false prophet." Recognizing that some leaders were teaching "for hire," the further counsel was given: "Appoint for yourselves therefore bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men who are meek and not lovers of money."<sup>59</sup>

Pride and arrogance were other underlying causes. Paul spoke of those false teachers who were arrogant and "puffed up" (1 Corinthians 4:18–19). When Simon the magician was reprimanded and rejected by Peter (Acts 8:20–23), Irenaeus observed that Simon "set himself eagerly to contend against the apostles, in order that he himself might seem to be a wonderful being."<sup>60</sup> So egotistical had Simon become that he alleged, as recorded by Irenaeus, "that it was himself [Simon] who appeared among the Jews as the Son, but descended in Samaria as the Father, while he came to other nations in the character of the Holy Spirit."<sup>61</sup> Valentinus had been denied the office of bishop, which he expected to receive. Speaking of this rejection, Tertullian wrote, "Just like those (restless) spirits which, when roused by ambition, are usually inflamed with the desire of revenge, he [Valentinus] applied himself with all his might to exterminate the truth."<sup>62</sup> John wrote of the renegade church leader Diotrophes who would not receive John or the appointed church leaders because he "loveth to have the preeminence among them [the Saints]" (3 John 1:9). Evidently his pride would not allow him to be the "number two" man when his Church superiors came.

Pride was likewise an underlying cause of apostasy among the Book of Mormon people. Alma speaks of the Nephites who "grew proud . . . because of their exceedingly great riches" (Alma 45:24). He then tells the consequence of such pride: "And there were many in the church who believed in the flattering words of

Amalickiah, therefore they dissented even from the church" (Alma 46:7).

Irenaeus recognized one of the prime causes for this multiplicity of heretical groups: "Numbers of them—indeed, we may say all—desire themselves to be teachers. . . . They insist upon teaching something new, declaring themselves the inventors of any sort of opinion which they may have been able to call into existence." Then, speaking in particular of one such heretic, who no doubt was a mirror image of many others, Irenaeus observed: "He separated from the church, and, excited and puffed up by the thought of being a teacher, as if he were superior to others, he composed his own peculiar type of doctrine."<sup>63</sup> Jude made a similar observation about the heretics of his day, who were "walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 1:16). Paul warned against those who "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18).<sup>64</sup>

Nephi prophesied that "the praise of the world" would "destroy the saints of God" (1 Nephi 13:9), that some churches would be "built up to get gain," that certain leaders would seek "to get power over the flesh" and "to become popular," and there would be yet others "who [would] seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world" (1 Nephi 22:23). Suffice it to say, history confirms his prophetic utterance. Paul noted that the Savior would not come until "after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9). By the time of the apostles' death, Satan's work was in full swing.

### The Apostasy Escalates

As one would expect, the apostasy was a process, not a singular event. For a time there were some spiritual holdouts. John commended the Saints at Philadelphia: "[Thou] hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8). Ignatius (A.D. 35–107), in his epistle to the Ephesians, commended the Saints for their resistance to heresy: "I have learned that certain persons passed through you from yonder, bringing evil doctrine; whom ye suffered not to sow seed in you, for ye stopped your ears, so that ye might not receive the seed sown by them."<sup>65</sup> No doubt there were other congregations, other individuals who for a time valiantly combated the evils of apostasy, but the cracks in the dam were appearing with alarming frequency. Ignatius, while commending the Ephesians for their steadfastness, was nonetheless painfully aware of the widespread apostasy: "For many specious wolves with baneful delights lead captive the runners in God's race."<sup>66</sup> The leaders of Christ's Church saw the tidal wave of heresy coming and repeatedly referred to it and prophesied of it. Referring to the conditions at the end of the first century, Joseph Milner, a noted historian of the ancient Church, wrote, "Through the prevalence of human corruption and the crafts of Satan, the love of truth was lessened, heresies and various abuses of the Gospel appeared: and in estimating them, we may form some idea of the declension of the true religion toward the end of the [first century]."<sup>67</sup> It is of interest to note that the principal argument among church historians is *not whether* Christ's Church declined, but *when* it declined. Even before the first century, Jude pled with the remaining faithful members to "earnestly contend for the faith which was *once* delivered unto the Saints" (Jude 1:3).

The apostasy had become so bold and open that Diotrephes, a rebellious church leader in the days of John the Revelator, spoke out against John and the brethren "with malicious words." Equally bad, this egotistical despot forbade the local members from receiving the Church leaders, and, if they did, then Diotrephes "casteth them out of the church" (3 John 1:9–10). In other words, he excommunicated those who sustained the apostles and those whom they appointed. This was nothing less than open rebellion against God's anointed servants.



LDS scholar Kent P. Jackson explained that the root meaning of *apostasy* comes from the original Greek word *apostasía* and "means 'rebellion,' 'mutiny,' 'revolt,' or 'revolution,' and it is used in ancient contexts with reference to uprisings against established authority. The idea of a gentle drifting that comes to mind with the phrase 'a falling away' is not one of its meanings."<sup>68</sup> It was indeed rebellion that was taking place within the Church.

Conditions were so desperate in the days of John that he found it necessary to reprimand at least five of the seven remaining congregations to whom he wrote. The condemnation of the Saints at Laodicea was stinging: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, *I [God] will spue thee out of my mouth.* . . . And [thou] knowest not thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:16–17). What clearer disavowal of divine sanction could they have? They were no longer God's people—to the contrary, as described by John, they were now spiritually poor (meaning without the rich doctrines of the kingdom), spiritually blind (without the guiding light of the Holy Spirit), and spiritually naked (without the protection of the priesthood). Is it any wonder God said they were wretched and miserable?

The Saints at Ephesus did not fare much better. They were given a severe warning to repent "or else I [God] will *come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place*" (Revelation 2:5). What did it mean to have the candlestick removed? Reference to the prior chapter of Revelation discloses that the candlestick was the Church: "The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (Revelation 1:20). It was a warning from the Lord that if they did not quickly repent he would come and remove the Church from them—an astonishing witness that the local apostasy was already so severe that God was threatening to "unchurch" this congregation. Adam Clarke explained that this was no casual reprimand, but rather a stern warning by the Lord in which he threatened to:

take away my ordinances, remove your ministers, and send you a famine of the word. As there is here an allusion to the candlestick in the tabernacle and temple, which could not be removed without suspending the whole Levitical service, so the threatening here intimates that, if they did not repent, *he would unchurch them; they should no longer have a pastor, no longer have the word and sacraments, and no longer have the presence of the Lord Jesus.*<sup>69</sup>

It was a remarkable forewarning—a type and shadow of things that would soon occur on a larger scale. In his kindness, the Lord is always chastening, admonishing, trying to avert a spiritual disaster, but unfortunately in this case there is no scriptural or historical evidence of repentance and, thus, the "unchurching" must have eventually occurred.

It seemed that the Church at the end of the first century was hanging by a thread. In addition to the reprimands mentioned above, John noted that there were only "*a few names* even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments" (Revelation 3:4), and as to those struggling Saints at Philadelphia he observed, "for thou hast a little strength" (Revelation 3:8). Some years earlier Paul had written "*all men forsook me*" (2 Timothy 4:16) and in his tragic reminiscence of his missionary labors in Asia, he recounted, "This thou knowest, that *all they which are in Asia be turned away from me*" (2 Timothy 1:15). This was no surprise to Paul. He had already prophesied that "grievous wolves [shall] enter in among you, *not sparing the flock*" (Acts 20:29); and John had prophesied that Satan would "make war with the Saints, and . . . *overcome them*:" and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Revelation 13:7). The apostasy was widespread; it would also be conclusive.

Those who came on the scene subsequent to the apostles observed this spirit of rebellion and apostasy. J. B.

Lightfoot, who translated and edited the writings of the apostolic fathers,<sup>70</sup> noted: "A feud had broken out in the church of Corinth. Presbyters [or church leaders such as elders] appointed by Apostles, or their immediate successors had been unlawfully deposed. A spirit of insubordination was rife."<sup>71</sup> Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100) spoke of a "detestable and unholy sedition" which "a few headstrong and self-willed persons have kindled to . . . a pitch of madness." He went on to say that it was a time of "jealousy and envy, strife and sedition, persecution and tumult, war and captivity," and then noted that the bishops of Corinth had been "unjustly thrust out from their ministration."<sup>72</sup> Lest there be any question about the consequences of their actions, he scolded them: "Your division hath perverted many; it hath brought many to despair, many to doubting, and all of us to sorrow."<sup>73</sup> In his response to the Philippians, Polycarp (A.D. 69–156) wrote, "Wherefore let us forsake the vain doing of the many and their false teachings, and turn unto the word which was delivered unto us from the beginning."<sup>74</sup> Polycarp saw the detour from the teachings of the apostles and wanted to bring the Saints back to the original source, but without the apostolic presence it was to no avail. The author of *The Epistle of Barnabas* (c. A.D. 70–132) referred to this time period (shortly after the death of the apostles) as a "season of lawlessness."<sup>75</sup>

Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) observed that Ignatius preached to the various churches in Asia, "particularly to caution them more against the heresies which even then were springing up and prevailing. He exhorted them to adhere firmly to the tradition of the apostles."<sup>76</sup> But there was no stemming the tide of apostasy. Hegesippus, as quoted by Eusebius, cited the names of many heretical groups, and then observed "every one introducing his own peculiar opinions, one differing from the other. From these sprung the false Christs and false prophets and false apostles, who divided the unity of the church, by the introduction of corrupt doctrines against God and against his Christ."<sup>77</sup> Eusebius saw the schism in the church caused by these heretics: "These, also, drawing away many of the church, seduced them into their opinions, each one endeavoring separately to introduce his own innovations respecting the truth."<sup>78</sup> In his own day Eusebius made this shocking observation about the disarray of the church:

We [sank] into negligence and sloth, one envying and reviling another in different ways, and we were almost, as it were, on the point of taking up arms against each other, and were assailing each other with words as with darts and spears, prelates inveighing against prelates, and people rising up against people, and hypocrisy and dissimulation had arisen to the greatest height of malignity; . . . we added one wickedness and misery to another. But some that appeared to be our pastors, deserting the law of piety, were inflamed against each other with mutual strifes, only accumulating quarrels and threats, rivalry, hostility and hatred to each other.<sup>79</sup>

Does that sound like Christ's Church? Paul had already warned of such a condition: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). No wonder Tertullian observed: "The gospel was wrongly preached; men wrongly believed; so many thousands were wrongly baptized . . . so many priestly functions, so many ministries were wrongly executed."<sup>80</sup> This was not an isolated apostasy, but an avalanche of dissension, revolt, and heresy, evidenced by the tragic references of those apostles and early Church leaders mentioned above.

This apostasy was triggered by widespread disobedience and by a proliferation of heresies. Accordingly, the martyrdom of the apostles was not the source of the apostasy; rather, it was a consequence of the apostasy. The seeds of apostasy were planted and springing up during the ministry of the apostles. Thereafter they nurtured into full bloom when no apostles remained to weed them out. No doubt if there had been significant righteousness among the Saints, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles would have continued. The apostasy

did not happen because the apostles were gone; the apostles were taken because the apostasy was in effect.<sup>81</sup> Evidently the time came when the transgressions of the people were so blatant, and the heresies so profound, that the Lord allowed the death of his apostolic ministers without providing a means for succession. He would not overrule the agency of the people.

With the power vacuum created by the death of the apostles, the local leaders quickly filled the void. Each local bishop became autonomous and governed his own region according to his own dictates. While there was correspondence between local bishops and attempts to harmonize on certain doctrinal issues, Church doctrine and procedure often varied from one locale to another. One can readily imagine what would happen if there were no President of the United States, no Supreme Court, and no Congress. If each state were left to govern its own affairs, there would quickly be disagreement in the interpretation of federal law. Federal appeals courts would be in opposition on certain matters with no final arbitrator. Governors might attempt to communicate and counsel with each other, but without a designated leader, differences of opinion would remain. Human nature would run its course and certain governors of larger and more powerful states would assert dominance.

Accordingly, it should be no surprise that with the death of the apostles the unifying force of the Church was gone. The distances to travel, the lack of effective communication, the disappearance of a central administration, and the frailties of human nature all combined to dictate the inevitable result—the fractionalization of Christ's Church. And so the power struggles commenced—with Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem emerging as the power centers of the church. In the years to follow, the bishops of Rome asserted their political and ecclesiastical muscle until they eventually manipulated and maneuvered their way to dominance.

The death of the apostles did not mean that *no* institutionalized church continued, but rather that a different church evolved—one without revelation and without priesthood authority. While there existed for a time many competing philosophies and would-be claimants to Christ's ongoing church, eventually one composite doctrine prevailed among a majority of the people who called themselves Christians. In this regard, LDS historian and professor Milton V. Backman Jr. wrote: "The compromising of truth and error, the assimilation of the gospel of Christ with the philosophies of men produced a new religion. This new religion was an appealing composite of New Testament Christianity, Jewish traditions, Greek philosophy, Graeco-Roman paganism, and the mystery religions."<sup>82</sup> Paul Johnson, a respected historian of Christian and Jewish societies, made a similar observation: "The church survived, and steadily penetrated all ranks of society over a huge area, by avoiding or absorbing extremes, by compromise, by developing an urbane temperament and erecting secular-type structures to preserve its unity and conduct its business. *There was in consequence a loss of spirituality.*"<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately, the price for unity was exacted at a terrible cost—a compromising of Christ's pure doctrine.

Adolf von Harnack commented on a much-changed Christianity after a century of compromise and worldly assimilation:

If we place ourselves at about the year 200, about a hundred or a hundred and twenty years after the apostolic age . . . what kind of spectacle does the Christian religion offer? . . . The living faith seems to be transformed into a creed . . . devotion to Christ, into Christology . . . prophecy, into technical exegesis and theological learning; the ministers of the Spirit, into clerics . . . miracles and miraculous cures disappear altogether. . . . The "Spirit" becomes law and compulsion. . . . This enormous transformation took place

within a hundred and twenty years. 84

The emerging church finally achieved some unity of doctrine when Constantine, emperor of Rome, endorsed that sect of Christianity which he thought had the greatest potential benefit to the Roman Empire. He called it "the most holy catholic (universal) church."<sup>85</sup> And thus, an alliance between the state and church had been forged. The ongoing church was now a political-religious body. Before the end of the fourth century, Christianity had become the official state religion of the Roman Empire. All other schismatic groups of Christians were eventually destroyed, substantially reduced in influence, or simply assimilated into the ongoing church which had the support and blessing of Constantine and his political successors.

While the Church of Jesus Christ did not continue in its fulness, there were many among the Catholic and Protestant churches who were instruments in preserving for the world certain fundamental gospel truths, namely, that Jesus is the Son of God, that he was crucified and resurrected, and that he is the Savior of the world. Likewise, they preserved the Bible for us, for which we are most indebted to them. Elder Dallin H. Oaks paid them this appropriate tribute: "We are indebted to the men and women who kept the light of faith and learning alive through the centuries to the present day. We have only to contrast the lesser light that exists among peoples unfamiliar with the names of God and Jesus Christ to realize the great contribution made by Christian teachers through the ages. We honor them as servants of God."<sup>86</sup>

But as fine as these servants were, Paul knew with certainty that Christ would *not* return for his second coming "*except there come a falling away first*" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). That prophecy was fulfilled. The primitive Church in its pristine state was lost. Fragments of the Church continued, some pieces of the gospel puzzle remained, but the glorious gospel in its fulness was gone.<sup>87</sup> Elder LeGrand Richards rightfully noted: "In *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, written by seventy-three noted divines and Bible students, this statement is made that 'one must not expect to find the gospel of Holy Writ upon the earth today. It is not to be found thus perfect in the total fragments of Christianity, and much less in any one fragment.'"<sup>88</sup> What an admission! Christ's Church, as organized by him, was no longer on the earth.

#### Notes to Chapter 5: The True Cause of the Apostasy

1. The same thing is true in the latter days. The martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum did not result in the demise of the restored Church. When the Saints were persecuted in New York, they journeyed to Ohio; when confronted in Ohio, they moved to Missouri; upon issuance of the infamous Extermination Order, they migrated to Nauvoo; and finally, when the persecution was unbearable in the City Beautiful, they made the historic trek to the Rockies.

2. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 255.

3. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:254.

4. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:621.

5. Certainly the Lord suffers the righteous to be slain that justice might come upon the wicked (Alma 60:13), but his church, as a divine institution, seems indestructible from outside forces.

6. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, 54–55; emphasis added.

7. Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 172. See also 4 Nephi 1:27, which describes the apostasy

in Book of Mormon lands as follows: "There were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel, insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness, and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness."

8. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 665.

9. See also Helaman 4:23, which states, "Because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle." See also D&C 3:3.

10. For an excellent article on the relationship between covenant breaking and the apostasy, see Noel B. Reynolds, "The Decline of Covenant in Early Christian Thought," 295–324.

11. See also 2 Peter 3:3.

12. Adam Clarke, the noted Bible scholar, opined, "Instead of that woman Jezebel . . . many excellent MSS., and almost all the ancient versions, read . . . thy wife Jezebel; which intimates, indeed asserts, that this bad woman was the wife of the bishop of the church, and his criminality in suffering her was therefore the greater" (*Clarke's Commentary*, 6:981).

13. The book of Hebrews speaks of the faith of many of the prophets and the great men and women who walked this earth—those who were tortured, mocked, imprisoned, sawn asunder, stoned, and exiled from their homelands, "of whom the world was not worthy" (Hebrews 11:38). In reverse fashion, the time came when men of faith and the priesthood were "exiled" from the church because it was not worthy of them.

14. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 54.

15. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:309.

16. See also Galatians 2.

17. See also LDS Bible Dictionary, 746.

18. Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:404.

19. The LDS Bible Dictionary notes that this epistle to Galatia was written "at the news of a wholesale defection from the truth of the gospel in favor of a return to the bondage of the Jewish law" (LDS Bible Dictionary, 744).

20. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:348.

21. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:570.

22. Hedonism is the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the highest good.

23. Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:976–77. Paul had previously been confronted by "certain philosophers of the Epicureans" (Acts 17:18), a school of philosophy that advocated bodily pleasure as the object of life.

24. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:348.

25. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:351. See also 1 Nephi 13:8.
26. Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 127.
27. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 125.
28. Von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* 200.
29. Von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* 207, 221; emphasis added.
30. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 595.
31. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 11.
32. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 603.
33. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 657.
34. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:353.
35. Barker, *Apostasy from the Divine Church*, 153.
36. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 228.
37. Hippolytus (A.D. 170–236) taught, "They have styled themselves Gnostics, alleging that they alone have sounded the depths of knowledge" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:47).
38. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) noted that the basic philosophical doctrine of Gnosticism had its origin with Plato: "Plato maintains that there are certain invisible substances . . . which they call *ideas* . . . which are the patterns and causes of those objects of nature which are manifest to us. . . . The former . . . are the actual verities, and the latter the images and likenesses of them. Well, now, are there not here gleams of the heretical principles of the Gnostics and the Valentinians? It is from this philosophy that they eagerly adopt the difference between the bodily senses and the intellectual faculties" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:197–98).
39. Those who espoused such a view were known as Docetists, coming from a Greek word meaning "to seem to be."
40. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:197.
41. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:327. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) also observed a similar teaching by Saturnius, "that Christ had not existed in bodily substance, and had endured a *quasi*-passion in a phantasmal shape merely; that a resurrection of the flesh there will by no means be" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:649). Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) likewise spoke of heretics "who maintain that even Jesus Himself appeared only as spiritual, and not in flesh, but presented merely the appearance of flesh: these persons seek to rob the flesh of the promise" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:295).
42. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:239.
43. Jackson, *From Apostasy to Restoration*, 15.

44. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:208. Some excellent LDS scholars believe that Gnosticism was not a cause of the apostasy, because its influence was not felt until after the Church was already gone. They believe, furthermore, that Gnosticism may have been the mold that shaped and preserved Christian doctrine, albeit incorrect doctrine, for centuries (see Noel B. Reynolds, "What Went Wrong for the Early Christians," 1–28).

45. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:342.

46. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:212.

47. Montanism was a Christian movement (ca. A.D. 170) named after its founder, Montanus. Although it adopted many of the orthodox views of mainstream Christianity, including the need for the gift of prophecy, it also advocated long fasts and asceticism. In addition, it prohibited second marriages and enacted a strict disciplinary code that allowed for no forgiveness of sins such as adultery or fornication after baptism (*Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 778–79).

48. Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, was born in A.D. 216 in southern Mesopotamia. He believed he was an apostle of light who received revelation from a "heavenly twin." His doctrine was a mixture of Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism. Manichaeism taught that certain persons were among the elect who had the power to forgive sins and to free particles of light in a darkened world (*Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 708–9).

49. Neoplatonism (meaning "new Platonism") was an outgrowth of the philosophy taught by Plato. Plato taught that knowledge comes from recognizing the form of a thing. The Neoplatonists believed that only forms exist—everything else is unreal—and furthermore that these "forms" exist only in the divine mind, where our spirits can sojourn after they depart our mortal bodies. The highest form was divine reason, as manifested in ideas. A much lower order was the realm of souls, and the lowest order of things was the world of physical bodies and matter. The two lower levels yearned to travel to the highest. As the human soul magnified its powers of reason, it accelerated its return to God (*The World Book Encyclopedia*, 14:125, and *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 801–2).

50. Hinckley, "Cornerstones of Responsibility," Regional Representatives Seminar, April 5, 1991.

51. In writing to Timothy, he observed, "As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Timothy 3:8).

52. Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:567; emphasis added.

53. Also interpreted to mean "myriads of leaders" (Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:210).

54. The *Interpreter's Bible* offers this insight: "Paul was not being very complimentary when he referred to the other teachers as *guides*. . . . These were not *instructors* . . . but attendants to whom small boys were entrusted in going back and forth to school. These . . . were often quite worthless slaves" (10:57). Paul further spoke of those who "greatly withstood our words" (2 Timothy 4:15), those whose words "will eat as doth a canker" (2 Timothy 2:17; an alternative Greek interpretation would be "teaching will spread like grangrene"), those who "erred concerning the faith" (1 Timothy 6:21), and those who were "evil workers" (Philippians 3:2).

55. See also 2 Peter 2:17; 3:16.

56. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 575.

57. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:353; emphasis added. Will and Ariel Durant made a similar observation: "About [A.D.] 187 Irenaeus listed twenty varieties of Christianity, about [A.D.] 384 Epiphanius counted eighty. At every point foreign ideas were creeping into Christian belief, and Christian believers were deserting to novel sects" (*Caesar and Christ*, 616).

58. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:259.

59. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 127–28. The Book of Mormon also speaks of those who preached "false doctrines; and this they did for the sake of riches and honor" (Alma 1:16).

60. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:347.

61. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:348. This is the same spirit Simon manifested when he worked his sorcery in Samaria, "giving out that himself was some great one" (Acts 8:9).

62. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:505.

63. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:353. Elder Bruce R. McConkie made a similar observation about self-proclaimed prophets in current times: "It is now almost as though every fool or near fool, and every person filled with self-conceit and desire to be in the spotlight of adulation, fancies himself a prophet of religion or politics, or what have you. On every hand there are those who suppose they know how to save society, to save nations, to save souls. They preach all sorts of gospels—a social gospel, a racial gospel; a gospel of freedom or communism, of socialism or free enterprise, of military preparedness or reliance upon the wispy promises of foreign foes; a gospel of salvation by grace alone, or of this or that doctrine" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 626).

64. Men of this type were not peculiar to a given geographic region. The Book of Mormon speaks of Sherem, who "preached many things which were flattering unto the people; and this he did that he might overthrow the doctrine of Christ" (Jacob 7:2). Likewise, this same book of scripture speaks of the antichrist, Korihor, who confessed that Satan "taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind; and . . . I had much success" (Alma 30:53).

65. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 65. Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) also noted that in spite of one heretical group rising after another, "the . . . only true church constantly advanced in greatness and glory, always the same in all matters under the same circumstances" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4:134). This statement seems to be more a statement of hope than of historical accuracy, for indeed there were many changes in the teachings and ordinances of the Church by his day (see chapters 14 and 15).

66. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 79.

67. Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ*, 1:133. On another occasion Milner wrote with even greater specificity of widespread apostasy at an early time in the history of the church: "I know it is common for authors to represent the great declension of Christianity to have taken place only after its external establishment under Constantine. But the evidence of history has compelled me to dissent from this view of



things. In fact we have seen, that for a whole generation previous to the [Diocletian] persecution, few marks of superior piety appeared. Scarce a luminary of godliness existed; and it is not common in any age for a great work of the Spirit of God to be exhibited, but under the conduct of some remarkable Saints, Pastors and Reformers. This whole period, as well as the whole scene of the persecution, is very barren of such characters" (*The History of the Church of Christ*, 2:28).

68. Jackson, *From Apostasy to Restoration*, 9.

69. Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:976; emphasis added.

70. The apostolic fathers are generally considered to be those early Christian writers who personally knew one or more apostles or those who were one step away (that is, they knew those who knew the apostles).

71. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 11.

72. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 13, 14, 32.

73. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 33.

74. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 97.

75. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 140.

76. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:121.

77. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2:157–58.

78. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5:195.

79. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 8:318. Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) had a different view. He spoke of a "harmonious multitude of many bishops" and "of the combined and everywhere compacted unity of the Catholic Church" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:333). It is true there was some unity, for otherwise no single church would have continued. Unfortunately, the price for this unity was a compromise of principle and an assimilation of certain heretical and pagan beliefs that substantially perverted the original teachings and ordinances of Christ's Church (see chapters 14 and 15).

80. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:256.

81. Summarized by Petersen in *Which Church Is Right?* 8–9. Similar circumstances arose in Book of Mormon times: "Wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that the Lord did take away his beloved disciples" (Mormon 1:13).

82. Backman, *American Religions and the Rise of Mormonism*, 6.

83. Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 63; emphasis added.

84. Von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* 192–93.

85. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 432.

86. Oaks, "Apostasy and Restoration," *Ensign*, May 1995, 85.

87. Joseph Smith made this succinct statement that helps one understand when the kingdom of God (his Church) is no longer on the earth: "What constitutes the kingdom of God? Where there is a prophet, a priest, or a righteous man unto whom God gives His oracles. . . . Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, there is the kingdom of God; but where these are not, the kingdom of God is not. All the ordinances, systems, and administrations on the earth are of no use to the children of men, unless they are ordained and authorized of God . . . for nothing will save a man but a legal administrator; for none others will be acknowledged either by God or angels" (*History of the Church*, 5:257, 259).

88. As quoted by Richards in "Strange Creeds of Christendom," *Ensign*, January 1973, 109.

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## When Was Christ's Church Taken Away?

The answer to the question, "When was Christ's Church taken away?" depends upon one's definition of the apostasy. In the larger sense, the apostasy was that overall process that resulted in loss of priesthood authority, loss of revelation, loss of the gifts of the Spirit, and a perversion of Christ's teachings and ordinances. That process began during the life of the apostles, and continued until the Church was restored in 1830. In that sense the apostasy continued for eighteen centuries. In a more specific and commonly used sense, the apostasy was the process that resulted in the loss of the priesthood keys (which were the power to direct the use of priesthood authority) from the earth so that the church no longer had the power to save and exalt a man. That loss occurred in two general stages: first, the loss of the priesthood keys held only by the apostles, which occurred at their death; and second, the loss of the remaining priesthood keys, which occurred with the death of those to whom the apostles had given limited priesthood keys and powers.

Commenting on the approximate period when the apostasy occurred, Brigham Young wrote, "Soon after the ascension of Jesus, through mobocracy, martyrdom and apostasy, the church of Christ became extinct from the earth."<sup>1</sup> Referring to the time period immediately following the death of the apostles, Elder James E. Talmage noted: "As a divine institution the church soon ceased to exist, the powers of the holy priesthood were literally taken from the earth."<sup>2</sup> Elder Bruce R. McConkie was in accord with these views:

I think we're in the habit of erroneously extending the extent of the Christian faith out. Somebody says, "When was the apostasy complete?" and an ordinary answer received in the church is that it was complete by 325 A.D., by the time of Constantine and so on. Well, it was so obviously complete at that time that there was no question about it. But really, it was completed a long time before that. It was completed by the time that the Apostles quit ministering among men, coupled with the period that would have succeeded that while there [were] still some legal administrators who had been authorized to do something. It was complete when the keys went, because once the keys went, then there was nobody on earth left to authorize somebody to

confer the priesthood on someone else. And it always takes two things—it takes priesthood and it takes keys. And so any additional supposed ordinations to the priesthood would not have been valid.<sup>3</sup>

The foregoing Church leaders recognized that when the apostles died, certain priesthood keys were lost and the Church in its fulness was no longer on the earth. Other Church leaders have reminded us that certain other priesthood powers (not unique to the apostles) continued for a short time thereafter.<sup>4</sup> The important point is that the current Church leaders have been unanimous in their assertion that the Church of Jesus Christ was lost from the earth shortly after the death of the apostles.

Perhaps the process of removing Christ's Church from the earth was somewhat akin to the Church's restoration process. We commonly say that the Church of Jesus Christ was restored on April 6, 1830, yet at that time there was no Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, no Quorum of the Seventy, no baptisms for the dead, no endowments, no sealings, and no keys for gathering Israel. While the restored Church of 1830 did have certain saving powers, manifested by its ability to baptize, confirm, and ordain to the priesthood, it did not yet have the keys to save the dead or exalt the living. It was in a sense, the "basic" Church, not the "full" Church. As the Church matured and grew in numbers and righteousness, the Lord empowered it with additional spiritual endowments, until eventually it had all the powers necessary to save and exalt both the living and the dead. Thus, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Quorum of the Seventy were organized in 1835, the "keys of the gathering of Israel" (D&C 110:11) and temple work were bestowed in 1836, the first baptisms for the dead were performed in 1842, the first endowments occurred in 1842, and marriage sealings took place thereafter.<sup>5</sup>

In truth, the Church in its fulness was restored in heaven-appointed installments—line upon line, precept upon precept. A major revelation concerning Church doctrine on the redemption of the dead (D&C 138) was not given until almost one hundred years after Joseph Smith's first vision, and another major revelation on the availability of the priesthood and temple ordinances was not revealed until almost 150 years after the Church was organized.<sup>6</sup>

The apostasy, likewise, took place in installments or stages, with each stage resulting from the increased wickedness of the people. An important first step was the loss of the apostles. Certain keys could be passed on only with their approval. Accordingly, within a generation after their death, certain keys were lost from the earth. At this point the Church in its fulness was no longer on the earth. It is likely, however, that certain other basic powers and keys remained in existence for a short time—such as the power to baptize and confirm.<sup>7</sup> As the wickedness increased and the heresies proliferated, the ongoing church diminished in truth and power, as though one were stripping the layers from an onion, until little remained. Eventually there were no authorized priesthood keys upon the earth. Fragments of the original teachings and remnants of the original ordinances remained, but the priesthood, the power that gave the Church its spiritual life and sustenance, was gone. Brigham Young places this loss of the priesthood in its proper perspective: "It is said the Priesthood was taken from the Church, but it is not so, the church went from the Priesthood and continued to travel in the wilderness, turned from the commandments of the Lord, and instituted other ordinances."<sup>8</sup>

In estimating the date of the apostasy, some are evidently referring to the time when the first keys were removed due to the death of the apostles, and others are referring to the time when the last remnants of priesthood authority disappeared (meaning when no keys or powers remained). We may not be able to identify the exact day the priesthood was removed, but there was a day when the priesthood was all gone. Perhaps it is somewhat akin to determining the date when a senior citizen's hair turned gray. We may not be

able to determine with exactness the precise date, but there is no argument that the event occurred. Likewise, the most important thing to know is not the exact day of removal, but that the authority and keys of the Church were ultimately lost from the earth, and thus a restoration was necessary.

The loss of Christ's Church, however, did not mean the apostasy was over. With the priesthood gone, there would yet be further perversions of the teachings and ordinances by the ongoing entity that succeeded the true Church. The apostasy continued until Christ's Church was restored, and revelation once again replaced reason as the Church's governing scepter.

#### Notes to Chapter 6: When Was Christ's Church Taken Away?

1. Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 415. The LDS Bible Dictionary states, "The scriptures contain the prophecies that the church which Jesus established would fall into apostasy. This occurred *soon* after the death of the Twelve" (LDS Bible Dictionary, 645; emphasis added).

2. Talmage, *The Essential Talmage*, 273. Scholar Kent P. Jackson opined, "Because of rebellion against the authority and doctrine of the apostles, the Early Church came to an end less than a century after its formation. . . . The Apostasy, then, refers to the circumstances that brought about the demise of the Early Church and to the period of time from its fall—about A.D. 100—until the time of the Restoration" (Jackson, *From Apostasy to Restoration*, 10).

3. Excerpt of an audiotape of a graduate institute class, *Doctrine and Philosophy*, taught by Elder Bruce R. McConkie in July and August, 1967. The lesson was entitled "Keys of the Kingdom."

4. Some, while in complete agreement with the historical occurrence of the apostasy, suggest that some priesthood may have continued into the third or fourth centuries. For example, President Ezra Taft Benson said, "By the second and third centuries, widespread changes had been made in the pure doctrines and ordinances given by the Savior. The Church that Jesus had established and sanctioned was no longer on this earth" (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 86). President J. Reuben Clark gave his best estimate as to the time when Christ's Church was taken: "The Church moved fairly well while the apostles still lived. Then followed a secondary period when, the apostles having died, there still lived those who had known the apostles, and who had received from them instructions. This kept the Church from wandering too far and too fast. Then the third church generation came, and not having the anchorage that was given by the apostles first, and next, by those who had known the apostles, they drifted and drifted rapidly, until by the middle of the third century, they had lost the priesthood" (Conference Report, April 1949, 184). President Joseph F. Smith also addressed this matter of timing: "The Melchizedek Priesthood . . . remained among men between three and four hundred years afterwards. When in consequence of transgressions, apostasy from the true order of the Priesthood and Church of Christ, the innovations of priestcraft and paganism, the true order of God was lost, the Holy Priesthood was taken from the earth, and the Church of Christ ceased to be among men, so far as we have any knowledge by revelation or from the history and records of the past" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 191). President Gordon B. Hinckley offered the following timeline: "Before many centuries had passed, the church was in a state of apostasy, and a long night of darkness followed, broken only by the imperfect light of the Renaissance" ("Cornerstones of Responsibility," Regional Representatives Seminar, April 5, 1991). The Church Educational System of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gave this further perspective on the loss of Christ's Church: "The change from truth to error in the Church did not take place in a day. The Apostasy, hastened by the death of the Apostles in the latter half of the first century, gradually deepened during the years that followed. By the fourth century there was hardly a trace of the

Church of Jesus Christ that was recognizable, and the 'long, dark night' was well underway" (*Church History in the Fulness of Times*, 4).

5. George Q. Cannon quoted Joseph Smith in this regard: "Hurry up the work, brethren, let us finish the temple; the Lord has a great endowment in store for you, and I am anxious that the brethren should have their endowments and receive the fulness of the Priesthood. . . . [then] the kingdom will be established, and I do not care what shall become of me" (Smith, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 306; emphasis added).

6. Official Declaration—2.

7. Based on the current method in which keys are regulated and distributed, it would seem that after the death of the apostles, no new apostles, seventies, stake presidents (if they existed at the time), or bishops could be selected, since each of these offices or callings requires the approval of the apostles. Accordingly, within one generation after the apostles' deaths, these callings and offices would die out. However, stake presidents (or their equivalent) could ordain high priests and elders; bishops could ordain priests, teachers and deacons, but none of these offices could perpetuate themselves, and thus within one generation after the death of stake presidents (or their equivalent) and bishops, these other offices would likewise be gone. Under this line of reasoning, the priesthood would disappear within two generations after the death of the apostles. We do not know, however, if the priesthood keys were governed in the primitive Church in the same manner as they are in the restored Church. In New Testament times, travel was slow, and there were no phones or instantaneous means of communication. If Paul knew he would not get back to an outlying congregation for ten years, or perhaps ever, then maybe he was able to make allowance for that by delegating the power to perpetuate keys on a limited basis, just as apostles can delegate to seventies the power to dispense keys on a limited basis. Or perhaps John the Revelator helped perpetuate the priesthood for a limited time. These are issues to which we simply do not currently have the full answers. What we do know is that there was a point, not too long after the death of the apostles, when the priesthood was lost from the earth.

8. *Journal of Discourses*, 12:69.

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## Differing Beliefs about the Apostasy

In spite of all the scriptures and early historical writings on the subject, many people do not believe in an apostasy or loss of Christ's Church from the earth. One's belief concerning the ongoing status of the primitive Church will generally fall within one of the following four categories:

*First*, some contend that the primitive Church as established by the Savior continued in its fulness. True, there were multiple heresies, persecutions, and even some revolt from within, but these, they argue, were minor and of passing duration; the "tree of life" (the Church) with its perfection of teachings, ordinances, and gifts never withered in the sun, never succumbed to the storms at hand. The Church remained firm and

steadfast and unchanged throughout the ages.

*Second*, others admit that the heresies and persecutions, as recorded in history, were substantial and did have a destructive effect upon the Church, but they nonetheless believe the Church survived. They acknowledge that many of the branches of the tree were gone, but the "main trunk" remained intact. While some heresies crept into the Church, and some doctrines and ordinances were changed or lost, a sufficient core of believers remained, with the "essential" truths and ordinances, that the Lord could sanction the ongoing entity and bless it as his Church.

*Third*, some believe that the Church continued but acknowledge that over time the doctrines and ordinances became perverted and the clergy lost their vision as men of God, hence the need for a reformation. Initially the Reformers merely wanted to make a course correction and bring the church back in line with the original teachings of the primitive Church. When it became evident, however, that the ongoing church was unwilling to change, the Reformers believed they were empowered to make the necessary course correction by starting their own churches.

*Fourth*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints asserts that the heresies were so profound, the wickedness so widespread, and the doctrines and ordinances so perverted that the Lord could no longer sanction the ongoing church, and thus he removed his divine approval and power shortly after the death of the apostles. At that point the Church of Jesus Christ disappeared from the earth. Christ could still give light to individual men and women who sought him, but his Church, which reflected his perfect nature and offered all the teachings and ordinances necessary for salvation, no longer remained. In other words, the Savior was not going to be the chief cornerstone of a church whose priesthood had succumbed to the ways of the world, whose teachings had been altered, and whose ordinances had been changed.

There were still ongoing organizations that did some good and taught some truths, but the saving power associated with the ordinances, the penetrating power that flows from pure and undiluted doctrines, and the supernal power that is associated with the priesthood of God had all disappeared. These would remain absent from the earth until Christ's Church was restored.

The Lord spoke of these tragic conditions: "And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh" (D&C 84:21). It was not just a matter of reforming the Church—there was nothing to reform because the Church was gone. One cannot graft a good branch into a dead tree and expect it to bear fruit. A new tree in the vineyard needed to be planted—a total restoration of the Church was required.

The Lord gave the test for truth: "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. . . . *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them*" (Matthew 7:17, 20).<sup>1</sup> The following chapters present the fruits of the ongoing organization that remained. I leave it to the reader to determine if those fruits are evidences of the continuation of Christ's Church or evidences of its cessation.

Note to Chapter 7: Differing Beliefs about the Apostasy

1. Adolf von Harnack essentially paraphrased the same test for truth but in the jargon of the historian: "It is the *work done* that forms the decisive test. With any other test we are involved in judgments of the vaguest kind, now optimistic, now pessimistic, and mere historical twaddle" (*What Is Christianity?* 194).

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## Evidences of the Apostasy

There is an old saying that no one has ever committed a perfect crime—there are always clues detectable by the observant and trained mind—and so it is with the apostasy. Satan's fingerprints are everywhere to be found. This does not mean, however, that the apostasy resulted in a complete absence of God-fearing men and women on the earth. Brigham Young explained:

There have been people upon the earth all the time who sought diligently with all their hearts to know the ways of the Lord. Those individuals have produced good, inasmuch as they had the ability. And to believe that there has been no virtue, no truth, no good upon the earth for centuries, until the Lord revealed the Priesthood through Joseph the Prophet, I should say is wrong. There has been more or less virtue and righteousness upon the earth at all times, from the days of Adam until now.<sup>1</sup>

While there existed isolated goodness on the earth, there was not an organized, priesthood-centered church. Some of the evidences of this apostasy, as discussed in succeeding chapters, are as follows:

*First*, the apostles were killed and revelation ceased, thus undermining the foundation of Christ's Church.

*Second*, the scriptures are a historical witness that the apostasy was in progress and a prophetic witness that it would be consummated before Christ's second coming.

*Third*, the Bible ended. If the Church had continued, revelation would have continued, and the Bible would have been an ongoing book.

*Fourth*, the gifts of the Spirit were lost.

*Fifth*, the dark ages became a historical fact, symbolizing that the light of Christ's gospel had been extinguished. If the Church had been on the earth and the predominant force in western civilization, those years would have been a period of light ages, not dark ages.

*Sixth*, many teachings became perverted, some were lost, and new ones were invented.

*Seventh*, many gospel ordinances were perverted, some were lost, and new ones were invented.

*Eighth*, the simple mode of prayer was changed, which diluted man's efforts to communicate with God.

*Ninth*, the scriptures were removed from the hands of the lay membership and retained solely in the hands of clergy, often in a language the common man could not understand.

*Tenth*, the wickedness sanctioned by the ongoing church was so prolonged and so egregious that no spiritually minded person could believe that Christ's Church, if on the earth, would condone such behavior.

*Eleventh*, there was a discernible decline in the moral standards and church discipline of the ongoing church.

*Twelfth*, the church no longer bore Christ's name.

*Thirteenth*, the priesthood was lost, and thus no one on the earth was authorized to perform the saving ordinances.

The foregoing evidences—spiritual, intellectual, and historical in nature—while independent in their own right, also complement and supplement each other. When viewed as a whole and not as solitary threads, they weave a consistent and unmistakable pattern showing that Christ's Church was ultimately lost from the earth.

Note to Chapter 8: Evidences of the Apostasy

1. *Journal of Discourses*, 6:170.

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# First Evidence: Loss of the Apostles and Revelation

## The Apostles Are the Foundation of the Church

Did the Church continue after the death of the apostles, or did the death of the apostles dictate the demise of the Church? Paul explained that the Church was "built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).<sup>1</sup> He then went on to say that we need apostles and certain other officers "for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: *till we all come in the unity of the faith*" (Ephesians 4:12–13). In other words, the apostles kept the doctrine pure and the Saints unified. They were the spiritual filters through whom the doctrines flowed. Without them the Church was like a ship without a rudder, "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14).

It is no wonder Satan was so intense in his attack against the apostles—for if the apostles could be extinguished, the Church would lose its foundation. The Savior himself prophesied, "The world hateth you [meaning the apostles]. . . . If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:19–20). Then he warned them: "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). That is why Paul observed that "the apostles . . . were appointed to death" (1 Corinthians 4:9). In fulfillment of those prophecies the apostles were killed as they went out to preach the gospel in foreign lands. At first, successor apostles were chosen such as Matthias (Acts 1:22–26), James (Acts 12:7; Galatians 1:19),<sup>2</sup> Barnabas (Acts 14:14), and Paul (Acts 14:14; Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 1 Corinthians 9:1).<sup>3</sup> As to these latter three, LDS scholar Kent Jackson wrote:

These three were called in the church history—before A.D. 50. But neither scripture nor other historical evidence gives us any indication of the calling of others. It thus seems reasonable to suggest that near the



middle of the first century, the calling of the apostles came to an end and the apostleship died out. As far as we know, by the 90s only John remained. When he left his public ministry around A.D. 100, apostleship ceased, and the keys of the kingdom were taken.<sup>4</sup>

But why were not replacement apostles continually chosen so the Quorum of Twelve Apostles would remain indefinitely?

In the meridian of time communication and travel were slow. The apostles were spread throughout the world preaching the gospel as the Savior had enjoined them to do (Matthew 28:19–20), even "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Eventually, the surviving apostles could not return to Church headquarters in a timely fashion to choose successors as they had previously done at Judas' death (Acts 1:23–26), and as a result, the Quorum of the Twelve was eventually phased out. While we may not know with historical certainty how each apostle met his death, there seems to be a consensus that their deaths were violent. In John Fox's<sup>5</sup> landmark book entitled *Fox's Book of Martyrs* the author lists their deaths as follows:

- Peter,<sup>6</sup> Philip, Andrew, Jude, Bartholomew, and Simon were crucified;
- James the Great was beheaded;
- Matthew was slain by a spear and a battle-axe;
- James the Less was beaten and stoned by the Jews;
- Matthias was stoned and then beheaded;
- Thomas was thrust through with a spear.
- As for John the Beloved, Fox observes, interestingly, "He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death."<sup>7</sup>

While the exact dates of death are not known in many cases, it is believed that with the exception of John, all met their deaths well before the end of the first century.

Why did the Lord allow the death of his apostles if they were the foundation of his Church and necessary to bring the people to a unity of the faith? Because the Lord has never forced his prophets upon the people. After years of prophetic succession, the last four hundred years of the Old Testament were devoid of any reported prophetic presence. The King James Version of the Old Testament concludes with this cryptic phrase: "The End of the Prophets." There were still some righteous men on earth, and the lesser priesthood of Aaron still remained, but a prophetic presence was noticeably absent from the earth. As a consequence, there was no revelation from heaven, and the Old Testament people were deprived of new scriptural guidance for the last four hundred years before the Savior's birth.

Such absence was a shadow of things to come. Micah described the tragic plight of a people without prophets: "Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; *and the sun shall go down over the prophets*, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; *for there is no answer of God*" (Micah 3:6–7).<sup>8</sup> Such a condition, however, was not a consequence of God's desire, but of man's unrighteousness.

There seems to be no dispute that the "apostolic age" came to an end. The real question is whether or not an apostolic equivalent or succession (through bishops) continued.

Was There an Apostolic Succession?

Some contend that Peter passed his authority to a successor, called a bishop, and that that bishop did likewise, and so on. The first such successor is claimed to be Linus, but as noted by the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, "Nothing is known of his life or career."<sup>9</sup> These successors are alleged to constitute the papal line of authority. In essence, the pope (meaning "papa" or "father") is deemed to be the supreme bishop. The official Vatican position is as follows: "The Catholic Church recognizes in the apostolic succession . . . an unbroken line of episcopal ordination from Christ through the apostles down through the centuries to the bishops of today."<sup>10</sup>

Francis A. Sullivan, a long-time professor of theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, wrote a book entitled *From Apostles to Bishops* and acknowledged that the argument asserting a direct line of succession is historically defective. He noted: "One conclusion seems obvious: Neither the New Testament nor early Christian history offers support for a notion of apostolic succession as 'an unbroken line of episcopal ordination from Christ through the apostles down through the centuries to the bishops of today.'"<sup>11</sup> With historic candor, this learned scholar admitted that there was no historical link between Peter and his supposed papal successors. There was much extrapolation and surmising and proposing, but in the final analysis there was no verifiable historical connection.

Contrary to the assertion of papal succession, the Church, after the death of the apostles, operated as local congregations, and not under a central command. Firmilian (A.D. 230–268), the bishop of Caesarea, criticized Stephen, the bishop of Rome, because he claimed succession from Peter: "I am justly indignant at this so open and manifest folly of Stephen, . . . who so boasts of the place of his episcopate, and contends that he holds the succession from Peter." Firmilian wrote of Stephen's disagreement "with so many bishops throughout the whole world" and then made it abundantly clear that Stephen did not have power over other bishops: "For while you think that all may be excommunicated by you, you have excommunicated yourself alone from all."<sup>12</sup>

On one occasion this same Stephen attempted to assert his general command over the African Council of Bishops on the issue of whether or not a heretic needed to be rebaptized. In A.D. 258, Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, called a council of eighty-seven bishops to discuss a response to what Cyprian called "the bitter obstinacy of our brother Stephen."<sup>13</sup> As part of their response, these bishops expounded that there was no successor to Peter, there was no pope, and there was no supreme bishop. They wrote: "For neither does any of us set himself up as a bishop of bishops, nor by tyrannical terror does any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience; *since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another.*"<sup>14</sup> In other words, as early as A.D. 258, the church was directed by local bishops, nothing more.

On yet another occasion when Cyprian spoke concerning the succession to Peter, he acknowledged that the church had become a church of local sovereignties under individual bishops: "Thence, through the changes of times and successions, the ordering of bishops and the plan of the Church flow onwards; so that the Church is founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers. Since this, then, is founded on the divine law, *I marvel that some, with daring temerity, have chosen to write to me as if they wrote in the name of the Church.*"<sup>15</sup> Suffice it to say, he was shocked to think that anyone would claim to be a pope or have general authority over the church. It was simply not the manner in which the ongoing church operated at the time of Cyprian (A.D. 200–258), more than two centuries after the ascension of Christ. It was a clear historical admission by him that there was no pope and thus no papal line of authority.

At the time of the Nicene Council (A.D. 325), Sylvester was the bishop of Rome. If he were the successor to Peter, one must wonder why he did not convene the council, preside at it, have substantial influence in the decision-making process, and sign the edict. Quite to the contrary, he was not consulted in the convening of the conference; it was called by Constantine. While Sylvester was unable to attend due to his age, he sent his representatives, but they had no presiding role and little if any known input in the final decision. In addition, Sylvester was never asked to ratify the decision, nor to issue it under his name. If the bishop of Rome had been the presiding officer of the church, does it seem likely that the most important council in church history and the most significant doctrinal statement ever issued by the church would be devoid of his presence, his influence, and his ratification?

Local bishops with equal, but local, authority continued until about A.D. 858. From time to time certain bishops of Rome asserted their political and spiritual power as the supreme leader of the church. Why the bishop of Rome? Why not the bishop of Jerusalem or Antioch or Alexandria? For many years Rome had been the political capital of the world. It was recognized as the world center of authority. There seemed to be no sharp dividing line between political and religious authority, particularly after the time of Constantine. In addition, Rome was a major metropolitan city and one of the dominant centers of church strength, which became more evident after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. These factors, coupled with the historical probability that Peter died in Rome and the fact that certain local congregations wrote to Rome for advice, led some aspiring bishops to claim that Peter had left the church's religious legacy to the bishop of Rome.

The power shift from local congregations to the bishop of Rome (or the pope) as the supreme authority evolved over time. At first one or more bishops of Rome, such as Clement (A.D. 30–100), were helpful to smaller struggling congregations, such as when Clement gave brotherly counsel and advice to the Saints of Corinth.<sup>16</sup> Later, others started to flex their ecclesiastical muscle on a global basis, such as Anacletus, a bishop of Rome who died as a martyr in about A.D. 90. He tried to mandate the celebration date of Easter for all Christians, but finally reached a peaceful compromise with Polycarp (A.D. 69–156). Then there were some, such as Stephen, a bishop of Rome in the mid-third century, who were overtly aggressive in their grab for power and in their attempt to dictate doctrinal matters on a churchwide basis, but who were rebuffed for a time by such as the African Council of Bishops. Worse yet, there were those who were conniving and who stooped to fraud to gain their dominance. A. Cleveland Coxe summarized how the bishop of Rome finally achieved supremacy:

"After the Council of Nice they [the bishops] were recognized as patriarchs, though equals among brethren, and nothing more. The ambition of Boniface III led him to name himself 'universal bishop.' This was at first a mere name 'of intolerable pride,' as his predecessor Gregory had called it, but Nicholas I (A.D. 858) tried to make it real, and, by means of the false decretals, created himself the first 'Pope' in the modern sense, imposing his despotism on the West."<sup>17</sup>

These decretals (or doctrinal decrees issued by the pope) came about because the German archbishops and kings paid only lip service to the would-be popes of Rome. In an effort to gain their support and loyalty, forged documents alleging Rome's preeminence were created. Somewhere in the A.D. 840s, a French cleric forged a series of church decrees giving ultimate power to the bishops of Rome. Will Durant explained as follows:

It was an ingenious compilation. Along with a mass of authentic decrees by councils or popes, it included

decrees and letters that it attributed to pontiffs from Clement I (91–100) to Melchades (311–14). These early documents were designed to show that by the oldest traditions and practice of the Church no bishop might be deposed, no Church council might be convened, and no major issue might be decided, without the consent of the pope. Even the early pontiffs by these evidences had claimed absolute and universal authority as vicars of Christ on earth. Pope Sylvester I (314–15) was represented as having received, in the "Donation of Constantine," full secular as well as religious authority over all western Europe. . . . The forgery would have been evident to any good scholar, but scholarship was at low ebb in the ninth and tenth centuries. The fact that most of the claims ascribed by the Decretals to the early bishops of Rome had been made by one or another of the later pontiffs disarmed criticism; and for eight centuries the popes assumed the authenticity of these documents, and used them to prop their policies.

In a footnote, Durant added: "Lorenzo Vallo, in 1440, so definitely exposed the frauds in the 'False Decretals' that all parties now agree that the disputed documents are forgeries."<sup>18</sup>

Recognizing the foregoing historical problem of papal succession from the apostles, and further recognizing there was no scriptural witness of apostolic succession through popes, Professor Sullivan, a Roman Catholic theologian, suggested an alternative approach to succession for the ongoing church, as follows:

*First*, he proposed that the apostles shared their "mandate" (or their power and authority) with both their missionary coworkers and with the leaders in the local churches, and that when the apostles died both of these groups carried on their ministry. Accordingly, he claimed there were initially two lines of apostolic succession (the missionary and the pastoral), which he suggests merged into one during the second century. While he acknowledged this was a new development after the New Testament times, he explained: "Most Catholic scholars . . . maintain that this development was so evidently guided by the Holy Spirit that it must be recognized as corresponding to God's plan for the structure of the church."<sup>19</sup>

*Second*, he contended that the new "episcopate" (the priesthood organization of bishops) was necessary to fight off the heresies and provide unity in the church. It is interesting to note that even those who claim there existed a form of apostolic succession acknowledge the major heresies and disunity that confronted the ongoing church.

*Third*, he submitted that "the Christian faithful recognized the bishops as the successors to the apostles in teaching authority."<sup>20</sup>

In summary, Professor Sullivan does not believe that Peter passed his authority to one successor replacement, but rather that all the apostles passed on their authority to missionary coworkers and local pastors or bishops. Eventually, he asserted, the bishops gained control of local congregations as the Spirit guided the development of the church and, finally, one bishop emerged as the supreme bishop, to be known thereafter as the pope. After asserting such a historical proposition, tempered by what he called "theological reflection," he candidly admitted: "We simply do not have documentary evidence on which to base a historically certain account of how it took place."<sup>21</sup>

Those who hope to subscribe to the foregoing theory of succession face many insurmountable obstacles. One obstacle is the lack of historical evidence, to which Professor Sullivan has admitted above. In this regard, he further wrote:

No doubt proving that bishops were the successors of the apostles by divine institution would be easier if the

New Testament clearly stated that before they died the apostles had appointed a single bishop to lead each of the churches they had founded. Likewise, it would have been very helpful had Clement, in writing to Corinthians, said that the apostles had put one bishop in charge of each church and had arranged for a regular succession in that office. We would also be grateful to Ignatius of Antioch if he had spoken of himself not only as bishop, but as a successor to the apostles, and had explained how he understood that succession. *Unfortunately, the documents available to us do not provide such help.*<sup>22</sup>

A second obstacle is that the ongoing church believed revelation ceased with the Bible; yet the foregoing theory requires the Holy Spirit to guide the development of the church in the post–New Testament era.<sup>23</sup> Such divine guidance is, in truth, another name for revelation.

There is yet a third obstacle. If the bishops assumed the power or "mandate" of the apostles, one would assume they would "take over" the role of the apostles. But the bishops were local ministers over local churches, while the apostles were general ministers over the general church. The bishops never became general ministers. Professor Sullivan so acknowledged: "A 'bishop' is a residential pastor who presides in a stable manner over the church in a city and its environs. The apostles were missionaries and founders of churches; there is no evidence, nor is it at all likely, that any one of them ever took up permanent residence in a particular church as its bishop."<sup>24</sup> In addition, the bishops were never considered as equal to the apostles in authority and power. Ignatius (A.D. 35–107), the bishop of Antioch who eventually gave his life as a martyr, recognized this distinction while writing to the Trallians: "Seeing that I love you I thus spare you, though I might write more sharply; . . . but I did not think myself competent for this, that . . . I should order you as though I were an apostle."<sup>25</sup> Ignatius clearly understood that to be a bishop was not equivalent to being an apostle.

Was the Quorum of Twelve Apostles Essential to the Perpetuation of Christ's Church?

On one occasion a client of mine broached the subject of religion with me and in so doing mentioned the name of his church. I thought his church was one of the few that believed in apostolic ministers today, and so I asked, "Don't you believe in an apostolic ministry?"

"No," he replied, "we are a fundamentalist group. We only believe what is in the Bible. Each congregation is independent. It has elders, teachers, priests—only those offices mentioned in the Bible."

Somewhat surprised, I responded, "Aren't apostles mentioned in the Bible?"

"Yes," he said, "but they were only meant to be a single episode in history."

The scriptures, however, do not agree with such a conclusion. Following the death of Judas and the ascension of Christ, the first official act of the Church was to select a replacement apostle for Judas: "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, *must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.*" The word "must" left no room for leeway. Accordingly, the eleven remaining apostles nominated two men to fill the vacancy. They prayed to know "whether of these two thou [God] hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell." The scriptures then record that Matthias was chosen "and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:22–26). The pattern had been set—the Quorum of Twelve Apostles was to continue as the foundation of Christ's Church.<sup>26</sup>

In spite of this, most Christians believe that there was no ongoing need for a Quorum of Twelve Apostles. They assert that the reason for the cessation of apostles was not due to the loss of Christ's Church, but because the apostles were no longer needed. In essence, these advocates believe the apostles founded the Church, completed their mission, died, and that was the end of the story. No replacements were necessary. In response, one might ask, "Once a house is completed and the roof finished can one then remove the foundation without devastating consequences, by merely reasoning that the foundation served its purpose?"<sup>27</sup> If the apostles, referred to by Paul as the foundation of the Church, were no longer needed, one must ask, "Why were they essential to the establishment of the Church, but not necessary for its perpetuation?" The following are possible answers which some might assert:

Perhaps God desired that this first apostolic quorum be a one-time event in the history of the Church. That seems unlikely, however, since a successor apostle was chosen to replace Judas pursuant to the divine directive: "*Must* one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22). If succession in the apostleship were not meant to continue, why choose a replacement for Judas after the Savior's ascension into heaven? In addition, why would Paul and Barnabas and James thereafter be selected as apostles? In fact, there is no revelation that states that continuity in the apostleship was to cease, but there does exist an established precedent that it was to continue. Why, in light of such historical events, would one suggest the Quorum of Twelve Apostles was not meant to be an ongoing entity?

Others may suggest that there was no ongoing need for apostles because God felt the early Saints no longer required the continuing benefit of apostolic wisdom or needed their spiritual maturity. In essence, these people believe the Saints had progressed beyond those initial spiritual thresholds to which the apostles were designed to lift them. But history suggests the opposite. The early Saints were bombarded with temptations, saddled with persecutions and inundated with heresies. They needed every ounce of apostolic wisdom and spirituality they could garner in order to guide them and sustain them in those perilous times.

Still others may opine there was no apostolic succession because God thought the early Saints were in perfect harmony with the divine doctrines and, therefore, no longer needed the apostles, who had been called to bring the Saints to a "unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13). As set forth earlier, however, there were myriads of heresies and numerous splinter groups, both during the lives of the apostles and thereafter. The apostles were desperately needed to unite the people and harmonize the doctrines.

Suppose one were to tell a story at one end of a row of people and let it work its way to the other end. As sure as can be, the story will inevitably change in the process. While the apostles were alive, they would correct the "story," or doctrine, by way of a conversation or a sermon or an epistle as soon as it started to depart from the truth, so that when the doctrine reached the "end of the row" it was pure and undefiled. This is illustrated by the letter of Paul to the Corinthians. He had taught them the correct doctrine of the resurrection, but later learned that some had departed from it—adopting the position of the Sadducees that there was no resurrection. So he wrote them a pointed letter confirming the reality of the resurrection and said, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Corinthians 15:12). As soon as the doctrine started to vary from the truth, the apostles brought it back on course. With the death of the apostles there was no self-correcting mechanism left as the doctrine passed "down the row"; there was no check and balance system. Instead, the doctrine spread unchecked on many fronts, and heresies flourished.<sup>28</sup>

Without the apostles there was no hope of keeping the doctrine pure. To suppose that local bishops, who

acted with great independence of each other, could maintain a unity of doctrine would be wishful thinking at best—particularly in a climate where congregations were days and weeks removed from each other with then existing methods of transportation and communication. To their credit, many of the congregations tried to be unified, but it was an impossible task. How do multitudes of congregations, perhaps hundreds of them, separated by hundreds or thousands of miles, with no instantaneous means of communication and no central leadership, keep the doctrine unified? The simple answer is, they cannot. Some made heroic efforts; but without the apostles, the system was destined for failure. With the death of the apostles, the general leadership of the Church was gone. There was no longer any central command—only local congregations with local leaders and local opinions.

Origen (A.D. 185–255) often gave his opinion on a doctrinal issue and then concluded by saying something such as: "If there be any one, indeed, who can discover something better, . . . let his opinion be received in preference to mine."<sup>29</sup> Cyprian would give local counsel to his parishioners, but add the caveat that his decision (even on such far-reaching doctrinal matters as baptismal sprinkling versus immersion) was not meant to bind other leaders.<sup>30</sup> It was simply his opinion for his congregations. Unfortunately there were no longer any apostles who could say without equivocation on behalf of the Church, "Thus saith the Lord."

Some historians have remarked that these local units achieved remarkable unity. In fact, on certain basic issues they did maintain unity for some years, namely, that Jesus is the Savior of the world; that he was resurrected from the dead; that the resurrection is a restoration of our physical and spiritual bodies; that baptism is essential to salvation; that the gospel was preached by the Savior to the dead; that abortion is akin to murder; and that works are an essential component of salvation.<sup>31</sup>

Many of these same historians contend that the disunification process did not really occur until after Constantine, but in truth the dilution of the doctrine was well under way by then. The early Christian writers wrote voluminously trying to explain their varied opinions on the nature of Jesus, the relationship between the Father and the Son, and whether there was one God or multiple gods. The Nicene Creed (adopted A.D. 325) merely codified the ambiguity that already existed. The doctrine of a premortal life was fast vanishing. The necessity of baptism by immersion was giving way to the more convenient method of sprinkling. The doctrine of original sin was invented, and as a consequence infant baptism began to creep into the church. Simple ordinances, such as baptism and the sacrament, were being converted to formalistic rituals. The doctrine of baptism for the dead was mystifying to the early Christian leaders, at least by the time of Tertullian (A.D. 140–230).<sup>32</sup>

To claim the apostles were not necessary because the local churches were unified would be a gross distortion of historical reality. When Constantine came on the scene, he brought about a quasi-unity of the faith, but unfortunately by his time much of the unified doctrine was already erroneous. In addition, the doctrine was now being dictated by an unbaptized political leader, not a prophet of God.

Some have suggested another reason the apostles might not have been necessary on an ongoing basis. Perhaps God no longer needed spokesmen for himself on earth because all the truth had been revealed, all the problems solved, all the guidelines for Church procedures issued.<sup>33</sup> But the need for divine direction through living apostles has always been essential to the spiritual well-being of man. For the entire four thousand years of Bible history, God revealed his words through prophets—Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Peter, and a host of others. That was his chosen method of communication to man, as announced by Amos: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the

prophets" (Amos 3:7). Christ's Church is a living church, not a dead church, and revelation is the lifeblood that gives the Church its vibrancy, its power, and its life. Take it away, and only a dead form remains.

### The Need for Continuous Revelation through Apostles

In spite of four thousand years of recorded revelation, it is surprising, even startling, that most churches believe revelation ceased with the Bible—that all God's word which was necessary had been dispensed to man in the meridian of time and that no new revelation was necessary. In essence, these people have consigned themselves to a mute God. Rulon Howells, in his book on comparative Christian religions, *His Many Mansions*, summarized the Catholic belief as follows: "Revelation ceased with the time of the apostles. There has been no revelation of doctrine (like scripture) since then." As to the Lutherans, he wrote that they "believe in the ancient revelations recorded in the Bible, but do not believe in any modern, or future revelation." And as to the Baptists, he noted that they "believe in ancient revelation but all of the revelation necessary has already been given, therefore there is no need for modern or future prophecy."<sup>34</sup>

If Christ is the head of his Church, why would he not give ongoing direction and revelation to his chosen servants? No doubt some revelation would come in the form of more enlightened doctrine as the Saints matured in righteousness, while other revelations would come in the form of better procedures or methods to build the kingdom as circumstances changed. Can anyone imagine a father saying to his children: "As of today I have taught you all that is necessary for life—there will be no further counsel, no further direction from me regardless of your need—my lips are sealed." Or the president of a company saying to newly trained employees: "Now you have received all the training and instruction you will ever receive from me. No matter what the problem, what the change in company or world conditions, no matter how long you work here, you are on your own." Fortunately, the New Testament reveals the true pattern of God's leadership for his Church—continuous revelation for continuous needs.

While the Savior was upon the earth he instructed his apostles not to teach the gospel to the Gentiles: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5–6). In strict obedience to that command the disciples went about "preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only" (Acts 11:19). But this was not always to be the case. The heavens would one day reveal a different course of action.

Cornelius was a worthy Gentile. He prayed often; he generously gave alms to the poor. Then one day an angel came to him and told him to send men to Peter and "he [Peter] shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10:6). The next day, about noon, Peter was hungry and "fell into a trance." The heavens were opened unto him and he saw "a great sheet knit at the four corners" containing all manner of "beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." There came a voice to him, "Peter; kill, and eat." He was stunned. He had been taught that these things were unclean, and so he replied, "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." The angel responded: "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." The heavenly instruction was given three times (Acts 10:10–16). Shortly thereafter Peter understood the significance of the vision. It meant that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, previously considered "unclean" in the eyes of the Jews (Acts 10:28). It was a radical departure from the instruction that he and the other apostles had previously been given; it was nothing short of a direct revelation from heaven.

Some have innocently but incorrectly contended that there was no revelation after Christ's ascension.<sup>35</sup> Such an assertion, however, is in total opposition to the revelation given to the apostles concerning the need for a Gentile ministry. Others have contended there was no revelation after the time of the apostles (but for this



purpose they include Paul, which is one more evidence that the apostleship was not intended to end with the death of the original Twelve). These people argue that the apostles taught the entire doctrine of the kingdom and nothing more was necessary.

The debate over continuous revelation was a focal point of the second century. Edwin Hatch, an Oxford historian on early Christianity, wrote:

The battle of the second century had been a battle between those who asserted that there was a single and final tradition of truth, and those who claimed that the Holy Spirit spoke to them as truly as He had spoken to men in the days of the apostles. The victorious opinion had been that the revelation was final, and that what was contained in the records of the apostles was the sufficient sum of Christian teaching: hence the stress laid upon apostolic doctrine.<sup>36</sup>

In essence, man had locked the doors on revelation from heaven.

Origen, an on-site witness of the early Church and one of the brightest men of his age, indirectly but powerfully argued for the necessity of current revelation. He shared some of the doctrines of the church that were unclear in his day (c. A.D. 225). He said that the doctrine concerning the origin of the soul "is not distinguished with sufficient clearness in the teaching of the church." The doctrine concerning the devil and his angels and how they exist, he said, "has not [been] explained with sufficient clearness." With regard to the doctrine of the premortal existence and the doctrine of "what will exist after it [the world]," he observed, "[it] has not become certainly known to the many, for there is no clear statement regarding it in the teaching of the church." He further indicated that it was not clear whether God had a corporeal body or not, or whether the Holy Ghost was a son of God or not. He longed for what he called "one body of doctrine," but recognized there were some gaping holes.<sup>37</sup>

If Origen was right in his assessment, then either the apostles never knew or never taught the missing doctrine, both of which are unlikely possibilities, or alternatively, they taught it but it became lost with time. In any case, the apostles were necessary to either provide or restore the doctrine; otherwise, the missing pieces would remain absent from the body of Christian theology until ultimately they would be replaced by the philosophies of men. If there were no apostles or prophets on the earth, to whom would revelations be given that would fill in the missing doctrinal pieces? Would it be to a local bishop, who had no authority to speak for the church at large?

The theophany of Cornelius and resultant revelation on missionary work to the Gentiles opened the door for further revelation. The Lord works that way: "precept upon precept; line upon line" (Isaiah 28:10). With the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles, there was "much disputing" concerning the need for circumcision among these new believers. Finally, the apostles, through revelation from heaven, reached "one accord" and brought unity to the Church on this doctrinal matter (Acts 15:7, 25). The author of *The Shepherd of Hermas* (A.D. 90–150) noted that the apostles and other Church leaders "always agreed with one another, they both had peace among themselves and listened one to another."<sup>38</sup>

The revelations on preaching the gospel to the Gentiles and dispensing with circumcision did not end the need for additional revelation. Other serious questions arose after the death of the apostles: Could the infirm be sprinkled in lieu of baptism by immersion? Did a repentant heretic need to be rebaptized into the Church or was his first baptism sufficient? If someone outside the Church were baptized in the name of Christ, did he need to be rebaptized in the true Church? Was the gospel preached to all the dead or just the righteous

prophets who died before Christ? How was the Son begotten of the Father? These and many other issues arose, but instead of being decided by revelation given to the apostles, they were either decided by the man-made reasoning of local bishops and scholars or, alternatively, the doctrinal answer was left unresolved. No wonder Edwin Hatch observed: "Prophesying [including revelation] died when the Catholic Church was formed. In place of prophesying came preaching."<sup>39</sup>

John Sanders, a contemporary Christian writer, was addressing the following theological issue: "What is the fate of those who die never hearing the gospel of Christ?" In attempting to answer that question, he made this telling admission: "*Christians have never reached consensus on this important but difficult subject. From the early church fathers to the present day, Christians have not come to one mind on the fate of those who die never hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ.*"<sup>40</sup> Such an admission on this critical theological doctrine, which affects the salvation of billions of people, only highlights the need for apostles and further revelation in order to bring us to a unity of the faith on this all-important matter.

Some years ago I met with a Harvard lawyer who had terminated his employment to become a minister in a Christian faith. He was coordinating a lunch program with various Christian churches in our community to help the homeless. He was performing a wonderful service. There was a need, however, of additional assistance, and so our local church offered to help. To my surprise, he refused the offer. I asked him why. He replied: "Because you are not really Christians."

Shocked, I responded: "What do you mean?"

Somewhat hesitant, he replied, "Because you still believe in revelation today. Revelation for the church ended with the Bible."

I thought, how tragic if that were true. I asked him if he believed the Bible clearly answered all doctrinal questions that were necessary for our salvation, and gave to us all direction necessary for our ultimate happiness. He replied in the affirmative. I then asked him if his church was opposed to abortion.

"Absolutely," he replied.

I asked him further, "Where in the Bible does it say abortion is a sin?"

He thought for a moment, and responded: "Well, it says we shouldn't kill."

I replied, "Doesn't it also say we should have agency to make choices? Wouldn't it be helpful if we had additional revelation today, so that there was no confusion on this matter—so that every Christian of every faith knew unequivocally that abortion was a sin?" There was little response.

I then asked him about baptism. "If the Bible clearly contained all revelation necessary for our salvation, why are the various Christian churches that participate in the lunch program you sponsor in disagreement on this vital issue? Some believe baptism to be essential, others optional. Some believe baptism by immersion is required; others believe sprinkling or pouring is satisfactory. Are these not substantial disagreements on the core issue of salvation? Would not revelation be helpful to clear this up?" Again, there was little response.

Obviously the list of questions might have continued: Is it appropriate for women to hold priesthood offices? Why were the Corinthians baptizing for the dead? Are we born tainted with the sin of Adam, or was it automatically removed by the atonement of Jesus Christ? If infants are not baptized before they die, are they

damned? Must one who holds the priesthood be called of God by the laying on of hands, or is sincerity and self-appointment sufficient? Does Christ presently have a body of flesh and bones in heaven, or is his resurrected body merely a temporary manifestation of these material elements? What is the role of the temple, which the Savior referred to as "my Father's house" (John 2:16)?

Does the Lord remain mute on these critical issues? If not, how does the Church obtain the answers—through the reason of man or by revelation from God? Revelation was absolutely essential for the unity and edification of the Church, and the apostles were the instruments through whom it was transmitted.

Origen criticized the Jews because they accepted prophets and revelation of past ages but could not accept Jesus Christ, the source of all revelation and prophecy. He rightfully observed that the Jews could not disregard Christ without disregarding the prophets who preached his word: "But disbelieving Him [Jesus Christ] they also disbelieve them [all the past prophets], *and cut off and confine in prison the prophetic word, and hold it dead.*"<sup>41</sup> In other words, they could not have the full truth because they disavowed the current word of God and treated revelation as though it were confined and dead (meaning consigned to past ages). The Jews suffered from the same malady as certain modern churches, who believe that revelation is confined to the ages of the past. In essence, those who treat revelation as a thing of the past have capped the well that quenches their spiritual thirst.

Papias, who wrote in the early second century, yearned to hear the words of the living prophets: "For I imagined that what was to be got from books [the scriptures] was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice."<sup>42</sup> The living prophets always take precedence over the dead ones. Christ's Church is a living, dynamic church that needs revelation to sustain it. The Book of Mormon people learned that one of the consequences of apostasy was a disbelief in revelation: "And because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle; and they began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation" (Helaman 4:23).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland referred to Ralph Waldo Emerson's assessment of the critical need for revelation today: "The incomparable Ralph Waldo Emerson rocked the very foundations of New England ecclesiastical orthodoxy when he said to the Divinity School at Harvard: 'It is my duty to say to you that the need was never greater [for] new revelation than now. The doctrine of inspiration is lost. . . . Miracles, prophecy, . . . the holy life, exist as ancient history [only]. . . . Men have come to speak of . . . revelation as somewhat long ago given and done, as if God were dead. . . . It is the office of a true teacher,' he warned, 'to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake.'"<sup>43</sup>

The improbability of a mute God was further expressed by the fiery preacher Jonathan Edwards: "It seems to me a[n] . . . unreasonable thing, to suppose that there should be a god . . . that has so much concern [for us] . . . and yet that he should never speak . . . that there should be no word [from him]."<sup>44</sup> Edwin Hatch detected what happened in the early Christian church—over time it traded the certainty of divine revelation for the ever-shifting philosophies and rhetoric of man. That, he believed, was the downfall of the Church:

Its [the Church's] progress is arrested now, because many of its preachers live in an unreal world. . . . But if Christianity is to be again the power that it was in its earliest ages, it must renounce its costly purchase. . . . *The hope of Christianity is . . . that the sophisticated element in Christian preaching will melt, as a transient mist, before the preaching of the prophets of the ages to come, who, like the prophets of the ages that are long gone by, will speak only "as the Spirit gives them utterance."*<sup>45</sup>

Jordan Vajda, a Catholic priest who after intense study joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, acknowledged that the loss of the apostles and revelation triggered the apostasy: "And to get back to my original hang-up—the great apostasy. I have come to recognize that it really has to do with a loss of living apostles to guide the Church. What I find in the LDS Church is a restoration, a fullness: once more there are living apostles to guide and direct the Church, to receive revelation that teaches and instructs us."<sup>46</sup>

### The Devastating Consequences Following the Death of the Apostles

Without the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles there was "no answer of God" (Micah 3:7), no revelation for the church at large, no unifying force in the church. Accordingly, the false doctrines and philosophies of men spread like wildfire. The fractionalization process flourished. Church "intellectuals" sought for followers. Durant observed: "Aside from these basic tenets, the followers of Christ, in the first three centuries, divided into a hundred creeds."<sup>47</sup> Durant understood the reason for this division: "When the first generations of Christianity had passed away, and the oral tradition of the apostles began to fade . . . a hundred heresies disordered the Christian mind."<sup>48</sup>

With the disappearance of the apostles, Satan's influence was profound. Many fell sway to his divisive tactics. Finally, Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202), as summarized by Durant, saw the imploding of Christianity into a thousand fragments unless some unification was taken: "The only way of preventing Christianity from disintegrating into a thousand sects . . . was for all Christians to accept humbly one doctrinal authority—the decrees of the episcopal councils of the church."<sup>49</sup> And so man-made councils, at first local and thereafter universal, replaced the apostolic quorum, and reason supplanted revelation as the "rock" upon which the church was built. As a result, the institution known as the church became more of a political than spiritual body.

Durant noted this politicization of the church: "The Roman Church followed in the footsteps of the Roman state; it conquered the provinces, beautified the capital, and established discipline and unity from frontier to frontier. Rome died in giving birth to the Church; the Church matured by inheriting and accepting the responsibilities of Rome."<sup>50</sup> Historian Paul Johnson observed this same trend towards secularism: "The Church . . . had changed a great deal. It had adapted itself to its state and imperial function; it had assumed worldly ways and attitudes, and accepted a range of secular responsibilities. . . . The process of integration of Church and State, begun by Constantine, continued until the two became inseparable."<sup>51</sup> And thus the remnant of Christ's Church became in large part a political body clothed with ecclesiastical vestments.

It is a common theme of historians to note the metamorphosis of the Roman Empire into the Roman Catholic Empire. Adolf von Harnack so wrote: "The Roman Church . . . privily pushed itself into the place of the Roman World-Empire, of which it is the actual continuation."<sup>52</sup> Then von Harnack spoke of the spiritual price that had to be paid for such political prominence:

It is a serious misunderstanding of Christ's and the apostles' injunctions to aim at establishing and building up the kingdom of God by political means. The only forces which this kingdom knows are religious and moral forces, and it rests on a basis of freedom. . . . The course of development which this church has followed as an earthly State was, then, bound to lead logically to the absolute monarchy of the Pope and his infallibility; for in an earthly theocracy infallibility means, at bottom, nothing more than full sovereignty means in a secular State. That the church has not shrunk from drawing this last conclusion is a proof of the extent to which the sacred element in it has become secularized.<sup>53</sup>

Shortly after the Council of Nicea a collection of early Christian writings on church order and administration, known as Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, warned against any sort of unlawful cohabitation between the state and church: "If any bishop makes use of the rulers of this world, and by their means obtains to be a bishop of a church, let him be deprived and suspended, and all that communicate with him."<sup>54</sup> It was a severe warning that if any man claiming to have the priesthood of God was a political or secular appointee, he and his followers were to be cut off from the church. With the loss of the apostles the leaders of the ongoing church were often appointed by political figures or by church leaders who had become quasi-political leaders.

We know what happens when the foundation of a building is removed. With the demise of the apostles, the collapse of Christ's Church was inevitable. The apostles were not intended to be an isolated episode in history or a temporary "jump start" to get the Church going. They were the spiritual glue that held the Church together, the moral compass that kept it on course, the spiritual filters through which the doctrines passed, and the mouthpieces through whom God spoke. Without them, preservation of the existing doctrine was hopeless, and revelation of new doctrine was impossible.

Without the apostles there remained no doctrinal anchor, no quorum to speak for God. Each local bishop was left to his own devices and resources. By the time of Augustine (A.D. 354–430) there were some doctrines that had completely disappeared from church theology, and only a small handful of original doctrines that remained untainted. If one believes the apostles were not necessary on an ongoing basis, he need only compare the doctrines taught by the church in the fifth century with those taught in the New Testament, and then ask the question, "Why the chasm of difference?"<sup>55</sup> This disparity presents a spiritual dilemma for many. Are they willing to acknowledge that the Church of Jesus Christ was taken from the earth and, thus, a restoration was necessary; or, alternatively, are they willing to embrace the ongoing church as Christ's Church in spite of its profound theological differences with the primitive Church?

Perhaps Pierre Van Paassen, who wrote a biography on the life of the reformer Girolamo Savonarola (A.D. 1452–1498), summarized the situation about as well as it can be stated. Commenting on the deprived conditions of the church and the wretched circumstances of the common man in Savonarola's day, he observed: "A world without prophets is a world that knows not its signs. It is like a ship without rudder or compass floundering about helplessly, aimlessly drifting toward perdition."<sup>56</sup> The loss of the apostles left the church a spiritual *Titanic*—headed for destruction.

#### Notes to Chapter 9: First Evidence

1. See also Revelation 21:14.
2. Paul confirmed that James, the brother of Jesus, was an apostle in the same sense as the original apostles. Paul went to Jerusalem, saw Peter, and then noted, "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:19).
3. Hippolytus (A.D. 170–236) stated that "Paul entered into the apostleship a year after the assumption of Christ" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:255). Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) referred to Peter and Paul as "the two most glorious apostles" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:415).
4. Jackson, *From Apostasy to Restoration*, 19.

5. Fox is spelled *Foxe* by some.
6. Farrar and others believe that Peter "was crucified, not in the ordinary position, but, by his own request, head downwards, because he held himself unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord" (Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 114).
7. *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, 5; see also 2–5. John the Beloved was promised by the Savior that he would not die until the Lord's second coming (John 21:20–23; D&C 7). Hippolytus (A.D. 170–236) also spoke of the martyrdom of the majority of the apostles (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:255).
8. In alluding to Micah's prophecy, President Spencer W. Kimball declared, "I bear witness to the world today that more than a century and half ago the iron ceiling was shattered; the heavens were once again opened, and since that time revelations have been continuous. . . . Never again will the sun go down; never again will all men prove totally unworthy of communication with their Maker. Never again will God be hidden from his children on the earth. Revelation is here to remain" (*Ensign*, May 1977, 77).
9. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 682.
10. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 13. For part of their support the Catholic scholars quote from Clement of Rome's letter to the Corinthians: "Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate [bishop]. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:17). This quotation does not refer to succession of the apostles but rather to succession of bishops. In other words, it does not state that bishops would be the successors to the apostles.
11. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 15–16.
12. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:394, 396.
13. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:388.
14. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:565; emphasis added.
15. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:305; emphasis added.
16. *The Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians* was written in response to the Saints at Corinth who had been wrongfully deposed from their leadership roles. The epistle is written in the form of brotherly advice. It is not written in an authoritative tone as though from a pope who had ultimate power. There were no mandates and no threats of discipline (even though a rebellion was in progress), which most likely would have been the case had the Bishop of Rome been the successor to Peter.
17. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:155.
18. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 525–26.
19. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 230. Firmilian (A.D. 260–268), the Bishop of Caesarea, evidently

had similar feelings as he expressed them in a letter to Cyprian (A.D. 200–258): "Therefore the power of remitting sins was given to the apostles, and to the churches which they, sent by Christ, established, and to the bishops who succeeded them by vicarious ordination" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:394).

20. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 225, 230.

21. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 224.

22. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 223; emphasis added.

23. "The Catholic doctrine is that divine revelation was completed during the apostolic age. This does not rule out the possibility of private revelations, but these are not to be depended on" (Roman Catholic Statement). The Statement of one Protestant belief also notes, "There is to be no more revelation, for all things are already revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Christ fulfilled all" (Smith, *Religious Truths Defined*, 213).

24. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 14.

25. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 73.

26. President Joseph Fielding Smith made the following observation about the ongoing nature of this quorum: "We have no record that states that in the days of the apostles of old that any one was ever ordained to be an apostle and not to be a member of the Council of the Twelve. The Savior chose Twelve Apostles, and *this quorum was to continue*, according to the revelations. . . . Paul was an *ordained apostle*, and without question he took the place of one of the brethren in that Council" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:153). Elder James E. Talmage made this observation about Paul: "Paul . . . received a special manifestation, in which he heard the voice of the Risen Lord declaring 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest' and thereby he became a special witness of the Lord Jesus, and as such was in truth an apostle, though we have no definite scriptural record that he was ever made a member of the council of twelve" (*The Great Apostasy*, 8).

27. Joseph Smith explained the consequences when the proper foundation of Christ's Church was removed: "It is in the order of heavenly things that God should always send a new dispensation into the world when men have apostatized from the truth and lost the priesthood; but when men come out and build upon other men's foundations, they do it on their own responsibility, without authority from God; and when the floods come and the winds blow, their foundations will be found to be sand, and their whole fabric will crumble to dust" (*History of the Church*, 6:478–79).

28. In interpreting the parable of the wheat and tares, the Doctrine and Covenants reveals the following: "The apostles were the sowers of the seed; and after they have fallen asleep the great persecutor of the church, the apostate, the whore, even Babylon, that maketh all nations to drink of her cup, in whose hearts the enemy, even Satan, sitteth to reign—behold he soweth the tares; wherefore, the tares choke the wheat *and drive the church into the wilderness*" (D&C 86:2–3; emphasis added).

29. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:284.

30. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:402.

31. See chapters 14 and 15 for a detailed discussion of these doctrinal points.

32. See chapters 14 and 15, which discuss these doctrines and ordinances in detail.

33. Many have argued that there can be no new revelation because Revelation 22:18 states, "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." From this scripture it is extrapolated that there can be no new revelation after the Book of Revelation, since it is the last book in the Bible. The fatal weaknesses to such a proposition are at least three-fold. First, the caution against adding anything was referring to the specific book of Revelation. The Bible, as a collective work, did not even come into existence for several hundred years thereafter. Second, almost the identical command was given in Deuteronomy 4:2: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." If one seriously contends that Revelation 22:18 means there is to be no more revelation after that time (about A.D. 90–100), then his argument would also eliminate all scripture and revelation subsequent to Deuteronomy 4:2 (about 1490 B.C.). Third, Revelation 22:18 clearly limits "man" from adding to that specific revelation, but it does not, nor could it, limit God, who is the source of all revelation. In other words, man cannot supplement John's revelation, but, of course, God could any time he so desired.

34. Howells, *His Many Mansions*, "A Comparative Chart of 10 Christian Religions on 23 Doctrinal Subjects."

35. Sometimes Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) is quoted as standing for the position that there was no revelation after the time of Christ: "In the Lord's apostles we possess our authority; for even they did not of themselves choose to introduce anything, but faithfully delivered to the nations (of mankind) the doctrine which they had received from Christ" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:246). If Tertullian was suggesting that the apostles taught nothing but what Christ taught them in his mortal ministry, then clearly he was at direct odds with Acts 10 and Acts 15. If, on the other hand, he was saying that the apostles taught only what Christ taught them while on earth or in heaven thereafter, then he was acknowledging the power of revelation after Christ's ministry. Some also quote another statement from Tertullian as support for their position that revelation ceased with the Bible: "No other teaching will have the right of being received as apostolic than that which is at the present day proclaimed in the churches of apostolic foundation" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:286). LDS theology would not disagree that all doctrine must have apostolic origins (through Christ), but would add that the restored church is of apostolic foundation and, therefore, is entitled to revelation through current apostles, just as Peter and the ancient apostles received revelation in their day.

36. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 324–25.

37. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:240–41.

38. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 173.

39. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 107.

40. Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* 15–16; emphasis added.

41. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:429; emphasis added.

42. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:153.



43. Holland, "Prophets, Seers, and Revelators," 8.
44. Edwards, *The Words of Jonathan Edwards*, "The Miscellanies," 18:89–90; as quoted by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland in *Ensign*, November 2004, 8.
45. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 114–15.
46. In an undated letter written in June 2003.
47. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 604.
48. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 592.
49. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 612.
50. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 619.
51. Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 126.
52. Von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* 252.
53. Von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* 256.
54. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:501.
55. See chapters 14 and 15 for a detailed explanation of the doctrines and ordinances that were lost or changed after the death of the apostles.
56. Van Paassen, *A Crown of Fire*, 172.

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## Second Evidence: The Testimony of the Scriptures

The scriptures are both a historical witness of the apostasy in progress and a prophetic witness that it would culminate before Christ's second coming. These divine records testify of the apostasy again and again. In fact, there are more than seventy scriptures in the Bible that speak of the apostasy, most of which are cited in chapter 5.1 It is a recurring theme throughout the Old and New Testaments.

With telescopic vision the Old Testament prophets looked down the corridors of time and saw the apostasy unfold. Isaiah saw the time when men would profess God with their lips but not their hearts: "Wherefore the Lord said, . . . this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men" (Isaiah 29:13).

Amos had the same 20/20 vision of a future apostasy. He prophesied that God would "send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, *they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it*" (Amos 8:11–12).<sup>2</sup>

These visions of a time when the heavens would be closed and people would suffer spiritual famine were not limited to the prophets of the Old Testament. Christ knew his apostles would be martyred for his name's sake, and he knew the consequences that would follow: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, *and shall deceive many*. And because iniquity shall abound, *the love of many shall wax cold*" (Matthew 24:9–12). The Savior knew that the future apostasy would not be of minor proportions: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. . . . For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders" (Matthew 24: 5, 24). In reference to Christ's prophecies, and with the advantage of hindsight, Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) observed: "For He [the Savior] said we would be put to death, and hated for His name's sake; and that many false prophets and false Christs would appear in His name, and deceive many: *and so has it come about*. For many have taught godless, blasphemous, and unholy doctrines, forging them in His name."<sup>3</sup>

Following Christ's mortal ministry the warnings continued to pour forth. Paul spoke of a "falling away" before Christ came a second time. He warned and then prophesied: "Be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: *for that day [the second coming of Christ] shall not come, except there come a falling away first*, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:2–3). Adam Clarke made the following observation about this scripture: "The apostle, to correct their mistake [that of the Saints] and dissipate their fears [that the end of the world was near at hand], assures them that a great apostasy, or defection of the Christians from the true faith and worship, *must happen before the coming of Christ*."<sup>4</sup>

Cyril, the bishop of Jerusalem who served in the mid- to latter half of the fourth century, was a firsthand witness of this "falling away." He observed: "Thus wrote Paul, and now is the falling away. For men have fallen away from the right faith. . . . And formerly the heretics were manifest; but now the Church is filled with heretics in disguise. For men have fallen away from the truth, and *have itching ears*. . . . *Most have departed from right words, and rather choose the evil*, than desire the good. This therefore is the falling away."<sup>5</sup>

Paul wrote Timothy "that in the *latter times* some shall depart from the faith" (1 Timothy 4:1) and "that in the *last days* perilous times shall come" (2 Timothy 3:1). Peter prophesied "that there shall come in the *last days* scoffers, walking after their own lusts" (2 Peter 3:3) and Jude warned of "mockers in the *last time*, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts . . . having not the Spirit" (Jude 1:18, 19). What did the prophets mean when they referred to the last days or latter times? Was this time frame restricted to the period immediately preceding the Savior's second coming, or did it have broader implications? Adam Clarke believed the phrase "*in the latter times*," as referred to by Paul, "does not necessarily imply the last ages of the world; but any times consequent [subsequent] to those in which the church then lived."<sup>6</sup>

In speaking of the apostasy, Jude reminded the Saints to "remember ye the words which were spoken

before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:17). Commenting on this verse, Farrar noted: "Warnings against such apostates, blasphemers, and ungodly men must have occurred often in the teachings of the Apostles."<sup>7</sup>

John the Revelator spoke of the total domination by Satan for a period: "And it was given unto him to make war with the Saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" (Revelation 13:7).<sup>8</sup> This scripture did not say Satan would halt the Church for a season, or impede its progress, but rather he would *overcome* the Saints and have power over *all nations*. The Old Testament prophets, the Savior, his apostles—they all saw it coming—the falling away of Christ's Church, the turning out of the gospel lights.

#### Notes to Chapter 10: Second Evidence

1. In counting this seventy, I have generally counted two or more verses as only one scripture if the verses are contiguous. If, however, the verses are not contiguous, then I have generally counted them as separate scriptural references. Some of these scriptures are: Isaiah 24:5; 29:10, 13; Amos 8:11–12; Micah 3:6–7; Matthew 24:5, 9–12, 24; 27:53; Acts 3:19–21; 8:18–21; 15:1–2, 7, 25–28; 20:29–30; 21:20; Romans 16:17–18; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 4:15–16, 18–19; 5:1; 11:18–19; 15:12; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 12:21; Galatians 1:6–7; 2:4; 3:1; 4:9, 11; Ephesians 1:10; 2:19–20; 4:11–14; Philippians 3:2; Colossians 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 7, 9; 3:11; 1 Timothy 1:6–7, 20–21; 4:1–4, 7; 5:15; 2 Timothy 1:15; 2:1–2, 17–18; 3:1–8, 13; 4:3–4, 15–16; Titus 1:10–11, 16; James 2:5–6; 4:1, 4; 1 Peter 5:2; 2 Peter 2:1–2, 14, 17; 3:3, 16–17; 1 John 2:18–19; 4:3; 2 John 1:7; 3 John 1:9–10; Jude 1:3–4, 7–8, 16–19; Revelation 1:20; 2:2, 5–6, 14–15, 20, 22; 3:4, 8, 15–17; 13:7; 14:6–7.

2. Some have suggested that this scripture prophesies of the time immediately before the Savior's birth, but this scripture does not seem to be a perfect fit for such a time period. This scripture speaks of a time when no word of the Lord is available, but the Aaronic Priesthood was on the earth in the days preceding the Savior's birth. Some of the prophecies cited in the Old Testament may have a dual prophetic utterance—once referring to the apostasy before Christ's first appearance and again referring to the apostasy before Christ's second appearance.

3. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:240; emphasis added.

4. Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:570.

5. *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*, 7:106–7; emphasis added.

6. Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 2:572.

7. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:235.

8. In this respect Joseph Fielding Smith noted, "Satan in his wrath drove the woman [Church] into the wilderness, or from the earth; the power of the Priesthood was taken from among men, and after the Church with its authority and gifts disappeared from the earth, then in his anger the serpent continued his war upon all who had faith and sought the testimony of Jesus, desiring to worship God according to the dictates of conscience. So successful did he become that his dominion extended over all the known world" (*The Progress of Man*, 166).

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## Third Evidence: The Bible Ends

The Bible ends about A.D. 100. Why did it end? If Christ's Church had continued, would the Bible have ended, or would it have continued with ongoing epistles from the apostles to the various congregations of churches—warning them and guiding them as necessary—just as it had done from the time of Christ's ascension to approximately A.D. 100? Many fail to understand that the majority of epistles in the New Testament were written to correct some error that was infiltrating the Church, to resolve some issue that was disputed, or to clarify some doctrinal point that was contended. Elder Mark E. Petersen observed, "The average Christian does not realize that the very scriptures which he reads are evidences that there has been a great apostasy from the truth. Particularly are the epistles of the New Testament such evidence. Nearly every one of these epistles was written to counteract some form of apostasy which was creeping into the Christian Church in the very days in which the original Twelve Apostles lived." Elder Petersen then gave some examples: In 1 Corinthians Paul rebuked members of the Church for their sins—"Immorality had become rife . . . and many now denied the resurrection. . . . Ephesians was written to warn them against every wind of doctrine." Philippians was written because of "the discord among the people" and "their vanity." Colossians was written to warn "against false teachers who were rising among the Saints."<sup>1</sup>

Frederic W. Farrar also summarized some of the apostate conditions highlighted in the New Testament epistles:

The Epistle to the Corinthians exhibits to us a Church of which the discipline was inchoate and the morality deplorable. The Epistle of the Colossians proves that there had been an influx of gnosticizing heresies, which illustrated the fatal affinity of religious error to moral degradation. The Pastoral Epistles show that these germs of sinful practice and erroneous theory had blossomed with fatal rapidity. In the Epistle of St. Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter we see perhaps still later developments of these tendencies.<sup>2</sup>

Speaking of the book of Hebrews, Farrar added: "The writer's main object was to prevent the Jewish Christians from apostatizing under the stress of persecution."<sup>3</sup>

The epistles were written in large part to correct, reprimand, and "straighten out" the errors rapidly infiltrating the Church. They were designed to clarify the doctrine and to inspire the Saints toward more Christlike lives. They were the standard works for the primitive Church.

Does it seem likely that there was some magical moment in time—about A.D. 100 (when the Bible ended)—when all error had been eliminated from the Church, when all doctrine had been clarified, when all the Saints had been perfected, and thus no new epistles were needed? If the Bible represented God's final word to man, the closing of the heavens, the unambiguous and final arbiter on all doctrinal matters, then why do we not have unanimity in the Christian world today on issues such as abortion, same gender marriages, the role of women and the priesthood, grace versus works, and the necessity of baptism? The answer is resounding: Because the apostles had been killed, the Bible had ended, and no new epistles were forthcoming to bring us

to "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5).

The Book of Mormon speaks harshly of those who attempt to limit God's word:

Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. . . . Because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written (2 Nephi 29:6, 9–10).

While many people believe the New Testament is the "final chapter" of God's revealed word, the evidence points to a contrary conclusion:

*First*, John the Beloved explained that "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25).<sup>4</sup> John was explaining that there was much additional revelation that the world did not have in written form at his time. Surely those teachings and acts of the Savior would give us new insights and renewed motivation to live better lives. Would anyone want to exclude that treasury of revelation by claiming the Bible was the end of God's word?

*Second*, there are at least fifteen books, prophecies, letters, or visions that are referred to in the Bible as authentic, but which are not found in our current Bible.<sup>5</sup> For example, Paul referred to an additional epistle to the Corinthians that we do not have (1 Corinthians 5:9) and Jude referred to prophecies of Enoch that are nowhere to be found in the Bible (Jude 1:14–15). In addition, Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100) cited "scriptures" not currently located in our Bible.<sup>6</sup> When these come forth, will some reject them because we have a Bible and there can be no more of the word of God?

*Third*, the New Testament contains only some of the words of some of the apostles. Does it seem likely that Peter, the chief apostle, should have only eight chapters, or twelve pages (1 and 2 Peter), of teachings after thirty years of ministry? Or that Andrew and Philip and Bartholomew and Simon and others who were, likewise, apostles of Jesus should have nothing worthy of recording? The truth is, there must be volumes of the word of God which are absent from the Bible—all of which are sources of revelation.

*Fourth*, does it seem reasonable that there would be no new problems after the Bible ended, no clarification of doctrine necessary, no further revelation required to shed forth light for a growing church in a changing climate?

If Christ's Church had continued, the Bible would *not* have ended at approximately A.D. 100, but rather apostolic epistles would have continued through the ages in order to bring the Saints to a unity of the faith, to resolve the ongoing disputes, and to put down any attempted discord. Christ's Church was not a static church; it was a dynamic, vibrant, living church—and revelation was its lifeblood. No wonder Elder Bruce R. McConkie concluded: "The very fact that the Bible ceased to grow through the ages is itself proof positive of the great apostasy."<sup>7</sup>

Notes to Chapter 11: Third Evidence

1. Petersen, *Toward a Better Life*, 70.

2. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:227.
3. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:346.
4. Brigham Young added this insight: "We understand from the writings of one of the Apostles, that if all the sayings and doings of the Savior had been written, the world could not contain them. I will say that the world could not understand them" (*Journal of Discourses*, 14:135–36).
5. See LDS Bible Dictionary, "Lost Books," 725, 726.
6. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 264.
7. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 398.

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### Fourth Evidence: The Loss of Miracles and Gifts of the Spirit

During his life Christ performed frequent healings and miracles. Similar healings and miracles continued during the era of the apostles. They had been given "power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease" (Matthew 10:1). Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) noted that Christ had given his apostles the "power . . . of working the same miracles which He worked Himself."<sup>1</sup> To the man lame from his birth, Peter declared: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). And he did. Luke observed that "by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people" (Acts 5:12). So great was the faith of the people in the healing power of Peter that the believing brought their sick into the streets so that "the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them" (Acts 5:15). Luke explained that the multitudes came out of the cities "bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one" (Acts 5:16).<sup>2</sup> So great were Peter's powers that he not only healed the sick, but he raised the dead to life (Acts 9:26–41).

The scriptures further record that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul" (Acts 19:11).<sup>3</sup> On one occasion Paul commanded "a cripple from his mother's womb" to "stand upright on thy feet." Immediately the man "leaped and walked." So astonished were the people who witnessed the miracle that they exclaimed: "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (Acts 14:8, 10, 11). Miracles were usually manifested in the form of blessings; but on one occasion Paul struck a wicked sorcerer blind because he attempted to thwart the word of God (Acts 13:6–11). There was no question that the apostles had the power of God.

This power to perform miracles, however, was not restricted to the apostles alone. It was given to all those

who had received the higher priesthood. The scriptures tell us that "Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people" (Acts 6:8). Many in Samaria "gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did." He cast out devils and healed many that had palsy or were lame, "and there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8:6–8). Paul spoke of the many gifts that were available to members of the Church (1 Corinthians 12:7). The manifestation of the gifts was a witness of the authenticity of God's disciples: "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost" (Hebrews 2:4).

For a short time following the death of the apostles, there were still Saints of God who could exercise the gifts of the Spirit. Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) wrote, "Now, it is possible to see amongst us women and men who possess gifts of the Spirit of God."<sup>4</sup> In fact, Justin argued with a Jew that Christians must be blessed of God because the Christians, not the Jews, possessed such gifts in his day and age: "For the prophetic gifts remain with us, even to the present time. And hence you ought to understand that [the gifts] formerly among your nation have been transferred to us."<sup>5</sup> Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) likewise wrote of the widespread manifestations of the Spirit in the early Church: "The holy Spirit also, wrought many wonders as yet through them, so that as soon as the gospel was heard, men voluntarily in crowds, and eagerly, embraced the true faith with their whole minds."<sup>6</sup>

The early Christian writers knew that miracles and gifts of the Spirit were an evidence of the true Church, and often referred to such gifts to prove their point. Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202), in contrasting the Gnostics with the Christians, observed: "For they [the Gnostics] can neither confer sight on the blind, nor hearing on the deaf, nor chase away all sorts of demons. . . . Nor can they cure the weak, or the lame, or the paralytic . . . as has often been done in regard to bodily infirmity. . . . And so far are they from being able to raise the dead . . . as has been frequently done in the brotherhood on account of some necessity."<sup>7</sup> Speaking again of the gifts of the Spirit that were abundant for a time, Irenaeus wrote:

His [Christ's ] disciples . . . perform [miracles], so as to promote the welfare of other men. . . . Some do certainly and truly drive out devils. . . . Others have foreknowledge of things to come: they see visions, and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole. Yea, moreover, as I have said, the dead even have been raised up, and remained among us for many years. And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the church, [scattered] throughout the whole world, has received from God.<sup>8</sup>

The foregoing reflections of Irenaeus, written about A.D. 185, are a significant testimony that miracles and the gifts of the Spirit were not limited to apostolic times but continued for some time thereafter. Origen (A.D. 185–255) noted that even in his day (early to mid-third century), the gifts of the Spirit were still visible: "And the name of Jesus can still remove distractions from the minds of men, and expel demons, and also take away diseases."<sup>9</sup>

At one point in the early church history, a heretic by the name of Montanus (c. A.D. 170) and two female cohorts, named Priscilla and Maximilla, claimed the gift of prophecy, evidently prophesying during violent agitations of the body and theatrical displays of the alleged spirit. Even though their actions were inconsistent with the nature of the divine gift, the early Christians knew that the gift of prophecy should be present in Christ's Church and to their dismay the Montanists were claiming it. In a prophetic condemnation of the ongoing church, Eusebius quoted Apollinaris of Hierapolis (an eloquent defender of the faith) who castigated the Montanists as follows:

If after Quadratus and Ammias in Philadelphia, the women that followed Montanus succeeded in the gift of prophecy, let them show us what women among them succeeded Montanus and his women. *For the apostle shows that the gift of prophecy should be in all the church until the coming of the Lord*, but they can by no means show any one at this time, the fourteenth year from the death of Maximilla.<sup>10</sup>

The early Christian writers knew that the gift of prophecy should continue until the Second Coming. This gift and the other gifts of the Spirit did remain for a time after the Savior, but unfortunately they gradually disappeared until they were rarely, if ever, seen. Origen noted in his day that while the Christians still had the gifts of the Spirit, they did not seem to be in the same abundance as in apostolic times. It was the first hint that the gifts were on the decline: "For they [the Jews] have no longer prophets nor miracles, *traces* of which to a considerable extent are still found among Christians, . . . and these we ourselves have witnessed."<sup>11</sup> The gifts of the Spirit went from an abundance to traces to almost nonexistent.

With rare exception, after the second or third century A.D., there is no mention of miracles, healings, prophecies, speaking in tongues, or other gifts of the Spirit. Paul Johnson, who wrote *A History of Christianity*, was aware of this void: "It had been acknowledged at least since imperial times that the 'age of miracles' was over, in the sense that Christian leaders could no longer spread the gospel, like the apostles, with the aid of supernatural power—at any rate as a rule."<sup>12</sup> The purported miracles and gifts of the post-apostolic era lacked in both frequency and genuineness compared with those miracles and gifts that were characteristic of Christ's Church. Paul prophesied "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, . . . speaking lies in hypocrisy" (1 Timothy 4:1–2). Adam Clarke commented on this prophecy as follows: "Multitudes of lies were framed concerning miracles wrought by the *relics* of departed *Saints*, as they were termed."<sup>13</sup> Paul Johnson added: "Relics rapidly became, and for some 800 years remained, the most important single element in Christian devotion. They were the Christian's only practical defence against inexplicable suffering."<sup>14</sup> Why? Because divine miracles were no longer common among the people.

As noted by William Manchester: "Pilgrims headed for over a thousand shrines whose miracles had been recognized by Rome. . . . One popular destination was the tomb of Pierre de Luxembourg, a cardinal who had died, aged eighteen, of anorexia; within fifteen months of his death 1,964 miracles were credited to the magic he had left in his bones."<sup>15</sup> It would be hard to dispute that mystical displays such as this were motivated by profiteering and flourished in cultures of ignorance and superstition. Where were the miracles that were born out of power and faith, miracles that healed the body, nourished the spirit, and refined the human soul?

Erasmus, a respected priest of the sixteenth century, reprimanded his fellow monks because they believed that "to perform miracles is old-fashioned, outworn, completely out of step with the times."<sup>16</sup> Is it any wonder that Nephi should see in vision the time when churches would "put down the power and miracles of God" (2 Nephi 26:20)?<sup>17</sup> Or that Moroni should prophesy of apostate times by saying, "It shall come in a day when it shall be said that miracles are done away" (Mormon 8:26). Two hundred years after the establishment of Christ's Church in ancient America, "there were many churches in the land" and Mormon observed: "There was another church which denied the Christ; . . . and they did despise [the true church] because of the many miracles which were wrought among them" (4 Nephi 1:27, 29).

One might appropriately ask: "What happened to the authentic miracles, the healings, the gifts of the Spirit—all of which are the fruits of the gospel? What good is the tree if it bears no fruit?" It was the Savior who gave the test for truth: "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16). On another occasion he said, "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*" (John 15:5). John Wesley (A.D. 1703–1791), the founder of Methodism, described this loss of fruit in the ancient church:

It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost [speaking of 1 Corinthians 13] were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian. . . . From this time they [the spiritual gifts] almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, (as has been vulgarly supposed,) because there was no more occasion for them, because all the world was become Christians. This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christian. The real cause was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so called, was "waxed cold." The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other Heathens. The Son of Man, when he came to examine his Church, could hardly "find faith upon earth." *This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.*<sup>18</sup>

Almost without exception, Christian historians acknowledge the multiplicity of gifts and miracles in the primitive Church, contrasted with the startling absence of such divine witnesses in later centuries. Why such a distinction? One such historian, who noted this disparity, rationalized the disappearance of such gifts and miracles as follows: "These miracles were outward credentials and seals of the divine mission of the apostles in a time and among a people which required such sensible helps to faith. But as Christianity became established in the world, it could point to its continued moral effects as the best evidence of its truth, and the necessity for outward physical miracles ceased."<sup>19</sup> In essence, he advocated the "sour grapes" defense: "Because we don't have miracles, we must not need them." Such an argument asserts that the Saints of later centuries eventually achieved a moral superiority to the Saints of the primitive Church, and thus somehow this moral superiority transcended the need for healings or prophecies or miracles.

Does any one really believe that the Saints of latter ages were morally superior to those of Christ's primitive Church, who had laid their all—even their lives—on the altar of sacrifice, and who were promised by John the apostle that "white robes were given unto every one of them" (Revelation 6:11)? The sad truth is that the morality of the church did not increase from the days of the primitive Church, but it decreased, particularly after the time of Constantine.

The true reason for cessation of miracles and gifts of the Spirit had nothing to do with an alleged increase in moral superiority. Contrary to the foregoing historian's assertion, it is moral superiority that spawns miracles, not suppresses them.

The real reason miracles ceased was given by Moroni: "And the reason why he [God] ceaseth to do miracles among the children of men is because that they dwindle in unbelief, and depart from the right way, and know not the God in whom they should trust" (Mormon 9:20). Mormon spoke the same truth: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven? . . . Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?" Then came the rightful answer, not from a misguided historian, but from a prophet of God: "Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; *wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is*

*because of unbelief, and all is vain" (Moroni 7:27, 36–37).<sup>20</sup>*

Mormon described the sad conditions of his day: "Wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that . . . the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people. And there were no gifts from the Lord" (Mormon 1:13–14). Moroni bore testimony that because God is unchanging, the gifts of the Spirit "never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men" (Moroni 10:19).

It was not moral superiority but a lack of faith that resulted in a notable absence of miracles and gifts in the ongoing church.<sup>21</sup>

Paul revealed an essential element of Christ's Church: "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20). Where there is faith, where there is the power of the priesthood of God upon the earth, there will be miracles and manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. So it has always been, and so it will always be. This is a sure and certain sign of Christ's Church. But when faith diminished and the Church vanished, so did the gifts of the Spirit. Their absence spoke volumes.

Notes to Chapter 12: Fourth Evidence

1. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:257.
2. Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) commented as to Thaddeus the apostle, "Many of the same city were also healed by the same apostle, who performed wonderful and great deeds, and proclaimed the word of God" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 1:46–47).
3. See also Acts 15:12; Hebrews 2:4.
4. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:243.
5. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:240. Eusebius (A.D. 270–340), quoting Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202), recognized the presence of spiritual gifts in the Church during the latter half of the second century: "As we hear many of the brethren in the church who have prophetic gifts, and who speak in all tongues through the spirit.' . . . These gifts of different kinds also continued with those that were worthy until the times mentioned" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 5:187).
6. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:123.
7. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:407.
8. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:409.
9. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:427.
10. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5:199–200; emphasis added.
11. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:433; emphasis added.
12. Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 162.

13. Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 2:572.
14. Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 161.
15. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 63.
16. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 112.
17. See also 2 Nephi 27:23; 28:6; Mormon 8:26.
18. Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. VII, 89:26,27; emphasis added. Joseph Milner observed that the Holy Spirit was missing at least by the end of the third century: "The [era] of its [the church's] actual declension must be dated in the pacific part of Diocletian's (A.D. 245–313) reign. During this whole century the work of God, in purity and power, had been tending to decay: The connexion with philosophers was one of the principal causes. . . . The faith of Christ itself appeared now an ordinary business. . . . Human depravity effected throughout a general decay of godliness; and one generation of men elapsed with very slender proofs of the spiritual presence of Christ with His Church" (*The History of the Church*, 1:497–98).
19. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 1:439.
20. See also Mormon 9:20.
21. See also 2 Nephi 27:23; Moroni 10:24.

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### Fifth Evidence: The Dark Ages

If Christ's Church is designed to perfect us physically, spiritually, intellectually, and socially (Ephesians 4:12), and if Christ's Church had been the dominant force in Western civilization following the fall of the Roman Empire (A.D. 476), then one might ask, "Would there have been a period of dark ages? Or would it instead have been a period of 'light ages'?" While there has been some scholastic movement afoot to disavow any period known as the Dark Ages, it would be hard to justify that the latter half of the first millennium was an enlightened period in Western civilization. Perhaps part of the debate over the term "Dark Ages" can be relegated to differences in definitions, part to an attempt by some to be politically correct, and part to an honest difference of opinion. One historian, Warren Hollister, wrote as follows:

Western man was thought to have dropped into a deep slumber at the fall of the Western Roman Empire in A.D. 476, awakening at length, like Rip Van Winkle, in the bright dawn of the Italian Renaissance. . . . It was . . . a millennium of darkness—a thousand years without a bath. Today this ungenerous point of view stands discredited, although it persists among the half-educated. Several generations of rigorous historical scholarship have demonstrated that the medieval period was an epoch of immense vitality and profound

creativity. The age that produced Thomas Aquinas and Dante, Notre Dame de Paris and Chartres, Parliament and the university, can hardly be described as "dark" or "barbaric."<sup>1</sup>

If Hollister is suggesting that the Renaissance and the Reformation really began earlier than the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, or that the seeds of the same were planted beforehand, he is probably right. God usually works in a natural, progressive way. Hollister's references, however, to the Cathedral of Notre Dame (twelfth century), the Cathedral of Chartres (twelfth century), the establishment of universities (twelfth century), Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century), and Dante (thirteenth century) merely move the day of enlightenment back to the twelfth century when a few rays of light could be seen on the horizon.<sup>2</sup> But what about the sixth through the tenth centuries in Western civilization? It was a period of five hundred years of relative stagnation, even retrogression in many cases. Where are the historic names, the inventions, the scientific advances, the economic progress? How many could read or write? Where are the great works of art, music, and poetry; the philosophers, the statesmen, the theologians; the signs of civility that mark these five centuries all across western Europe? The enlightened periods of Greek and Roman cultures should have been foundations to build upon, but instead it was a bleak period in the progress of man—spiritually, intellectually, and socially.

Of course, there were some good and progressive individuals, some advances here or there, and a few bright stars on the horizon, but in comparison to other ages the sky was noticeably absent of luminaries.<sup>3</sup> There is no suggestion being made here that it was a time of "black ages," devoid of all light and truth. The term "dark" is a comparative term, and thus the phrase "Dark Ages" seems to accurately describe the period from A.D. 500 until A.D. 1000, as compared to the prior Greek and Roman cultures and as further compared to the subsequent Renaissance. It was dark in terms of intellectual advancements, dark in terms of social customs, dark in terms of economic progress, and dark in terms of political freedoms. No amount of revisionist history can convert it into an enlightened age. As Paul Johnson, the noted historian on Christian and Jewish societies, wrote: "The expectations of Dark Age man were not high. The Carolingian age itself was a comparatively brief episode of order between repeated breakdowns in society. The profound pessimism which Christians drew from Augustine's writings itself seemed to mirror the uncertainties of life as they knew it. There grew up at this time a strong sense of the pointlessness of earthly life."<sup>4</sup>

If one were to deny the existence of the Dark Ages (at least as defined between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1000) because there were a few isolated bright spots, one might as well say that the world was not wicked at the time of Noah because there lived eight righteous souls whom God chose to save. It may be politically correct to say the world was not wicked in the days of Noah or there were no Dark Ages in Western civilization, but it simply does not seem to square with historical fact, with the words of the living prophets, or with the scriptures.

William Manchester criticized certain historians who have abandoned any reference to the phrase "the Dark Ages," because, as one of them said, "of the unacceptable value judgment it implies." In response to such a line of reasoning, Manchester retorted:

Yet there are no survivors to be offended. Nor is the term necessarily pejorative. . . . Intellectual life had vanished from Europe. . . . Literacy was scorned. . . . Virtually no stone buildings, except cathedrals, were raised for ten centuries. . . . The level of everyday violence . . . was shocking. . . . Medieval Christianity had more in common with paganism than its worshipers would acknowledge. . . . Except for the introduction of waterwheels in the 800s and windmills in the late 1100s, there had been no inventions of significance. No

startling new ideas had appeared, no new territories outside Europe had been explored. . . . All knowledge was already known. *And nothing would ever change.*<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps Manchester summarized it best, as follows: "The Dark Ages were stark in every dimension."<sup>6</sup> He was certainly not alone in his assessment. Paul Johnson and Jonathan Hill (a philosopher and theologian from Oxford, who wrote *The History of Christian Thought* in 2003) repeatedly used the term "the Dark Ages" to describe the decline in Western civilization following the fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>7</sup>

Norman F. Cantor, an eminent scholar of medieval history, recognized much literary, social, and cultural progress before the Renaissance, but he also acknowledged that it was preceded by a bleak period in western civilization known as the "Dark Ages":

In spite of perceptual variety and debate, we can assert the basic facts about the Middle Ages in a manner that reflects a broad, if not universal, consensus among academic medievalists. The magnificent Roman Empire in western Europe went into irrevocable economic, political, and military decline sometime after the middle of the fourth century. . . . The once-great Roman Empire, its beautiful cities, its capable government and lawcourts, its deeply learned schools and libraries, descended into the twilight of the Dark Ages of the sixth and seventh centuries, in which literate civilization survived only in a handful of ecclesiastical centers, mostly walled Benedictine monasteries.<sup>8</sup>

In summary, Cantor described this period of retrogression as "four hundred years of decline, fragmentation and enfeeblement."<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, some historians have tried to find a silver lining in this cloud of darkness. Manchester referred to one such historian who acknowledged "the brutalities of medieval life" and "the lower grades of ignorance and superstition abounding," but indicated that his book focused on "the more informed and constructive spirit of the medieval time." To this Manchester replied: "No matter how hard I shake my kaleidoscope, I cannot see what he saw." In other words, it kept coming up dark. Then Manchester added, "But I do not see how that [an understanding of the influence of the Christian faith in the Middle Ages] can be achieved without a careful study of brutality, ignorance, and delusions in the Middle Ages, not just among the laity, but also at the highest Christian altars. Christianity survived despite medieval Christians, not because of them. Fail to grasp that, and you will never understand their millennium."<sup>10</sup> That was a fairly brutal, but nonetheless honest assessment of the sad state of affairs to which Christianity and society had descended. Christianity had survived in name, but not in spirit.

President Spencer W. Kimball spoke similarly of these times: "This earth, already much in darkness, slipped into the Dark Ages when the Holy Ghost was not available to men, when no prophets led the people, when men's minds were darkened, when few inventions came to benefit mankind."<sup>11</sup> In further describing this benighted period in history, President Kimball wrote:

When the light of that century [the first century] went out, the darkness was impenetrable, the heavens were sealed, and the "dark ages" moved in. The thickness of this spiritual darkness was not unlike that physical darkness in Nephite history when "neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood" (3 Nephi 8:21). The spiritual vapor of darkness was impenetrable, and centuries were to pass with hardly the dim uncertain light of a candle to break its austere darkness.<sup>12</sup>

Other modern prophets have likewise acknowledged the reality of a period in history known as the Dark

Ages. President Ezra Taft Benson wrote: "So the world entered that long night of apostasy, the Dark Ages. The church, no longer sanctioned by God, exercised an oppressive tyranny on the minds of men and shackled them with chains of false traditions."<sup>13</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley wrote: "Ignorance and evil enveloped the world, resulting in what is known as the Dark Ages. . . . For centuries, disease was rampant and poverty reigned."<sup>14</sup> Elder Jeffrey R. Holland confirmed the existence of such a bleak period in Western civilization: "Surely the Dark Ages were appropriately named, and not one of us is anxious to be transported back even to those later years of, say, the Hundred Years' War or the Black Plague."<sup>15</sup> Note that each of these prophets speaks of the apostasy not only in terms of a spiritual decline but also of its negative effect on society at large.

The Dark Ages, by their very name, are evidence that "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4) had been snuffed out. Isaiah saw this tragic period, for he prophesied: "For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isaiah 60:2). The words of Micah are ever so haunting: "Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision . . . and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them" (Micah 3:6).<sup>16</sup> Christ referred to himself as the light of the world, and then declared that when he is gone "the night cometh" (John 9:4). In latter days the Lord declared he would bring the Church "out of obscurity and out of darkness" (D&C 1:30).<sup>17</sup> Again and again the scriptures and living prophets refer to this period of apostasy as a period of darkness.

Some may contend that these scriptures refer solely to spiritual darkness, but our lives and cultures are not segregated into tidy compartments—one for spiritual, another for intellectual, another for social, and so on. They overlap and integrate with each other. A loss in one adversely affects the others. The historian Paul Johnson recognized this:

These Dark Age scholars believed that God had imposed definite limits on what knowledge man might acquire in this world without sin. In accepting these limits they were motivated by fear. . . . They were, indeed, fearful and superstitious men. . . . If Christianity had been "imperialized" in the fourth century, it was to some extent "barbarianized" in the West, during the three centuries beginning about 500. Nothing exactly new was created.<sup>18</sup>

Some, while acknowledging a spiritual apostasy, suggest it caused no concurrent decline in moral, cultural, or educational pursuits. Somehow it was a rock thrown in the pond of society that had no rippling effect. But that argument would be counter to the realities of life. Our depth of spirituality is the driving force in our culture—it has a profound effect upon the inspiring nature of our music, the refinement of our art, the humor and purity of our drama, the beauty of our dance, and the integrity of our business. It is the foundation of our educational values and the subject of our literary pursuits. President Brigham Young spoke of the interrelationship between secular learning and spiritual advancement:

Do you think the Lord Almighty will reveal the great improvements in the arts and sciences which are being constantly made known and will not revive a pure religion? If any man imagines that with the mighty strides which the sciences have been making for a few years past, there will be no improvement in religion, that man is vain in his imagination. God will improve the religion of the nations of the earth in proportion to the improvement made in the sciences. *This is true whether you believe it or not.*<sup>19</sup>

If Christ's Church had continued and been a dominant force for multiple centuries, then the course of history would have been substantially altered. Such a powerful force for good would have fostered education rather than illiteracy, freedom rather than serfdom, religious tolerance rather than religious persecution, the refining

sympathies rather than cultural famine. The light of the gospel would have inspired poets and authors, given new vision to artists, planted divine melodies in the hearts of musicians, illuminated the land with books and learning, promoted peace, and combated sorcery and superstition.<sup>20</sup> But such was not the case. Instead, the conditions of the Dark Ages—socially, intellectually, and spiritually—were grim, a stark reminder that the Church of Jesus Christ in its fulness was gone. In truth, it matters not what the period from A.D. 500 to A.D. 1000 is called. The issue is that it should have been a period of great enlightenment if the Church of Jesus Christ were on the earth in its fulness, particularly if the Church were the dominant political, social, spiritual, and intellectual force in society. But no such enlightened period emerged in western civilization during the latter half of the first millennium A.D.

Light has always been a preeminent symbol of Christ and his Church. Paul taught, "Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14). On another occasion, he reminded the Saints at Thessalonica: "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: *we are not of the night, nor of darkness*" (1 Thessalonians 5:5). In other words, wherever the Church and its righteous Saints were found, they repelled darkness and replaced it with light.<sup>21</sup>

John recorded these descriptive words of the Holy One: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).<sup>22</sup> There is no darkness in Christ, just as there is no divine light in Satan.<sup>23</sup> Again and again Christ and his gospel are associated with light. John summarized it well: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*" (1 John 1:5–6).<sup>24</sup> These are powerful words. How inconsistent it would be to portray Christ and his gospel as the ultimate symbol of light, and then suggest that the members of his Church walked in darkness for century after century during what is known as the Dark Ages.

It is one way or the other—either Christ's Church was a dominant force on the earth and there were no Dark Ages, or the Dark Ages are a historical fact and Christ's Church with its attendant light was noticeably absent from the earth.

### Notes to Chapter 13: Fifth Evidence

1. Hollister, *Medieval Europe: A Short History*, 1. It is of some interest to note that by the fifth edition of this book (1982), Mr. Hollister tempers his remarks about the Dark Ages. He deletes his reference that such a belief (in the Dark Ages) only "persists among the half-educated" and now suggests that the medieval period was an epoch of intense creativeness "during the centuries following A.D. 1000," thus suggesting, of course, that such was not the case from A.D. 500 to A.D. 1000 (page 1 of his introduction). In the ninth edition (2002), Mr. Hollister and his coauthor Judith M. Bennett in essence described a dark age without reference to the name: "In Western Europe, the sixth and seventh centuries witnessed repeated invasions, accompanied by political and economic turmoil. Illiterate, hard-bitten landholders led their retinues in battle. . . . In the midst of this turmoil, cities became underpopulated and ruinous, while the countryside suffered periodic famines and plagues" (6). The description continues: "Archeological investigations have disclosed a process of urban collapse during the 600s and early 700s: in many places north of the Alps, cities simply disappeared" (69). "The Carolingian Empire would prove to be ephemeral. Rising out of a chaotic past, it disintegrated in the turbulent era that followed" (122). It seems like most of the elements of a dark age were acknowledged (illiteracy, turmoil, urban collapse, famines, plagues, and chaos), but for some reason the phrase "dark ages" seems to carry some historical taboo in certain academic circles.

2. For further information on this view of an earlier renaissance, see Hawkins, *The Renaissance of the 12th Century*. Nonetheless, Hawkins acknowledges the reality of a dark age, for he writes of the revival of "the Latin tongue, which had suffered so severely in the 'Dark Ages'" (Hawkins, 17).
3. Some of those luminaries might include, among others, Justinian (A.D. 527–565), the Roman emperor who briefly united the Roman Empire and codified Roman law into what is now commonly referred to as the Code of Justinian; Charles the Great or Charlemagne, the Roman emperor who brought about a revival in learning during his reign (A.D. 800–814); and John the Scot, "Erigena" (ninth century), a Latin and Greek scholar who was considered an able theologian and a forerunner to the high Middle Ages. Another bright light included Ireland and its culture, which had escaped much of the foreign invasion suffered by its neighbors and was referred to by historian and theologian Jonathan Hill "as an island of classical enlightenment" (*The History of Christian Thought*, 129, 128). During this period there was also the invention of the waterwheel and the development of a heavy, wheeled plow that was superior to the light plow used by the Romans.
4. Johnson, *History of Christianity*, 177. Johnson referred to Augustine (A.D. 354–430) because Augustine had a profound effect on the religious thought of the ongoing church. He believed that man was fallen, that man should separate himself from the material possessions of the world through a life of celibacy, and that only certain people were selected by God to receive his grace.
5. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 3, 5, 6, 8, 26, 27.
6. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 5.
7. See Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, 170–72, and *A History of Christianity*, 136, 138, and 161. See also Hill, *The History of Christian Thought*, 124, 128, 130–31. Four historians, including Warren Hollister, made the following observation about the circumstances and conditions of the eighth century: "Europe was afflicted by warfare between and within its kingdoms. *The population declined, cities shriveled into villages, and commerce ebbed.* Europe became a land of isolated agricultural settlements surrounded by forest and wastelands" (Hollister, Leedom, Meyer, and Spear, *Medieval Europe: A Short Sourcebook*, 1; emphasis added).
8. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages*, 19–20.
9. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages*, 46.
10. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, xvii.
11. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 425.
12. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 424. Elder Bruce R. McConkie also referred to such darkness: "When the gospel sun went down almost two millenia ago, when the priesthood was taken away . . . and when those on earth no longer were taught and directed by apostles and prophets, then spiritual darkness reigned" ("The Morning Breaks; The Shadows Flee," *Ensign*, May 1978, 12).
13. Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 85.
14. Hinckley, "The Dawning of a Brighter Day," *Ensign*, May 2004, 82.



15. Holland, "Look to God and Live," *Ensign*, November 1993, 13.
16. See also D&C 95:6.
17. See also 1 Nephi 22:12.
18. Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 161.
19. Young, *The Discourses of Brigham Young*, 108.
20. President Spencer W. Kimball wrote of the impact the gospel would have on the arts: "Take a Nicodemus and put Joseph Smith's spirit in him, and what do we have? Take da Vinci or a Michelangelo or a Shakespeare and give him a total knowledge of the plan of salvation of God and personal revelation and cleanse him, and then take a look at the statues he will carve and the murals he will paint and the masterpieces he will produce. Take a Handel with his purposeful effort, his superb talent, his earnest desire to properly depict the story, and give him inward vision of the whole true story and revelation, and what a master you have!" ("First Presidency Message," *Ensign*, July 1977, 5).
21. Speaking of those who possessed this light, the Lord promised that such would have the power to "chase darkness from among [them]" (D&C 50:25).
22. See also John 3:19; 9:5; 2 Nephi 26:23; D&C 14:9.
23. Peter, aware of the dark era that prevailed before Christ's birth, described the contrasting influence of the Savior's ministry: "[He] hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).
24. See also 2 Nephi 26:23.

## 14

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### **Sixth Evidence: Many Teachings Were Perverted, Others Lost, and New Ones Invented**

Many teachings that had been kept pure by the apostles became perverted or lost with the apostles' death. Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) quoted Hegesippus (A.D. 110–180), another early Christian author, in this regard:

The church continued until then [shortly after the death of the apostles] as a pure and uncorrupt virgin; whilst if there were any at all, that attempted to pervert the sound doctrine of the saving gospel, they were yet skulking in dark retreats; *but when the sacred choir of apostles became extinct, and the generation of those that had been privileged to hear their inspired wisdom, had passed away, then also the combinations of impious error arose by fraud and delusions of false teachers.* These also, as there were

none of the apostles left, henceforth attempted, without shame, to preach their false doctrine against the gospel of truth.<sup>1</sup>

While the apostles were on the earth, there was "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). With the loss of the Quorum of Twelve, reason supplanted revelation as the well from which the church would drink. John Fox, the author of *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, summed it up well: "Most of the errors which crept into the Church at this time arose from placing human reason in competition with revelation."<sup>2</sup> Paul warned Timothy, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1). Adam Clarke explained what Paul meant when he warned that some would "depart from the faith":

*They will apostatize from the faith*, meaning from Christianity; renouncing the whole system *in effect*, by bringing in doctrines which render its essential truths null and void, or denying and renouncing such doctrines as are essential to Christianity as a system of salvation. A man may hold all the truths of Christianity, and yet render them of none effect by holding other doctrines which counteract their influence; or he may apostatize by denying some essential doctrine, though he bring in nothing *heterodox*.<sup>3</sup>

With prophetic insight Paul warned: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit" (Colossians 2:8). In hindsight, his warning was greatly needed but largely unheeded. Edwin Hatch observed "a large part of what are sometimes called Christian doctrines, and many usages which have prevailed and continue to prevail in the Christian Church, are in reality Greek theories and Greek usages changed in form and colour by the influence of primitive Christianity, but in their essence Greek still."<sup>4</sup>

No wonder William Manchester referred to the church as "hopelessly at odds with the preachings of Jesus, whose existence was the sole reason for *its* [the church's] existence."<sup>5</sup> In other words, the church had lost its vision; its primary purpose had now become to sustain itself. Savonarola (A.D. 1452–1498), a Dominican friar and fiery reformer of the fifteen century, likewise observed: "If there is no change soon . . . the Church of Italy will be punished for not preaching the pure gospel of salvation."<sup>6</sup>

When Thomas Jefferson came on the scene, he recognized the great perversion of Christian doctrines, but he also believed there would be a restoration of the original doctrines if freedom of religion were allowed to flourish, not just in theory, but in practice. He wrote as follows:

I hold the precepts of Jesus, as delivered by himself, to be the most pure, benevolent, and sublime which have ever been preached to man. I adhere to the principles of the first age; and consider all subsequent innovations as corruptions of this religion, having no foundation in what came from him. . . . If the freedom of religion, guaranteed to us by law *in theory*, can ever rise in *practice* under the overbearing inquisition of public opinion, truth will prevail over fanaticism, and *the genuine doctrines of Jesus, so long perverted by his pseudo-priests, will again be restored to their original purity. This reformation will advance with the other improvements of the human mind, but too late for me to witness it.*<sup>7</sup>

Jefferson's statement proved prophetic. He wrote the foregoing in 1820—the same year Joseph Smith received the First Vision. Jefferson died in 1826—four years before Christ's Church with its original teachings was restored to the earth.

The following is a sampling of some of the pure doctrines originally taught in the Bible that eventually became perverted or lost. In some cases surrogate doctrines of manmade origin filled the void. In others, the doctrine

simply vanished. Fortunately, in the Lord's timetable the truth would be restored in its pure and undiluted form.

## Nature of God

How important is it for us to understand the nature of God? John the Beloved taught the imperative need to understand God when he wrote, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The Church of the New Testament and the early Christian writers taught that God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost were three, separate, distinct beings, having a oneness in unity and purpose. Unfortunately, this simple doctrinal belief quickly evolved into a mystery, namely that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were an inexplicable triune—three gods who were somehow only one substance and one God.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the early Christian writers came to the erroneous conclusion that God was some immaterial essence. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) recognized that there was a corrupting influence at work: "No doubt, after the time of the apostles, the truth respecting the belief of God suffered corruption, but it is equally certain that during the life of the apostles their teaching on this great article did not suffer at all."<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately there is much confusion in the Christian world today about the nature of God and the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and whether they are material or immaterial beings. If someone is not aware of this uncertainty, then he simply needs to ask ten or twenty Christians of different faiths, at random, the following questions: Do you believe that God the Father and Jesus Christ are the same being or separate beings? Do you believe that God has a material body or instead is some immaterial, undefinable entity? Do you believe Jesus was resurrected with a glorified body of flesh and bones and, if so, does he still have a material body in heaven today? If Christ retained his resurrected body, does God the Father also have a similar glorified body of flesh and bones, since Jesus is in his Father's express image? If Jesus, however, does not have a glorified physical body in heaven today, then what happened to his resurrected body, and what was the purpose of his resurrection? Further, ask a little child how she pictures her Father in Heaven—does she view him as some amorphous being or as a kindly, loving Father who is in the image of the mortal Jesus?

## One God or Three Gods?

If the members of the Godhead are different manifestations of the same person or substance, as some assert, then many scriptural events and passages make no sense whatsoever. Much of the confusion centers around John 10:30: "I and my Father are one." From this, many have assumed that God the Father and Jesus Christ are one and the same person. They often include the Holy Ghost in this "oneness." The scriptures assert and many of the early Christian writers testified, however, that they were three separate and distinct persons who shared a oneness, not in identity of person, but in purpose, unity, and will. The scriptural references to their separateness are numerous. Following are but a few examples.

Why would Jesus have prayed to himself? Why would he have pled with himself for the cup to be removed? Why would he in agony have said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46) if he and the Father were the same? What imploring value would those petitions have had, if made only to self? If they were the same individual—the same God—why would Jesus have stated: "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). How could his Father be "greater" than he if they were the same person? It was Jesus who said, "I seek not mine *own* will, but the *will* of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). Certainly, this was a magnificent statement of submission. But what submission would there have been if he were merely

following his own will under a different name?<sup>10</sup>

The Savior said, "If I bear witness of myself, *my witness is not true*" (John 5:31). He then set forth a list of independent witnesses of his divinity, citing John the Baptist, his own miraculous works, and "the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." If he and the Father were the same being, then it would be counterproductive to list the Father as a witness of his divinity, for the Savior prefaced his testimonial by stating that if he bore witness of himself, "my witness is not true" (John 5:33–37).

In the beginning God said, "Let *us* make man in *our* image" (Genesis 1:26). Who is the other person making up the "us" and "our" if God and Jesus are the same personage? Tertullian referred to this scripture as proof of the distinct nature of the Father and the Son: "I ask you how is it possible for a Being who is merely and absolutely One and Singular, to speak in plural phrase, saying, 'Let us make man in our own image, and after our own likeness'; whereas He ought to have said, 'Let me make man in my own image, and after my own likeness,' as being a unique and singular Being?"<sup>11</sup> Tertullian further spoke of the distinct nature of the Father and the Son. Referring to 1 Corinthians 15:24–25, he observed: "Now, from this one passage of the epistle of the *inspired* apostle, we have been already able to show that the Father and the Son are *two separate Persons*. . . . He who delivered up the kingdom, and He to whom it is delivered up—and in like manner, He who subjected (all things), and He to whom they were subjected—must necessarily be two different beings."<sup>12</sup>

Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) acknowledged that Jesus was the begotten Son of God, and then rightfully concluded "that which is begotten [Christ] is numerically distinct from that [the Father] which begets."<sup>13</sup> Dionysius of Alexandria (c. A.D. 264) acknowledged that Christ was the Son of God and then observed that this fact argued to the conclusion that Christ and his Father must be two separate persons: "Parents are absolutely distinguished from their children by the fact alone that they themselves are not their children."<sup>14</sup> The logic seems so compelling—and so simple and straightforward—that it is difficult, if not impossible, to dispute.

The scriptures present a similar rationale for the separateness of the Son and the Holy Ghost and for the distinction of the Holy Ghost as a god. If the Son is the same as the Holy Ghost, why is it that the man who speaks "a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him" (Matthew 12:32)?<sup>15</sup> If they are one and the same, why would there be different consequences for the same sin? There is no question that the Holy Ghost is also a god in his own right, as is evidenced by the reprimand of Peter to Ananias: "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost. . . . Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:3–4).

The separate, distinct nature of the three members of the Godhead was evidenced at the baptism of the Savior. On that occasion Jesus stood in the water, the Holy Ghost descended upon him, and the Father spoke from the heavens: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16–17). The three members of the Godhead again manifested themselves at the stoning of Stephen. While "full of the Holy Ghost," Stephen saw "Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). For those who tried to dilute or mystify the reality of three gods, Dionysius of Alexandria (c. A.D. 264) wrote, "If from the fact that there are three hypostases [essential parts], they say that they are divided, *there are three whether they like it or no, or else, let them get rid of the divine Trinity altogether*."<sup>16</sup> In other words, he argued, there is either a trinity or there is not—but do not give me any nonsense that they are three separate, distinct persons yet somehow only one being or substance.

While there are some scriptures that suggest the Father and the Son are one (John 10:30; John 17:21; 1 John 5:7), they become clear as to what is meant by "one" when read in context. There are likewise scriptures that suggest a husband and wife are one: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and *they shall be one flesh*" (Genesis 2:24).<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, the real question is, "What does it mean to be one, as that term is used in the scriptures?" No one would contend a husband and wife are one physical body, or one and the same individual manifested in different forms. However, a husband and wife may be one in purpose and in mind and in will.

In speaking of missionary work, Paul declared, "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one." Then he explained how they are one: "For we are laborers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:8–9). Again, the scriptures are not referring to a oneness in person, but a oneness in purpose. So it is with God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. They are two separate, distinct individuals with a unity of purpose and mind and will.

Jesus prayed that this type of oneness be extended to all his disciples: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee" (John 17:21). Certainly he was not preaching that all believers be merged into one physical mass, but rather be one in purpose and mind. Hippolytus (A.D. 170–236) gave this same interpretation of John 10:30:

Understand that He [Jesus] did not say "I and the Father *am one*, but *are one*. For the word *are* is not said of one person, but it refers to *two persons*, and one power. He has Himself made this clear, when He spake to His Father concerning the disciples, "The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." . . . *Are all one body in respect of substance, or is it that we become one in the power and disposition of unity of mind?*<sup>18</sup>

Origen (A.D. 185–255) was in accord with this interpretation: "We worship, therefore, the Father of truth, and the Son, who is the truth; and these, while they are two, considered as persons or subsistences, are one in unity of thought in harmony and in identity of will."<sup>19</sup>

The early Christian writers knew there were three separate gods who were one in purpose. This was an inescapable conclusion derived from the scriptures, as discussed above. But there was a problem. The Church's explosive growth had been among the Gentiles, whose culture was dominated by Greek philosophy.<sup>20</sup> Certain key Greek philosophers, such as Plato, taught there was only one cause to all being and that cause was God. He wrote, "God is the absolute idea, . . . the first and final cause of all being, and consequently superior and anterior to being itself."<sup>21</sup> From this the conclusion was reached that all other beings must be subordinate to the original cause and, thus, there could exist only one God. This single dogma had a powerful influence on Christian thinking.

Edwin Hatch noted Christianity's affinity for Greek philosophy: "The ideas of men were trooping in one vast host to proclaim with a united voice that there are not many gods, but only One, one First Cause by whom all things were made, . . . one Supreme Being."<sup>22</sup> This formed the basis of the theological battle for several centuries—three gods as dictated by the scriptures versus one God as dictated by the philosophers. How did the battle end? As Edwin Hatch correctly observed: "The struggle really ended as almost all great conflicts end, in a compromise." But in weighing this compromise, he added: "The dominant Theistic philosophy of Greece became the dominant philosophy of Christianity. It prevailed in form as well as in substance."<sup>23</sup>

The Nicene Creed, adopted in A.D. 325,<sup>24</sup> was a crucial step in the integration of the scriptures with Greek

philosophy. The purpose of this book is not to discuss at length the Council of Nicea. Many fine books on the subject have been written. It is important, however, to understand the underlying need as to why such a council was convened. About A.D. 319 Arius was serving as the leader of one of the Alexandrian churches. He was bright and influential. He taught that God the Father was uncreated and thus always existed. The Son, however, was the creation of the Father and therefore had a beginning. This meant there was a time when the Son did not exist, and therefore he must not be equal to the Father in divinity. In other words, the Son was subordinate to the Father because he had been created by the Father and, unlike the Father, did not exist for all eternity. In summary, Jesus was greater than man, but nonetheless of lesser divinity than the Father. On the other hand, Bishop Alexander of Alexandria and his deacon Athanasius taught that Jesus was coequal to the Father throughout eternity—that Jesus was not a lesser or subordinate God. This presented a deep theological problem—were there two gods or one God?<sup>25</sup>

In A.D. 324 Constantine, with his victory over Licinius, became the emperor of the entire Roman Empire. He believed Christianity was the religion of the future, but he knew it was terribly divided at the time over the "Arius-Athanasius dispute." Constantine seemed to have little concern for theological dogma. What he wanted was peace and harmony in the empire. Being the consummate politician, he knew he could not have the latter without the former, hence the prime reason for the Council of Nicea. While other councils were held before this one, it is sometimes referred to as the first ecumenical council, because it was the first council that had a broad representation of bishops throughout the empire.<sup>26</sup>

Motivated by the spirit of compromise and political expediency, someone at the council proposed that *omoousios* (two Greek words combined meaning "same substance")<sup>27</sup> be used to describe the relationship between the Son and the Father. In essence, they were deemed to be consubstantial, or of the same substance. It mattered not that such a word was never used in the scriptures or by the early Christian writers; it suited the exigencies of the moment. The concept of consubstantiality was ambiguous enough that the vast majority of attending bishops were willing to accept it. It could mean that God and Jesus were equal (that is, having the same substance) but at the same time two persons, because one cannot be consubstantial with himself.

Not long after the Nicene Council—at least by the fifth century—the ongoing church had unofficially adopted what is commonly called the Athanasian Creed. It was an attempt by man, without the aid of revelation, to further elaborate on the nature of God. The final product was a litany of contradictions. The "creed" eventually became the official stance of the ongoing church. The simple and sublime truth about God had become a total mystery. If one doubts the authenticity of such an assertion, he merely needs to read the language of the creed and then attempt to explain it to another in his own words. Almost always, after going through a line of convoluted reasoning, the participant will end by saying, "But it is a mystery." The pertinent language from the creed reads as follows:

We worship one God in the Trinity and Trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance; for the person of the Father is one, the Son's is another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is one. . . . Uncreated is the Father, uncreated the Son, uncreated the Holy Spirit; infinite . . . is the Father, infinite the Son, infinite the Holy Spirit; eternal is the Father, eternal the Son, eternal the Holy Spirit; yet, they are not three eternal beings but one eternal, just as they are not three uncreated beings or three infinite beings but one uncreated and one infinite. . . . *Thus, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; yet, they are not three gods but one God.* Thus, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord; yet, they are not three lords, but one Lord. . . . So too the

Catholic religion forbids us to speak of three gods or lords.<sup>28</sup>

Suppose someone were to tell you that one *plus* one *plus* one equals one (three separate gods somehow equal one God). Suppose they were further to tell you that it is both light and dark at the same time or that something simultaneously both exists and does not exist. You would no doubt shake your head in disbelief, but such is the reasoning of the foregoing creed. No wonder Elder James E. Talmage, after reading the Athanasian Creed, observed: "It would be difficult to conceive of a greater number of inconsistencies and contradictions expressed in words as few."<sup>29</sup>

How did the doctrine of the Godhead become entwined in such a web of inconsistencies? The church leaders were faced with two irreconcilable conclusions—three gods on one hand, as taught by the scriptures, but only one God on the other, as taught by the philosophers. Eventually political expediency dictated the outcome, and both conclusions were deemed to be true. When asked how that could possibly be, the standard answer was given: "It is a mystery." The truth is, it was a political compromise that ended in a maze of contradictions that could only be defended by camouflaging it in the garb of a divine mystery. To those who disbelieved, the Athanasian Creed pronounced this dire consequence: "Unless one believes it faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved."<sup>30</sup> The scriptures and philosophies of man had merged into a doctrinal quagmire.

Fortunately, the truth about the Godhead was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. He declared that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were three distinct personages, each a member of the Godhead and thus each a god in his own right. In this sense there are three gods. Sometimes the scriptures, however, refer to one God,<sup>31</sup> which may cause confusion unless one understands the context in which it is used. As already discussed, the three separate gods comprising the Godhead are one in purpose and unity. In this sense they are one. But there is another sense in which it is appropriate to refer to a singular God. The gods have a hierarchy among themselves, meaning that while they all have divine power and omniscience, one presides over the others as a matter of order and respect, and it is to him that we are ultimately accountable. Joseph Smith spoke of this hierarchy or order of priority among the gods: "Any person that had seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens who hold the keys of power, and one [God the Father] presides over all."<sup>32</sup> The assertion that the three distinct gods of the Godhead are also one in person and substance ("without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance") was a man-made doctrine that is supported by neither scriptures nor logic. It was simply one more heresy of the apostasy.

### An Immaterial or Material God?

Origen spoke of the separate and distinct identities of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, but he acknowledged that the church at his time did not have a clear understanding of whether God was material or immaterial: "For it is also to be a subject of investigation how God himself is to be understood,—*whether as corporeal, and formed according to some shape, or of a different nature from bodies,—a point which is not clearly indicated in our teaching*, and the same inquiries have to be made regarding Christ and the Holy Spirit."<sup>33</sup>

What an admission! The doctrine concerning the physical nature of God was lost. Instead, it was replaced by the opinions of men. While Origen acknowledged that the church in his day did not have a doctrinal stance on the physical nature of God, he nonetheless gave his opinion that God was immaterial: "It is an attribute of the divine nature alone—meaning, of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—to exist without any material substance and without partaking in any degree of a bodily adjunct. . . . And if God is declared to be a body,

then He will also be found to be material, since every body is composed of matter. But if He be composed of matter, and matter is undoubtedly corruptible, then, according to them, God is liable to corruption."<sup>34</sup>

It is of some interest to note that after Origen gave the foregoing opinion on the immateriality of God, he wrote with intellectual honesty: "The above, meanwhile, are the thoughts which have occurred to us, when treating of subjects of such difficulty as the incarnation and deity of Christ. *If there be any one, indeed, who can discover something better, and who can establish his assertions by clearer proofs from holy Scriptures, let his opinion be received in preference to mine.*"<sup>35</sup> What happened to the steadfast doctrines of the apostles that were not influenced by the vagaries and whims of men?

As a result of this theological uncertainty concerning the corporeal existence of God, a false doctrine arose concerning the nature of God, namely, that God was immaterial. This heresy was founded upon one or more of the following assumptions: (1) God was invisible and therefore had no form or substance, (2) all matter was corruptible and, therefore, a god who was eternal could not be composed of a corruptible substance, and (3) God is a spirit and therefore cannot have a material body.

No doubt much of the foregoing was influenced by Greek philosophy. Aristotle had taught: "The Supreme Being is immaterial; it can have no impressions, no sensations, nor appetites, nor a will in the sense of desire, nor feelings in the sense of passions; all these things depend on matter."<sup>36</sup> Edwin Hatch explained the overwhelming impact such philosophy had on the Christian doctrine of God: "It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the conceptions by which Greek thought lifted men from the conception of God as a Being with human form and human passions, to the lofty height on which they can feel around them an awful and infinite Presence."<sup>37</sup> On another occasion Hatch noted the Greek preference for a god who "was not limited by parts or by bodily form." Then he added: "But it is probable that the conception in its first form [meaning God] was rather of a material than of an ideal unity."<sup>38</sup>

B. H. Roberts responded to the immaterialists as follows:

It is remarkable how clearly men will reason upon the absurdity of immaterialism in everything except in respect to God. As an example take the reasoning of Rev. John Wesley in regard to the supposed immateriality of the fire in hell: "But it has been questioned by some whether there be any fire in hell; that is, any material fire. Nay, if there be any fire it is unquestionably material. For what is immaterial fire? The same as immaterial water or earth? Both the one and the other is absolute nonsense, a contradiction in terms. *Either, therefore, we must affirm it to be material, or we deny its existence.*" Now apply that correct reasoning to the immaterial God of the orthodox Christian and what is the result? Let us try the experiment by substituting the word God, for the word fire in the quotation:—"But it is questioned by some whether there be any God; that is, any material God. Nay, if there be any God, he is unquestionably material. For what is an immaterial God? The same as immaterial water or earth! *Both the one and the other (that is, both immaterial God and immaterial earth,) is absolute nonsense, a contradiction in terms. Either, therefore, we must affirm him to be material, or we deny his existence.*"<sup>39</sup>

God declared his materiality in the first book of the Bible: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Genesis 1:26–27). A few chapters later, Moses confirmed that Adam was "in the likeness of God," and then, to help us understand how he was using the words "likeness" and "image," Moses observed that Adam "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth" (Genesis 5:3). The parallel was clear—man is in the physical likeness and image of God,<sup>40</sup> just as Seth was in the physical image of his father.



How was man created in God's image if he was not in the form of his person? Ezekiel believed that must be the case, for he wrote that God's "likeness [was] as the appearance of a man" (Ezekiel 1:26). In the *Clementine Homilies* (most likely written in the third century), Peter is quoted as saying that man is in the image of God: "And Simon said: 'I should like to know, Peter, if you really believe that the shape of man has been moulded after the shape of God.' And Peter said: 'I am really quite certain, Simon, that this is the case. . . It is the shape of the just God.'"41

It is of further interest to note that Paul declared that Christ is in "the *express image of his [God's] person*" (Hebrews 1:3), meaning that he looks like God the Father, much as a son is in the image of his mortal father. What does the word *image* mean in these verses if God has no form, no substance, no materiality?42 James reaffirmed that man was "made after the similitude of God" (James 3:9). But how could man be made in God's similitude if God had no form or image to imitate? One must wonder why there is such an active pursuit to change the simple meaning of words such as *likeness* and *image* and *similitude* to some erudite and mystical meaning that has no relationship to their common meanings. Yet almost every Christian church today teaches that God is a spirit, without body, parts, or form. At least one major church declares that God is also without passions, hence the phrase that "God is without body, parts, or passions."

What type of relationship can someone develop with a god who is immaterial, invisible, and undefinable? It must be difficult, if not impossible, for the human heart and mind to fully contemplate and consummate a relationship with a mysterious "something" that can be neither envisioned nor defined. Contrary to such a belief, Paul declared: "We are also his [God's] offspring." Then he added, "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:28–29). What was Paul's point? That like begets like, and thus, if we are his offspring, we must be like him. A similar message was recorded in Hebrews, which reminds us to be "in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live" (Hebrews 12:9). There are multiple passages that refer to God as our Father in Heaven. Why? Because we are his spirit children, created in his image.

God is not an "it," as many Christians assert. He is not a thing. He is not some neuter force, not some ethereal nonsubstance. The scriptures not only refer to God as our Father in Heaven, but as "him" or "he" in verse after verse. Why? Because God is a male personage.43

Consistent with being a male personage, God has a corporeal body. Jacob declared: "I have seen God *face to face*" (Genesis 32:30). Paul spoke of a "*face to face*" encounter with the Lord (1 Corinthians 13:12), and John saw the day when the worthy would approach the throne of God and "see his *face*" (Revelation 22:4). The seventy of Israel "saw the God of Israel: and there was under his *feet* as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone" (Exodus 24:10). The ten commandments were "written with the *finger* of God" (Exodus 31:18). God said to Moses: "I will take away mine *hand*, and thou shalt see my *back parts*: but my *face* shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:23).44 The Lord said with regard to Moses: "With him will I speak *mouth to mouth*" (Numbers 12:8).45 It was the resurrected Savior whom Stephen saw "standing on the *right hand* of God" (Acts 7:55).46 Ezekiel saw "the appearance of his *loins*" (Ezekiel 1:27). John saw the coming of the Lord and declared that "his *eyes* were as a flame of fire, and on his *head* were many crowns. . . . And out of his *mouth* goeth a sharp sword" (Revelation 19:12, 15). He further revealed that Jesus "*sat upon*" a white horse and "was *clothed* with a vesture dipped in blood" (Revelation 19:11, 13). The scriptures also tell us that "Enoch *walked* with God" (Genesis 5:24) and that Abraham "stood yet before the Lord" (Genesis 18:22). Isaiah "saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne" (Isaiah 6:1). Does this sound like an amorphous, immaterial being—one whom the scriptures declare has a head, a face, eyes, a mouth, a hand, a finger, back

parts, loins, who sits upon a throne, rides a horse, wears clothes, and who has conversed with, walked with, and been seen by multiple prophets? Some would dismiss these as figurative, not literal statements, but why make repeated reference to God's body, person, image, and similitude if he has no body, is not a person, has no image, and lacks a similitude?<sup>47</sup>

But there is additional scriptural evidence of God's corporeal nature. There is no legitimate question about the physical nature of the Savior's resurrection. To his disciples he testified: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; *for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have*" (Luke 24:39). To dispel any doubt about the corporeal nature of his resurrected body, the Savior ate a "piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb" (Luke 24:42).<sup>48</sup> Tertullian knew Christ had a physical body in heaven: "Jesus is still sitting there at the right hand of the Father, . . . flesh and blood, yet [his body is] purer than ours."<sup>49</sup> The account of the resurrected Savior puts the "immaterialist" in a difficult position, for Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9), and the book of Hebrews declared the resurrected Savior to be in the "*express image of his [the Father's] person*" (Hebrews 1:3). In other words, the Father must also have a body of flesh and bones, since his Son is in his express image.

To counter this conclusion, the immaterialists contend that Jesus' resurrected body of flesh and bones was but a temporary manifestation to appeal to mortal man. Jesus, they claim, is not "restricted" to a physical body, but is a spirit (except for his brief appearances to man). Origen so implied:

He Himself [the Savior] is everywhere, and passes swiftly through all things; nor are we any longer to understand Him as existing in those narrow limits in which He was once confined for our sakes, meaning, not in that circumscribed body that He occupied on earth, when dwelling among men, according to which He might be considered as enclosed in some one place.<sup>50</sup>

Such a conclusion reached by Origen, however, is devoid of any scriptural support. There is no scripture that suggests that Christ has, or will, "shed" his resurrected physical body. In fact, such a conclusion is directly contrary to the teachings of Paul and is in opposition to the underlying purpose of the resurrection. Paul taught that the resurrected Lord "dieth no more" (Romans 6:9). What did Paul mean by that? He was not referring to the death of the spirit body, because it cannot die at all, let alone "no more." Rather he had reference to the death of the physical body. Accordingly, this scripture promised that the resurrected Jesus would not suffer physical death again. What is physical death? James defined it by saying, "the body *without* the spirit is dead" (James 2:26). Such an explanation means that Christ's physical body will *never* again be separated from his spirit; otherwise, he would suffer physical death—the very event Paul said could occur "no more." This means Christ will have his resurrected body for eternity. That is why John taught that when we are resurrected "we shall be like him [Jesus], for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

The whole purpose of the resurrection is to reunite the body (in a glorified state) with the spirit forever.<sup>51</sup> The Savior was the great exemplar. He was "the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). He arose with a physical body for all immortality, as a prototype of the resurrection for all mortals. A glorified physical body in its resurrected state is not a curse nor a restriction—to the contrary, it is an enhancement of our godly powers, an indispensable element to a fulness of joy, for "spirit and element [the body], inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy" (D&C 93:33).<sup>52</sup>

With a resurrected body the Savior penetrated the solid walls of the room where the apostles were gathered. The scriptures read: "*When the doors were shut* where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you" (John 20:19). After traveling

with the two men on the road to Emmaus, it was this resurrected body that "vanished out of their sight" (Luke 24:31), and it was this same resurrected body that ascended into heaven and will appear in great glory at his Second Coming. It was the physical body of the Savior that walked on water. Do these sound like restrictions—a body that can penetrate walls, instantaneously transport itself through space, come in glory, and walk on water? Eastern Orthodox writer Vladimir Lorsky wrote, "After the Resurrection, *the very body of Christ mocks spatial limitations*."<sup>53</sup> The truth is, the spirit body without its physical counterpart is restricted, for the scriptures tell us that the dead yearn for their bodies: "For the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage" (D&C 138:50). There is something about our physical bodies that perfects our passions, enlarges our power, and maximizes our joy.

### Why the Doctrine of a Corporeal God Became Corrupted

Why is it that the doctrine of a material God became lost? The following rationale and misinterpretations of scriptures evolved over time.

On several occasions the scriptures refer to an "invisible" God (Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:27). Some assume that these scriptures mean God cannot be seen by anyone, and therefore he must lack any element of materiality. What these scriptures mean is that God cannot be seen by the natural or carnal man.<sup>54</sup> This principle was taught many years before in the Old Testament. Daniel had a glorious vision in the presence of others, but recorded: "I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision" (Daniel 10:7). Why were the others blind to the heavenly manifestation? Because they were not on the same spiritual wavelength as Daniel. The book of Hebrews discloses that Moses was on that spiritual wavelength, because he "by faith . . . endured, *as seeing him who is invisible*" (Hebrews 11:27). This is consistent with the promise of the Lord to Aaron and Miriam, that "the similitude of the Lord shall he [Moses] behold" (Numbers 12:8). Obviously if God had a "similitude," he had an image or form that could be seen. In other words, God was invisible or hidden to the natural man, but not to spiritual men such as Abraham and Jacob and Moses and Stephen, who declared with solemnity that they had seen the living God.

In spite of the clear and multiple references of God's appearances to man, as discussed earlier, there are several scriptures that state that "no man hath seen God" (John 1:18)<sup>55</sup> or that use similar phrases (1 Timothy 6:15–16; 1 John 4:12; Exodus 33:20). How can these scriptures be reconciled with the testimonies of those who claimed to have seen God? Fortunately, Joseph Smith, while "retranslating" the Bible, clarified each of these scriptures to put them in conformity with their original translation. For example, John 1:18 was corrected to read, "And no man hath seen God at any time, *except he hath borne record of the Son*" (JST John 1:19);<sup>56</sup> and Exodus 33:20 was clarified to read, "Thou [Moses] canst not see my face, *at any time. . . . And no sinful man hath at any time, neither shall there be any sinful man at any time, that shall see my face and live*" (JST Exodus 33:20). The message was clear—no sinful man, no carnal man could see God, but spiritual men did, as testified repeatedly in the scriptures. One has two reasonable choices: either (1) accept a seeming conflict between the scriptures that record God's multiple visits to man and the scriptures that suggest no man has seen God, or (2) accept Joseph Smith's inspired translation and have no conflict among the scriptures.

Some have argued that God could not be corporeal because matter is corruptible, and therefore God, if material, would be corruptible. For example, Origen taught: "If He [God] be composed of matter, and matter is undoubtedly corruptible, then, according to them, God is liable to corruption!"<sup>57</sup> But what if there were a

type of matter that was not corruptible? What if there were a glorified matter that was indeed indestructible (immune to disease, pain, and death)? Would this not completely undermine Origen's premise for a noncorporeal God? Interestingly enough, Origen's argument is completely antithetical to the most basic of Christian beliefs—namely, that all men will be resurrected with glorified physical bodies, which are incorruptible (not subject to pain, disease, or death).<sup>58</sup> Paul addressed this issue clearly: "The dead shall be raised incorruptible. . . . For this corruptible [or present physical body] must put on incorruption [a glorified physical body], and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:52–53).<sup>59</sup> The doctrine of the physical resurrection of an incorruptible body was so universally accepted in the primitive Church that Tertullian wrote, "He, therefore, will not be a Christian who shall deny this doctrine [of a bodily resurrection] which is confessed by Christians."<sup>60</sup>

The obvious question arises, If mortals can have resurrected physical bodies that are incorruptible, then why cannot God's physical body be composed of the same material and thus be incorruptible? Of course, the answer is that it can and it does. In fact, that is exactly what Paul taught: "[Jesus] shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:21). This scripture was a simple acknowledgment that our resurrected bodies of flesh and bones will be fashioned like the Savior's glorious body, which body is able to "subdue all things unto himself." In other words, a resurrected body in its most glorified state has no restrictions or limitations.<sup>61</sup> If that is the case, then Origen's argument, that God cannot have a material body because it must of necessity be corruptible, completely fails. Origen knew that bodies might be glorified, for he wrote: "Another . . . may say that in the end, every bodily substance will be so pure and refined as to be like the aether [sic], and of a celestial purity and clearness. How things will be, however, is known with certainty to God alone."<sup>62</sup> But Origen knew more than he disclosed, because he understood and taught that men would be resurrected with an incorruptible body.

If a physical body is some type of limitation, then why would all men be resurrected with physical bodies? The doctrine of a physical resurrection was so basic to the early Christian church that it was incorporated into the Apostles' Creed (about A.D. 150) and thereafter adopted by the Catholic church and almost every Protestant faith. The pertinent line of the creed reads: "I believe in . . . the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting."<sup>63</sup> If a spirit alone is better than a combined body and spirit, why did God not leave all our physical bodies in the grave and allow the spirit of man to continue "unimpeded" by a resurrected body? The simple answer is that a glorified body does not impede us but enhances us. Otherwise, the central purpose of the resurrection is flawed.

Still others have argued that God cannot have a physical body because it would limit his presence to one place. With a body, they claim, God could not be everywhere. The sun, a material orb, is in one place, but its rays or influence are felt everywhere. So why cannot God have a physical body, yet like the sun have his influence felt everywhere?

Most of the confusion about the physical nature of God focuses on one scripture in John 4:24, in which John is quoted as saying, "God is a Spirit." This scripture might be interpreted in at least three ways:

*First*, it might be interpreted in the exclusive sense to mean that God is a spirit entity and nothing more (meaning, he has no body). Such an interpretation, however, would be in conflict with the multiple scriptures referred to above.

*Second*, this scripture might be interpreted to mean that God has a spirit, but that his spirit is only one

element of his being. In other words, John 4:24 was not intended to be a total description of God, but it was given in a nonexclusive sense. It did not exclude the possibility of him also having a physical body. Other scriptures illustrate the concept of nonexclusive descriptions of God. For example, Moses recorded that the Lord said, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:5).<sup>64</sup> It should be evident that this scripture referred only to *one* element of God's personality. It did not mean he was not also loving and kind and merciful. On one occasion the Lord said, "Man is spirit" (D&C 93:33). This was also given in a nonexclusive sense. It did not mean that man does not also have a physical body. When read in a nonexclusive sense, the foregoing scripture, "God is a Spirit," is not inconsistent with the host of other scriptures referring to God's physical nature and, in addition, is not inconsistent with the doctrine of Christ's physical resurrection.

*Third*, Joseph Smith observed that John 4:24 is one of the mistranslations of the Bible.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, he corrected this scripture to read in conformity with its original language: "For unto such hath God promised his Spirit" (JST John 4:26). This translation makes sense when the foregoing scripture is read in context. The woman of Samaria had asked the Savior *where* one should worship (on Mt. Gerizem where the Samaritans worshiped or in Jerusalem where the Jews worshiped). In response, the Savior emphasized that the place of worship was not the issue; what mattered more was the manner of worship, and we should worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23). In other words, as Joseph Smith's translation makes plain, the question was not about the nature of God, but where we should worship him. Referring to John 4:24, Elder Bruce R. McConkie added: "What marvels of mischief one mistranslated phrase has done! Jesus never, never, never said, 'God is a Spirit,' but rather that God had promised his Spirit unto those who worshiped him in Spirit and in truth."<sup>66</sup>

Even though many of the early Christian writers believed that God was a spirit, they struggled when trying to describe God as such. Tertullian wrote: "God, too (meaning Jesus), is a Spirit. Even when the ray is shot from the sun, it is still part of the parent mass; the sun will be in the ray, because it is a ray of the sun—there is no division of substance, but merely an extension [of it]."<sup>67</sup> The very words Tertullian used to describe a spirit, in fact, describe a material entity (parent mass, division of substance, extension of substance). Such a description suggests that God is some sort of substance but somehow not a material substance.

To further confuse matters, Origen simply echoed the sentiments of others, when he said, "The Word and Wisdom were begotten out of the invisible and incorporeal without any corporeal feeling."<sup>68</sup> In other words, something which is immaterial (but not nothing) proceeded to be begotten from something else which was immaterial (but not nothing).<sup>69</sup> As a result, some Christian creeds have described God as without body, parts, or passions. They claim he is immaterial, invisible, and undefinable. No wonder Elder LeGrand Richards observed, "To me it seems that their description of the god that they believe in is about the best description of nothing that can be written."<sup>70</sup> It is as though they are trying to place their arms around an elusive cloud instead of a loving Father in Heaven in whose image we are created.

### The Revealed Truth about God

In spite of the repeated scriptural witness of a material God, there was an attempt, after the loss of the apostles, to immaterialize, depersonalize, and mystify the nature of God. No longer was he our Father in Heaven, in whose image we were created. No longer was the Savior the literal Son of God with a glorified body of flesh and bones. This was too simple, too straightforward, too materialistic for the religious esoteric to accept. Rather, many heretics believed that simplicity and truth were mutually incompatible. Ignatius (A.D. 35–107) criticized certain heretics because "they introduce God as a Being unknown."<sup>71</sup> Yet that is exactly

the type of God that was eventually worshiped by the ongoing church.

The truth about the nature of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, is straightforward. This is not to suggest we can understand everything about them with our mortal minds, for we cannot; but any elaboration intended to add a cloak of mysticism only detracts from that which is already perfect.

After having read approximately five thousand pages of early Christian writings, hundreds of which are devoted to struggling attempts to describe the nature of God (often in the most arcane language, and frequently at odds one with another), how refreshing it was for me to reread the revelation given to Joseph Smith on the nature of God—simply and accurately stated in one sentence: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" (D&C 130:22). Such is the difference between the revelations of God and the philosophies of man. President Gordon B. Hinckley underscored this when he wrote:

To me it is a significant and marvelous thing that in establishing and opening this dispensation our Father did so with a revelation of himself and of his Son Jesus Christ, as if to say to all the world that he was weary of the attempts of men, earnest though these attempts might have been, to define and describe him. . . . The experience of Joseph Smith in a few moments in the grove on a spring day in 1820, brought more light and knowledge and understanding of the personality and reality and substance of God and his Beloved Son than men had arrived at during centuries of speculation.<sup>72</sup>

## Premortal Existence

### The Bible Speaks of a Premortal Life

Most Christian churches believe that Christ existed as a spirit before his mortal birth. Likewise, they believe that divine personages in the form of angels existed in that pre-earth life, and that Satan was a premortal being. But for some reason they do not believe that the spirits of mortals existed during this premortal realm. Rather, they believe that each man's spirit is created at his mortal birth. Unfortunately, the doctrine of a premortal existence for man was banned by the ongoing church. The scriptures and some early Christian writers, however, teach the contrary.

When speaking to Jeremiah, the Lord clearly taught the doctrine that man existed before his mortal birth: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). Obviously Jeremiah had to have lived prior to his birth if the Lord both knew him and ordained him before he was in his mother's womb. This is also consistent with the writings of Paul, which state, "For whom he did foreknow [or knew before birth], he also did predestinate [foreordain]" (Romans 8:29), and Paul's further writings to Timothy, noting that God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling . . . before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9).<sup>73</sup> The disciples also knew that there was a premortal life, as evidenced by their question concerning the man who "was blind from his birth." They asked: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:1–2). Why would the apostles have asked if premortal sin was the cause of his blindness at birth unless he existed in some capacity before mortality and, in addition, had the capacity to sin in such pre-earth life?<sup>74</sup>

The book of Ecclesiastes gives insight into the form in which we existed in our premortal life: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Certainly our spirits could not *return* to God at the moment of death unless they had previously been there prior to our mortal birth, any more than a man can return to a place from whence he has never been. The Savior taught the same doctrine: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven" (John 3:13).

Our spirits resided in the presence of God, as his sons and daughters, before our mortal birth. As Paul observed: "We are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28), meaning his spiritual children. He further referred to our divine heritage when he said, "We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Hebrews 12:9). In premortal life God was the father of our spirits. We were part of his family, as noted by Paul: "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Ephesians 3:15). In his fathering role, God nurtured and trained and prepared us for mortality. It was revealed to President Joseph F. Smith that "even before they [the noble and great ones] were born, they, with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits" (D&C 138:56). William Wordsworth must have glimpsed this heavenly home when he wrote:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar;  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home.<sup>75</sup>

In this primeval setting, John the Revelator said, there was a "war in heaven" (Revelation 12:7). Satan and a "third part of the stars of heaven," symbolizing God's spirit children, were "cast . . . to the earth" (Revelation 12:4).<sup>76</sup> Jude made mention of those "angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" (Jude 1:6), referring to their fall from heaven. Isaiah likewise saw the fall of Lucifer, for he said, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Then he explained why such a fall occurred: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God" (Isaiah 14:12–13).<sup>77</sup> However, two-thirds of those "stars of God" (God's spirit children) did not follow Satan and his minions. Job declared that when the foundation of the earth was being laid "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:4, 7). Those morning stars and sons of God were the two-thirds of God's spirit children who followed the Savior. They had faith in him, they trusted in him, and now they shouted for joy for the opportunity to enter their "second estate"—that of mortality.

Some people have become confused in thinking that the angels of heaven, as referred to in the scriptures, are different from the children of God who are sent to the earth. But Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100), in his epistle to the Corinthians, helps us understand that they are one and the same: "*When the Most High divided the nations, when He dispersed the sons of Adam, He fixed the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the angels of God*" (meaning the people who would constitute the nations of the earth).<sup>78</sup> Moses made it clear that the phrase "angels of God" (as referred to by Clement above) meant those mortals who would become the house of Israel, equating the angels of heaven with certain premortal spirits. He stated that God "set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:8). As to those premortal spirits who would inhabit the earth, Paul taught that God "hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). In other words,

God knows both the date and place of our mortal birth, predicated in large measure upon our life in the premortal existence.

### The Early Christian Writers Spoke of a Premortal Life

One of the earliest post-New Testament references to the doctrine of a premortal life is found in the *Recognitions of Clement*, which was probably written in the latter part of the second century or early part of the third century.<sup>79</sup> The author, speaking as though he were Peter, discoursed on the creation, and then commented: "But after all these things [the creation of the earth] He made man, on whose account He had prepared all things, *whose internal species is older*, and for whose sake all things that are were made." The translator, referring to the phrase "whose internal species is older," added this enlightening footnote: "That is, his soul, according to the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls."<sup>80</sup>

Origen acknowledged that the doctrine of the premortal existence had become obscure by the beginning of the third century: "What existed before this world, or what will exist after it, has not become certainly known to the many, for there is no clear statement regarding it in the teaching of the Church."<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, Origen believed there was a premortal realm, not only for Christ, but for all mortals. He understood that each of us brings to mortality those traits we developed in that premortal sphere. He suspected the reason that some people were more receptive to good and others to evil had to do with events "older than the bodily birth of the individual." He cited as the basis for his belief in a premortal existence the leaping of John the Baptist in his mother's womb at the salutation of Mary, and the Lord's pronouncement that he knew Jeremiah and ordained him a prophet before he was born. Origen then gave the following opinion as to why people are born with certain dispositions:

It appears to me, [to] give no other answer, so as to show that no shadow of injustice rests upon the divine government, than by holding *that there were certain causes of prior existence*, in consequence of which *the souls, before their birth in the body*, contracted a certain amount of guilt in their sensitive nature, or in their movements, on account of which they have been judged worthy by Divine Providence of being placed in this condition. For a soul is always in possession of free-will, as well when it is in the body as when it is without it; and freedom of will is always directed either to good or evil. . . . *And it is probable that these movements furnish grounds for merit even before they do anything in this world*; so that on account of these merits or grounds they are, immediately on their birth, and even before it, so to speak, asserted by Divine Providence for the endurance either of good or evil.

Then he added: "We must suppose that there sometimes existed certain causes anterior to bodily birth."<sup>82</sup>

Origen must have felt strongly about the reality of a premortal existence for man, because he further wrote, "He [God] created all whom He made equal and alike." (Certainly Origen was not referring to the physical creation, because all mortals are not equal or alike at birth.) He then continued:

But since those rational creatures themselves . . . were endowed with the power of free-will, this freedom of will incited each one either to progress by imitation of God, or reduced him to failure through negligence. And this, as we have already stated, is the cause of the diversity among rational creatures [some advanced above others in the premortal life]. . . . Now God, who deemed it just to arrange His creatures according to their merit, brought down these different understandings into the harmony of one world.

Origen further explained that God sent various vessels (or souls) to the earth—some were like gold and



silver, to be honored, others were like wood or clay, to be dishonored, based on their actions in the premortal life. As a result, Origen concluded that God is just because everyone is born "according to his merits; nor will the happiness or unhappiness of each one's birth, or whatever be the condition that falls to his lot, be deemed accidental." Why? Because his status in this life will in part be a reflection of his premortal choices. With the foregoing understanding, Origen reasoned that Jacob was honored above Esau due "to the deserts of his previous life."<sup>83</sup>

### The Doctrine of a Premortal Existence Is Banned by the Ongoing Church

The doctrine of a premortal existence continued to have some viability until the mid-sixth century, when Origen's teachings of a premortal life were condemned by a church edict known as *anathemas* against Origen.<sup>84</sup> It was a tragic event. A council composed of approximately 165 bishops, the very men who were entrusted to preach the gospel of Christ, denounced the very doctrine that was one of the cornerstones of the gospel plan. The doctrine of premortal existence had been officially banned. As to this event, Elder Boyd K. Packer observed: "This doctrine of premortal life was known to ancient Christians. For nearly five hundred years the doctrine was taught, but it was then rejected as a heresy by a clergy that had slipped into the Dark Ages of apostasy."<sup>85</sup>

Scholar Barry Robert Bickmore suggested three possibilities for such a ban, summarized and paraphrased as follows: First, the doctrine was promulgated by the Gnostics and, therefore, may have been in disfavor with mainline Christians; second, the doctrine may have been part of the secret traditions of the Christians (meaning it was sacred and, therefore, not publicly taught, but rather only privately discussed among the spiritually seasoned); and third, in a Hellenistic-driven world, it may have fallen prey to the Platonic doctrine that the spirit was uncreated.<sup>86</sup> Whatever the argument advanced, falsehood took the front stage from truth.

With the pronouncement of the foregoing edict, Satan must have been exultant. It was the dissolution of one more divine doctrine. Additional pieces of the gospel puzzle had been discarded, making it all the more difficult for the common man to understand God's plan—where he came from, why he is here, and where he is going. But truth is resilient. It is not easily dismissed. You may malign it, defame it, temporarily suppress it, even ignore it—but you cannot bury it. Armies may combat it, magistrates legislate against it, popes and clerics decry it, but like the immortal phoenix it will always rise again. It is eager to be discovered, anxious to shed forth its illuminating light on a benighted world. It has no equal—it overrules philosophy, it outranks science, it dictates to the dictator. Unleashed in its fulness, it crushes falsehood with a merciless power. And so the doctrine of a premortal existence could not be extinguished by a mere edict. One might as well declare by an edict that the earth is flat or the world is the center of the universe or God is dead. Time is always on the side of truth, and given enough time the doctrine of a premortal existence would triumph once again.

While the doctrine of the premortal existence was no longer taught in the ongoing church, it nonetheless surfaced in bits and pieces throughout Christian apocryphal literature. These were the seeds that would one day blossom in their fulness in the nurturing era of the Restoration. For example, in the *Secrets of Enoch* we read, "All souls are prepared to eternity, before the formation of the world."<sup>87</sup> From the Nag Hammadi book known as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the author wrote, "Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you will find the Kingdom. For you are from it, and to it you will return."<sup>88</sup> Referring to the relationship between one's actions in the premortal existence and one's birth in this life, the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, speaking as though he were Solomon, wrote: "I was, indeed, a child well-endowed, having had a noble soul fall to my lot; or rather being noble I entered an undefiled body."<sup>89</sup> And just as Jeremiah knew of his

foreordained status as a prophet of God, so likewise did Moses, as declared in the *Assumption of Moses*: "He [God] designed and devised me, and He prepared me before the foundation of the world, that I should be the mediator of His covenant."<sup>90</sup>

The idea of God's foreknowledge and acquaintance with mortals in a premortal life is a recurring theme in early Christian literature. The *Odes of Solomon* are one more example: "For I do not turn away my face from them that are mine; for I know them, and before they came into being I took knowledge of them, and on their faces I set my seal."<sup>91</sup> Amidst the dark night of apostasy, there were a few shining stars of truth.

### Human Experience Confirms a Premortal Life

Years ago my wife gave birth to identical twin sons. As time passed it was apparent they had many similarities. It was also apparent they had some distinct differences, even though they had the same genetic structure and were being raised in a kindred environment. It became obvious that they brought with them certain dispositions, certain attitudes and inclinations that were not environmentally induced. These qualities had far deeper roots and more distant origins than their brief mortal years. One might similarly ask, Why was Mozart a musical genius in his early childhood? Did he develop those remarkable skills in a few brief childhood years? Or did he develop the predominance of those skills over a long period of time in a premortal existence and then bring them with him at his birth? Some spiritual truths should be obvious deductions from our mortal experiences.

### Why the Doctrine Needed to Be Restored

In spite of the teaching of the prophets, in spite of the writings of the early Christian authors, and in spite of man's powers of observation about human development, the doctrine of a premortal existence disappeared from the horizon of Christian theology. There may be some individuals in particular sects who believe in such a teaching today, but as a church doctrine it was totally lost. President Joseph Fielding Smith observed the absence of this doctrine in modern Christianity: "I believe we are the only people in the world who believe in the pre-existence of the human family. There are many who believe in the pre-existence of Jesus Christ but they do not believe that we, individually, lived before we came into this life."<sup>92</sup>

Why does it make a difference if such a doctrine is taught? Because this doctrine helps us understand that we are the literal spirit children of God, who lived in his presence and were tutored in his heavenly home. It helps us understand that we came to earth to gain a physical body so we might become more like God physically and to keep his commandments so we might become more like him spiritually. This doctrine is a cornerstone to understanding who we really are and what we might really become. Its loss was a monumental setback to comprehending the divine plan and a significant clue that an apostasy was in effect. But like all truth, time was on its side. The day of restoration of all the truths of the primitive Church would come, and among them would be the doctrine of a premortal existence.

### The Fall of Adam

While all the doctrines of Christianity are critical to understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ, there are two doctrines that form the crux of Christianity—the fall of Adam and the atonement of Jesus Christ. One cannot understand the Atonement without first understanding the Fall any more than one can understand calculus without first understanding algebra. One is a prerequisite to the other. In this regard, President Benson said, "No one adequately and properly knows why he needs Christ until he understands and accepts the doctrine

of the Fall and its effect upon all mankind."<sup>93</sup> Thus the Fall and the Atonement become the centerpiece of Christianity.

I grew up thinking that what I believed about the Fall was the same as what my friends in other Christian churches believed, but in later years I discovered it was not so. Many of the basic, underlying principles of the Fall were lost or distorted during the times of the great apostasy. As a result, the following misconceptions concerning the Fall emerged:

*First misconception:* Much of the Christian world believes Adam and Eve would have had children in the Garden of Eden if they had been allowed to remain. Why do they believe this? After Adam and Eve transgressed in the Garden, the Bible records this statement of the Lord to Adam and Eve: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Genesis 3:16). Many interpret this to mean that if they had not sinned, they would have been allowed to bring forth children "without sorrow" in the Garden of Eden. Evidently Tertullian had this misconception. Speaking of the fall of Adam, he opined, "Woman is at once condemned to bring forth in sorrow and to serve her husband, although before she had heard without pain the increase of her race proclaimed with the blessing, *Increase and multiply*."<sup>94</sup> But fortunately the Book of Mormon enlightens us. Referring to the conditions in the Garden, it records: "And they would have had no children" (2 Nephi 2:23). Eve confirms this, as recorded in a modern-day scripture known as the Pearl of Great Price: "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed" (Moses 5:11). Likewise, logic confirms to us that it would have violated God's plan for Adam and Eve to have had children in the Garden, for such children, of necessity, would have been immortal (like their parents in the Garden) and thus deprived of all the growing experiences that are associated with a mortal body.

*Second misconception:* Many Christians believe that Adam and Eve, while in the Garden, were experiencing unparalleled joy in the presence of God, but the Book of Mormon reveals their true state of affairs: "They 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 Nephi 2:23). They would have been stuck, so to speak, in a state of spiritual neutral. It would be like asking someone in New York to drive to California, but requesting him to do so while in neutral. No matter how hard the driver pushed on the accelerator, his car simply would not go forward. It was necessary that Adam and Eve be cast from the Garden, so they could be put in "spiritual drive" and thus have the opportunity to move forward and become like God. Professor John Fiske, a Harvard philosopher, grasped the dilemma of their condition with this remarkable insight:

Clearly, for strong and resolute men and women an Eden would be but a fool's paradise. How could anything fit to be called *character* have ever been produced there? . . . We can at least begin to realize distinctly that unless our eyes had been opened at some time, so that we might come to know the good and the evil, we should never have become fashioned in God's image. We should have been the denizens of a world of puppets, where neither morality nor religion could have found place or meaning.<sup>95</sup>

As a result of these misconceptions, much of the Christian world has concluded that if Adam and Eve had not fallen, all of Adam's children would have been born in a state of bliss, to live happily ever after in Edenic conditions. Thus they conclude, the Fall was not part of God's master plan, but rather a tragic step backwards. Of course, this is not the case, for if there were no Fall, there would have been no Atonement; yet the Lord decreed in the premortal councils that the Savior would be the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8), thus evidencing that the Fall and the Atonement were part of the original divine plan.

## Grace versus Works

Likewise, misconceptions arose concerning the atonement of Jesus Christ and the relationship between grace and works. The ongoing church knew that godly works were an essential component to salvation,<sup>96</sup> but unfortunately these godly works were in many instances evidenced by mechanical acts. Instead of focusing on visiting the sick, helping the poor, living morally clean lives, or reading the scriptures, the church fixated on pilgrimages to holy sites, worship of relics, burning of incense, and payment of indulgences. It was a triumph of form over substance, the mechanical over the spiritual. Harry Emerson Fosdick, a noted Baptist minister, wrote, "Neither in the Letter to the Romans, nor in any letter he wrote was St. Paul concerned about sacred relics, religious pilgrimages, confession to a priest, purgatory and how to get out of it, acts of penance, and all the self-punishments familiar in the monasteries."<sup>97</sup>

Is it any wonder the Reformers were disenchanted with these godless works that were supposed to save? But unfortunately, as so often happens, the Reformers overcompensated and invented a new doctrine of salvation by grace alone, that disavowed all works, even godly works, as a necessary ingredient of salvation. The pendulum merely swung from one heresy to another.

As a result of the Reformation, many Christians teach that through the atonement of Jesus Christ we can be saved by grace alone, regardless of any works on our part. Many who teach this doctrine still render many good works. They do not believe, however, that works are a condition to salvation; they view good works as an evidence of their salvation. Generally these proponents quote the words of Paul: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, the supporters of salvation by works often quote James, who said: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. . . . The devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:17, 19–20).<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately, in some cases the discussion has been reduced to an ecclesiastical "shoot out" of sorts, one scripture being pitted against another. Does it seem reasonable that Paul and James, both apostles of God, would teach conflicting doctrines on the basic issue of salvation?

Who is right—the supporters of salvation by grace alone or the supporters of salvation by works? Are the foregoing scriptures irreconcilable? Martin Luther evidently thought so, for he wrote: "Many sweat to reconcile St. Paul and St. James . . . but in vain. 'Faith justifies' and 'faith does not justify' contradict each other flatly. If any one can harmonize them I will give him my doctor's hood and let him call me a fool."<sup>100</sup> So annoyed was he by this apparent inconsistency in the scriptures that he advocated, "We should throw the Epistle of James out of this school [the University of Wittenberg]."<sup>101</sup> Unable to reconcile the scriptures, Luther decided to allow Paul's writings to trump James's writings.

Luther was a great man in many respects, but such a course of conduct set a spiritually dangerous precedent. He elected to "throw out" the book of James because a portion of it spoke of works, contrary to his belief in salvation by grace alone. Based on that same rationale, would he now discard the book of Revelation because it insisted that as to the dead "their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13), and that the dead would be "judged every man according to their works" (Revelation 20:13)?<sup>102</sup> Worse yet for Luther, the book of Revelation records that an angel from heaven reprimanded the Saints at Sardis because their "*works*" were not "perfect before God." This angel then promised the faithful Saints at Sardis that "they shall walk with me in white: for they are *worthy*" (Revelation 3:2, 4). Those terrible words to Luther, "works" and "worthy," were being used by an angel of God. Would Luther nonetheless discard these angelic words as

being inconsistent with that portion of the Holy Writ he chose to follow? Yet if Luther threw out the book of Revelation, then he should rightfully discard all the writings of its author, John. This would necessitate the removal of First, Second, and Third John, particularly since John wrote the following: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (1 John 2:4–5).<sup>103</sup> It would even require the removal of the gospel of John, since it states that those who "have done good, come unto the resurrection of life" (John 5:29).<sup>104</sup> Peter likewise would not be exempt from Luther's pruning process, for Peter had declared that the Father "judgeth according to every man's works" (1 Peter 1:17), and that it was "the will of God" that men be engaged in "well doing" (1 Peter 2:15).<sup>105</sup>

But Luther's slippery slope only gets worse. Paul, who is the primary proponent for Luther's claim of salvation by grace alone, is also Luther's chief opponent. Paul stated that God "will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6) and then elaborated, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:13).<sup>106</sup> Paul commended the Saints at Philippi for their obedience and then instructed them: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Later he informed Titus that some are "abominable" because they "profess" God "but in works they deny him" (Titus 1:16). Paul then explained to Titus that the Savior wanted to purify a people who would be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).<sup>107</sup> What happened to being saved by grace alone? Does Luther now tear from his Bible every epistle of Paul, except for selected verses that refer to salvation by grace?

But there loomed an even greater dilemma for Luther. After the Savior gave the masterful discourse known as the Sermon on the Mount, setting forth how men should live (not just believe), did he conclude by saying, "Believe and ye shall be saved"? No! Instead he warned the listeners, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven." Lest there be any question about the Savior's intent, he added, "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand" (Matthew 7:21, 26). Could any miss the point? Hearing alone, belief alone, was not enough. In fact, reliance on belief alone was declared by the Savior to be foolishness.

Again and again the Savior preached the need for works and obedience: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15), and "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (John 15:10). Jesus then gave the true test of discipleship: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31).<sup>108</sup> The Savior made it clear that belief alone was not sufficient for salvation, for he declared, "He that shall *endure* unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).<sup>109</sup>

It was not just grace alone, but works and worthiness and endurance were also essential elements of salvation, as taught by the Savior himself. Would Luther, nonetheless, obliterate these writings of the Savior from the New Testament because they were seemingly contrary to Paul's message on grace?

Contrary to the suggested outcome of Luther's challenge, the foregoing scriptures on grace and works can be harmonized, as discussed below. Fortunately, no gospel writers need be in jeopardy of having their works dismissed from the New Testament because they are in supposed opposition to others. Each was an instrument in the Lord's hands and each taught the same doctrine.

David W. Bercot, an ardent student of the early Christian authors, wrote a book entitled *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*. It is a collection of over seven thousand quotations of the early Christian writers

categorized in over seven hundred topics. In another related book titled *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up* he told of his somewhat startling introduction to these early Christian writings:

When I first began studying the early Christian writings, I was surprised by what I read. In fact, after a few days of reading, I put their writings back on the shelf and decided to scrap my research altogether. After analyzing the situation, I realized the problem was that their writings contradicted many of my own theological views. . . . They frequently taught the opposite of what I believed, and they even labeled some of my beliefs as *heretical*. . . .

If there's any single doctrine that we would expect to find the faithful associates of the apostles teaching, it's the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. After all, that is the cornerstone doctrine of the Reformation. In fact, we frequently say that persons who don't hold to this doctrine aren't really Christians. The story we usually hear about church history is that the early Christians taught our doctrine of salvation by faith alone. But after Constantine corrupted the church, it gradually began to teach that works play a role in our salvation. . . . Most evangelical writers give the impression that the belief that our own merits and works affect our salvation was something that gradually crept into the church after the time of Constantine and the fall of Rome. But that's not really the case. The early Christians universally believed that works or obedience play an essential role in our salvation. This is probably quite a shocking revelation to most evangelicals. But . . . there's no room for doubt concerning this matter.<sup>110</sup>

Bercot then quoted numerous early Christian writers, in chronological order, each of which asserted that works are an essential component of salvation. The following is a sampling of his quotations:

Clement of Rome, who was a companion of the apostle Paul, . . . wrote, "It is necessary, therefore, that we be prompt in the practice of good works. For He forewarns us, 'Behold, the Lord comes and His reward is before his face, to render to every man according to his work.'"

Polycarp, the personal companion of the apostle John, taught, "He who raised Him up from the dead will also raise us up—if *we do His will and walk in His commandments*."

The letter of Barnabas states: "He who keeps these [commandments] will be glorified in the kingdom of God."

Hermas, who wrote sometime between the years 100 and 140, stated, "Only those who fear the Lord *and keep His commandments have life with God*. . . . But I implore you to *obey His commands, and you will have a cure for your former sins*."

In his first apology, written sometime before A.D. 150, Justin Martyr told the Romans, . . . "And so we have received [this teaching] that *if men by their works show themselves worthy of His design*, they are deemed worthy of reigning in company with Him."

Clement of Alexandria, writing in about 190, said, . . . "Whoever obtains [the truth] *and distinguishes himself in good works* shall gain the prize of everlasting life. . . . Some people correctly and adequately understand how [God provides necessary power], but attaching slight importance to the *works* that lead to salvation, they fail to make the necessary preparation for attaining the objects in their hope."

Origen, who lived in the early 200s, wrote, "The soul . . . [will] be rewarded according to what it deserves,

being destined to obtain . . . an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness, *if its actions shall have procured this for it.*"

Hippolytus, a Christian overseer who lived at the same time as Origen, wrote, "The Gentiles, by faith in Christ, prepare for themselves eternal life *through good works*. . . . The righteous will remember only the *righteous* deeds by which they reached the heavenly kingdom."

Cyprian wrote, . . . "a person does not attain the Kingdom of Heaven even though he is found in all these things unless he walks in the observance of the right and just way. . . . We must obey His precepts and warnings that our merits may receive their reward."

Finally, Lactantius, writing in the early 300's, explained to the Romans, . . . "For this reason He has given us this present life, *that we may either lose the true and eternal life by our sins, or win it by our virtue.*"<sup>111</sup>

There are many other such references by the early Christian writers. For example, Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) focused in on the same issue:

But how can a man say that he believes in Christ, who does not do what Christ commanded him to do? Or whence shall he attain to the reward of faith, who will not keep the faith of the commandment? He must of necessity waver and wander, and, caught away by a spirit of error, like dust which is shaken by the wind, be blown about; *and he will make no advance in his walk towards salvation, because he does not keep the truth of the way of salvation.*<sup>112</sup>

Barnabas, who was also cited above, wrote, "The way of light, then, is as follows. If any one desires to travel to the appointed place he must be zealous in his works."<sup>113</sup> Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) helps us understand that the word "believe" is not meant to be a passive principle, for he wrote, "*To believe in Him [Christ] is to do His will.*"<sup>114</sup> In other words, one did not really believe if he did not obey.

It is no surprise that David Bercot concluded: "In fact, *every* early Christian writer who discussed the subject of salvation presented this same view."<sup>115</sup> Bercot was careful to note that the early Christian writers also taught that we cannot be saved without the grace of Christ.<sup>116</sup> In other words, he noted that grace and works are inextricably tied together. He then explained the relationship between the two, as follows:

You may be saying to yourself, "I'm confused. Out of one side of their mouths they say we are saved because of our works, and out of the other side they say we are saved by faith or grace. They don't seem to know what they believed!"

Oh, but they did. Our problem is that Augustine, Luther, and other Western theologians have convinced us that there's an irreconcilable conflict between salvation based on grace and salvation conditioned on works or obedience. They have used a fallacious form of argumentation known as the "false dilemma," by asserting that there are only two possibilities regarding salvation: it's either (1) a gift from God or (2) it's something we earn by our works.

The early Christians would have replied that a gift is no less a gift simply because it's conditioned on obedience. Suppose a king asked his son to go to the royal orchard and bring back a basket full of the king's favorite apples. After the son had complied, suppose the king gave his son half of his kingdom. Was the

reward a gift, or was it something the son had earned? The answer is that it was a gift. The son obviously didn't earn half of his father's kingdom by performing such a small task. The fact that the gift was conditioned on the son's obedience doesn't change the fact that it was still a gift.

The early Christians believed that salvation is a gift from God but that God gives His gift to whomever He chooses. *And He chooses to give it to those who love and obey him.*<sup>117</sup>

This observation by Bercot is consistent with the doctrine of the restored Church: "And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7).

David Bercot's conclusion is also a synopsis of the doctrine repeatedly taught by the early Christian writers. They knew that the doctrines of works and grace were not only compatible but mutually dependent. For example, Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200) taught: "For by grace we are saved': not, indeed, without good works."<sup>118</sup> Tertullian understood there could be no forgiveness without some works (in this case, repentance):

Further, how inconsistent is it to expect pardon of sins (to be granted) to a repentance which they have not fulfilled! *This is to hold out your hand for merchandise, but not produce the price. For repentance is the price at which the Lord has determined to award pardon: He proposes the redemption of release from penalty at this compensating exchange of repentance.*<sup>119</sup>

Fortunately, it is not an equal quid pro quo which God requires (meaning God does not require our works to equal his grace). Origen highlighted the uneven contributions made by man and God in the salvation process. He spoke of certain sailors who exerted great labor and demonstrated the highest of navigational skills to avoid a dangerous storm, but ultimately were saved by the mercy of God. He concluded his parable-like story by saying, "Not even the sailors or pilot venture to say, 'I have saved the ship,' but they refer all to the mercy of God; not that they feel that they have contributed no skill or labour to save the ship, but because they know that while they contributed the labour, the safety of the vessel was insured by God." Then Origen made this analogy: "So also in the race of our life we ourselves must expend labour, and bring diligence and zeal to bear; but it is from God that salvation is to be hoped for as the fruit of our labour. *Otherwise, if God demand none of our labour, His commandments will appear to be superfluous.*" Another translation of the same by Origen reads: "So also our own perfection is brought about, not as if we ourselves did nothing; for it is not completed by us, *but God produces the greater part of it. . . . And in the matter of our salvation, what is done by God, is infinitely greater than what is done by ourselves.*"<sup>120</sup>

We recognize that we do not earn our salvation—all the good works in the world cannot save a single man. But as small as it might be in the total equation, we must contribute the best we have to offer. Nephi put grace and works in their proper perspective when he wrote, "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). His observation was perhaps as perfect a summary as one could make of the early Christian writers on this subject. C. S. Lewis likewise hit the nail on the head when he said that the debate between grace and works is "like asking which blade in a pair of scissors is most necessary."<sup>121</sup> In other words, works and grace are mutually dependent.

If the following principles are applied, the scriptures on grace and works can be found to be in harmony, not in conflict:



*First*, an acknowledgment that no one can be saved without the grace of God (works alone can never save a single person).<sup>122</sup>

*Second*, an understanding that works are necessary to make us eligible for the grace of God. Our works *do not earn* us the right to receive God's grace, but our works do *make us eligible*<sup>123</sup> to receive God's grace, because God has so decreed it.

*Third*, an understanding that the scriptures that suggest we are not justified by the law are generally speaking of the law of Moses, *not* the law of Christ. For example, Paul taught, "Ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39).<sup>124</sup>

*Fourth*, a willingness to apply some common sense, from which theology is not exempt. Isaiah said, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18).<sup>125</sup> What doctrine makes more sense: that every man is saved who professes a belief in Christ regardless of his lifestyle, or that we are saved by Jesus' grace, *provided* we live the commandments as given to us by God? Which of the foregoing doctrines would make men more godly? Which would make for a better world? Which one would appeal to Satan? Answer those questions, and you will know the doctrine taught in the ancient Church.

It is of some interest that David Bercot noted there was one "religious group, labeled as heretics by the early Christians, who strongly disputed the church's stance on salvation and works." This group, he said, taught "that we are saved solely by grace. That works play no role in our salvation." Then he insightfully observed: "I know what you are thinking: This group of 'heretics' were the real Christians and the 'orthodox' Christians were really heretics. But such a conclusion is *impossible*. I say it's impossible because the group I'm referring to are the Gnostics."<sup>126</sup> Bercot pointed out that a believer of the Gnostic philosophy was branded by John the Beloved as a "deceiver and an antichrist" (2 John 1:7). He then concluded his message with this somewhat damning observation: "So, if our evangelical doctrine of salvation [the belief that we are saved by grace alone] is true, we are faced with the uncomfortable reality that this doctrine was taught by 'deceivers and antichrists' before it was taught by the church."<sup>127</sup> And so the doctrine of salvation by grace alone, first invented by the Gnostics and erroneously reenthroned by the Reformers, replaced the true doctrine in much of the Christian world. It was another departure from the truth—another evidence of apostate doctrine.

#### The Doctrine of Deification (Becoming Like God)<sup>128</sup>

With the advent of the Restoration came some doctrines that corrected certain Christian teachings that had been corrupted with the apostasy, some that filled a void created by lost doctrines, and yet others, particularly one, that so confronted and challenged mainstream Christian theology that it has been labeled as blasphemous by many. This is the doctrine that man may become a god through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Such a doctrine is alleged to lower God to the status of man, and thus deprive God of both his dignity and divinity. Certain detractors claim that man's quest for godhood is devoid of scriptural support and that no God-fearing, right-thinking, Bible-oriented person would subscribe to such a philosophy. On occasion members of the restored Church are disparagingly referred to as "God Makers." Yet the evidence of this glorious truth and its divine correctness is not only substantial but compelling. If there were a trial, the witnesses would be lined up to testify in its behalf. First, there would be the testimony of the Bible and modern scriptures; second, the witness of the early Christian writers; third, the works of noble poets and authors; fourth, the voice of history; and fifth, the power of logic.

#### The Bible and Modern Scriptures

The Bible and modern scriptures are replete with references to man's potential for perfection and ultimately godhood. As early as in the book of Genesis an angel appeared to Abraham and extended to him this heavenly mandate, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1). What type of perfection was the angel alluding to? Perfection as compared to other men? Angels? God? During the Sermon on the Mount the Savior gave the unequivocal answer: "Be ye therefore perfect, *even* as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).<sup>129</sup> This challenge was consistent with the Savior's high-priestly prayer. Speaking of the believers, he petitioned the Father "that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:22–23). Paul taught that a vital reason for the Church was "for the perfecting of the Saints . . . till we all come . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the *fulness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:12–13). Note the measuring rod—not man, not some form of mini-Christ or quasi-God, but rather "the fulness of Christ." The standard of perfection was not other men or angels, but Christ himself. Fortunately the timetable for accomplishing this lofty goal extends beyond these mortal bounds.

The scriptures supporting this doctrine continue to roll forth with repeated and powerful testimony. At one point the Savior was about to be stoned by the Jews for blasphemy. He reminded them of his good works and then asked, "For which of those works do ye stone me?" They replied, that they were not stoning him for his good works, but "because that thou, being a man, *makest thyself God.*" Ironically, it is exactly the same argument made by the detractors of today—the Savior was accused of being a "God Maker." To this he readily acknowledged that he was, and declared that they should be likewise: "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?" (John 10:32–34). In other words he said, not only am I a god, but all of you are potential gods. He was referring to his own Old Testament declaration, with which the Jews should have been familiar: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High" (Psalms 82:6). The Savior was merely reaffirming a gospel teaching that all men were children of God and thus might become like him. Paul understood this principle, for when speaking to the men of Athens, he said, "Certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28).

Paul knew the consequences of being the offspring of God, for while speaking to the Romans, he declared, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16–17)—not subordinate heirs, not junior, not contingent, but joint, equal heirs with Christ, to share in all that he shall receive.<sup>130</sup> John the Revelator saw in vision how all-inclusive this inheritance might be, even for a struggling mortal: "He that overcometh shall *inherit all things*; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7). There are no qualifiers here. The Lord does not promise "some things" or even "many things," but rather "all things." Timothy also knew of this possibility, for Paul promised him, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:12).<sup>131</sup> The word *reign* suggests a kingdom, a dominion over which we would have rule. The words *reign with him* suggest a position of *like* power and rule.<sup>132</sup> This is consistent with the Savior's promise: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21). What throne was he referring to? Nothing less than the throne of godhood.

Is it any wonder that Paul should write to the Saints of Philippi, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). Paul, who understood this doctrine, was striving for the prize of godhood. He then extended this universal invitation to all Saints: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded" (Philippians 3:15).<sup>133</sup> Peter acknowledged that God "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness," and accordingly declared that we "might be partakers of the divine

nature" (2 Peter 1:3–4), meaning recipients of godhood.

Knowing that men might become partakers of the divine nature, David spoke of a multiplicity of gods: "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the *gods*" (Psalm 82:1). Later he wrote, "Before the *gods* will I sing praise unto thee" (Psalm 138:1). Nonetheless, some contend that other scriptures refer to only one God and, therefore, man cannot become a god—otherwise he would be in violation of such scriptures. For example, they quote Paul, who taught, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Corinthians 8:6).<sup>134</sup> The foregoing scripture, however, does not say there is an absence of multiple gods, but rather suggests there is a hierarchy or order of gods, and thus there exists only one God to whom we are accountable.<sup>135</sup> The Savior's soul-stirring and thought-provoking injunction to "be ye therefore perfect" was more than the sounding of brass or tinkling of cymbals. It was a heavenly mandate to rise up to our full potential and become like God our Father.

### Early Christian Writers

The foregoing doctrine was likewise taught by many of the early Christian writers. It is of some interest that Jordan Vajda, a former Catholic priest, came to a similar conclusion while writing his master's thesis. He wrote the following: "The historic Christian doctrine of salvation—theosis, meaning, human divinization [becoming like God]—for too long has been forgotten by too many Christians, despite the fact that this teaching is a part of the common inheritance—first millennium Christianity." Vajda then cited some early Christian writers who supported this view: "St. Irenaeus of Lyons, . . . who had known St. Polycarp, who had known the Apostles—wrote, 'the Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, who because of his immeasurable love became what we are in order to make us what he is.' St. Athanasius of Alexandria [ A.D. 295–373] also explained that 'God became man, so that we might be made gods.'"<sup>136</sup>

Many other Christian writers addressed the subject. In speaking of the hereafter, Barnabas wrote, "We ourselves shall be made perfect so we may become heirs of the covenant of the Lord."<sup>137</sup> Justin Martyr recognized that mortal men could eventually be deified: "We have learned that those only are deified who have lived near to God in holiness and virtue."<sup>138</sup> Theophilus (second century A.D.) wrote that if a man would keep the "commandment of God, he should receive as reward from Him immortality, and should become God."<sup>139</sup> Hippolytus further elaborated on this same subject: "If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God. And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the laver, he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead."<sup>140</sup> Cyprian reaffirmed that men can become like Christ: "What Christ is, we Christians shall be, if we imitate Christ."<sup>141</sup>

The process of becoming like God is possible, but it is a long and strenuous journey. Irenaeus noted: "We have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, then at length gods."<sup>142</sup> Clement of Alexandria spoke of the "great preparation and previous training" it would require. He then spoke of the reward of godhood that followed:

It [the instruction and preparation] leads us to the endless and perfect end, teaching us beforehand the future life that we shall lead, according to God, and with gods; after we are freed from all punishment and penalty which we undergo. . . . After which redemption the reward and the honours are assigned to those who have become perfect; when they have got done with purification . . . the Lord, there awaits them restoration to everlasting contemplation; and they are called by the appellation of gods, *being destined to sit on thrones with the other gods that have been first put in their places by the Saviour*.<sup>143</sup>

Clement of Alexandria then added: "Being baptized we are illuminated; illuminated, we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal. 'I' says He, have said that ye are gods, and all sons of the Highest."<sup>144</sup> Arnobius (A.D. 260–330) went even further, as summarized by the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*: "The gods were originally human beings who were deified upon death."<sup>145</sup>

Some have contended that the references of the early Christian writers to deification and godhood meant only immortality and moral perfection, not an acquisition of godly power; but the scriptures and writers referred to above spoke of man achieving a "fulness of Christ," being one like Christ and the Father, becoming "joint-heirs with Christ," reigning with Christ, becoming like Christ, and sitting "on thrones with the other gods." Does this sound like something less than a fulness of godhood?

Irenaeus made it clear that exalted man would not be relegated to some type of glorified angel, but literally become a god: "Passing beyond the angels and be made after the image and likeness of God."<sup>146</sup> Clement of Alexandria added this unequivocal statement about the man who lives a righteous life: "Knowing God, he will be made like God . . . and *that man becomes God, since God so wills*. Heraclitus, then rightly said, 'Men are gods and gods are men.'<sup>147</sup>

Hippolytus spoke of the unlimited potential of faithful Saints in this life: "And thou shalt be a companion of the Deity, and a *co-heir* with Christ, no longer enslaved by lusts or passions, and *never again* wasted by disease. *For thou has become God, . . . thou has been deified*, and begotten unto immortality. This constitutes the *import of the proverb*, 'Know thyself,' meaning, discover God *within thyself*, for He has formed thee *after His own image*."<sup>148</sup> Why refer to God's image within us if we cannot become like the great prototype himself?

Fortunately, some of the early Christian writers, as well as modern-day prophets, were kind enough to further elaborate on the subject of multiple gods, and in so doing they spoke of a hierarchy of gods. This helps us understand the relationship between an exalted man, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Highest in this order of hierarchy is the Father, then the Son, then the Holy Ghost, and thereafter exalted mortals. Origen so wrote: "And thus the first-born of all creation, who is the first to be with God, and to attract to Himself divinity, is a being of more exalted rank than the other gods beside Him, of whom God is the God. . . . The true God, then, is 'The God,' and those who are formed after Him are gods, images, as it were, of Him the prototype."<sup>149</sup> Origen then acknowledged that some will dislike his reference to man's potential for godhood, due to his admission of "other beings besides the true God, *who have become gods by having a share of God*. They may fear that the glory of Him who surpasses all creation may be lowered to the level of those other beings [exalted man] called gods."<sup>150</sup> To eliminate such fear, Origen did not repudiate man's potential for godhood, but instead reinforced the truth that in the hierarchy of gods "there is but one God the Father" and "to us there is one Lord, Jesus Christ."<sup>151</sup> In other words, we can become gods, but we will still honor and worship the Father, just as a son who becomes a father can still honor his own father. Accordingly, this heavenly hierarchy allows for man's potential godhood without sacrificing God's divinity or preeminence. President Gordon B. Hinckley wrote: "This lofty concept [deification] in no way diminishes God the Eternal Father. He is the Almighty. He is the Creator and Governor of the universe. *He is the greatest of all and will always be so*."<sup>152</sup>

Jordan Vajda, while a Catholic monk, concluded his master's thesis with this observation, which may be unsettling for many: "It seems that if one's soteriology [theological beliefs about salvation] cannot

accommodate a doctrine of human divinization [man becoming like God], then it has at least implicitly, if not explicitly, rejected the heritage of the early Christian church and departed from the faith of first millennium Christianity."153

#### Literary Insights (Poets and Authors)

We may also find a witness of man's potential godhood in the wisdom of selected poets and authors who drank from the divine well. C. S. Lewis was one who reaffirmed this divine proposition on multiple occasions. Commenting on Matthew 5:48, he wrote:

The command *Be ye perfect* is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. . . . He said (in the Bible) that we were "gods" and He is going to make good His words. . . . The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less. He meant what He said. . . . Those who put themselves in His hands will become perfect, as He is perfect—perfect in love, wisdom, joy, beauty, and immortality.154

On another occasion he addressed the same subject:

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which . . . you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.155

There are no ordinary people—no ciphers and no zeros, only potential gods and goddesses in our midst. C. S. Lewis taught this principle by way of a childhood experience. He recalled his repeated toothaches and his desire for relief—but likewise the nagging fear that if he disclosed his pain, his mother would take him to the dentist. He said, "I knew those dentists; I knew they started fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. . . . [I]f you gave them an inch, they took an ell." Then he made this comparison:

Our Lord is like the dentists. . . . Dozens of people go to Him to be cured of some one particular sin which they are ashamed of. . . . Well, He will cure it all right: but He will not stop there. That may be all you asked; but if you once call Him in, He will give you the full treatment. . . . "Make no mistake," He says, "if you let Me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in My hands, that is what you are in for. Nothing less, or other, than that. You have free will, and if you choose, you can push Me away. But if you do not push Me away, understand that I am going to see this job through. Whatever suffering it may cost you in your earthly life, whatever inconceivable purification it may cost you after death, whatever it costs Me, *I will never rest, nor let you rest, until you are literally perfect—until my Father can say without reservation that He is well pleased with you, as He said he was well pleased with Me. This I can do and will do. But I will not do anything less.*" . . . *You must realize from the outset that the goal toward which He is beginning to guide you is absolute perfection; and no power in the whole universe, except you yourself, can prevent Him from taking you to that goal. That is what you are in for. And it is very important to realize that.*156

Victor Hugo, the masterful French author, offered this powerful and sublime thought: "The thirst for the infinite proves infinity."<sup>157</sup> Perhaps the thirst for godhood likewise proves godhood. Would the God you and I know plant the vision and desire for godhood within a man's soul and then frustrate him in his ability to attain it?

Robert Browning, whose vision so often pierced the mortal veil, knew the answer, as disclosed in these lines from his poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra":

Life's struggle having so far reached its term.  
Thence shall I pass, approved  
A man, for aye removed  
From the developed brute—a god, though in the germ.<sup>158</sup>

### The Voice of History

The voice of history is another witness that will testify of man's godly destination. No doubt we all feel inadequate when we look at the distance between God and ourselves, but we can take comfort when we contemplate what can be accomplished in the short space of a mortal life. B. H. Roberts expressed it in these lofty terms:

Think for a moment what progress a man makes within the narrow limits of this life. Regard him as he lies in the lap of his mother, . . . a new born babe! . . . From that helpless babe may arise one like Demosthenes, or Cicero, or Pitt, or Burke, or Fox, or Webster, who shall compel listening senates to hear him, and by his master mind dominate their intelligence and their will, and compel them to think in channels that he shall mark out for them. . . . From the helpless babe may come a Michael Angelo, who from some crude mass of stone from the mountain side shall work out a heaven-born vision that shall hold the attention of men for generations, and make them wonder at the God-like powers of man that has created an all but living and breathing statue. Or a Mozart, a Beethoven, or a Handel, may come from the babe, and call out from the silence those melodies and the richer harmonies that lift the soul out of its present narrow prison house and give it fellowship for a season with the gods. . . .

And all this may be done by a man in this life! Nay, it has been done, between the cradle and the grave—within the span of one short life. Then what may not be done in eternity by one of these God-men?<sup>159</sup>

Contemplate for a moment what can be accomplished in the mere span of a mortal life. Suppose now, that you were to remove from man the barrier of death, grant him immortality and God for his guide; what limits would you then want to ascribe to his mental, moral or spiritual achievements? Again, B. H. Roberts expressed it well when he said:

If within the short space of mortal life there are men who rise up out of infancy and become masters of the elements of fire and water and earth and air, so that they well-nigh rule them as gods, what may it not be possible for them to do in a few hundreds or thousands of millions of years? What may they not do in eternity? To what heights of power and glory may they not ascend?<sup>160</sup>

C. S. Lewis gave this additional reminder: "The job will not be completed in this life: but He means to get us as far as possible before death."<sup>161</sup> A glimpse beyond the veil reveals that the records of history do not end at death, but continue to mark man's unlimited achievement. Victor Hugo sensed the unlimited possibilities in

the afterlife:

The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the worlds which invite me. . . . For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose, verse, history, satire, ode, and song. I have tried all, but I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to my grave I can say like many others, "I have finished my day's work," but I cannot say I have finished my life. My day's work will begin on the next morning. Death is not a blind alley. It is a thoroughfare. It closes up the twilight; it opens upon the dawn.<sup>162</sup>

The scriptures suggest that the quest is neither easy nor quick at hand. Peter admonished the Saints to "humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you *in due time*" (1 Peter 5:6).<sup>163</sup> Modern scriptures also caution: "Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now. . . . Wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected" (D&C 67:13). Are there any for whom the divine possibility has become a divine reality? Speaking of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Lord said, "Because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation . . . and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods" (D&C 132:37). History had run its course—men had become gods.

## Logic

The power of logic ought to convince us that the doctrine of deification is consistent with fundamental scientific and religious truths. Do not the laws of science teach us that like begets like, each after its kind? Science has discovered that a complex genetic code transferred from parent to child is responsible for the child attaining the physical attributes of his parents. If this be so, is it illogical to conclude that spiritual offspring receive a spiritual code giving them the divine potential of their parent—even God himself? No, it is but a fulfillment of the law that like begets like. This is the same truth taught by the prophet Lorenzo Snow, who through personal revelation was so well acquainted with this principle:

We were born in the image of God our Father; He begat us like unto Himself. *There is the nature of Deity in the composition of our spiritual organization.* In our spiritual birth, our Father transmitted to us the capabilities, powers and faculties which He possessed, as much so as the child on its mother's bosom possesses, although in an undeveloped state, the faculties, powers and susceptibilities of its parent.<sup>164</sup>

Elder Boyd K. Packer told of coming home one day and being met by his little children, who were anxious to show him some newly hatched chicks. As his little four-year-old daughter picked one of them up Elder Packer said, "That will make a nice watchdog when it grows up, won't it?" His daughter looked at him with an expression that suggested he did not know much. So he said, "It won't be a watchdog, will it?" She shook her head and replied, "No, Daddy." Then he added, "It will be a nice riding horse." His little daughter gave him that "Oh, Dad!" look. Then he said, "Even a four-year old knows that a chick will not grow to be a dog, nor a horse, nor even a turkey. It will be a chicken. It will follow the pattern of its parentage."<sup>165</sup> The Gospel of Philip, one of the Nag Hammadi discoveries, makes this simple statement of fact: "A horse sires a horse, a man begets man, a god brings forth a god."<sup>166</sup> That is exactly what John Taylor taught: "As the horse, the ox, the sheep, and every living creature, including man, propagates its own species and perpetuates its own kind, so does God perpetuate His."<sup>167</sup>

The difference between man and God is significant, but it is one of degree, not kind. It is the difference between an acorn and an oak tree, a rosebud and a rose, a son and a father. In truth, every man is a god in

embryo, in fulfillment of that eternal law that like begets like.<sup>168</sup> To suggest otherwise is to suggest that God begat inferior offspring, in direct conflict with every scientific law known to man. But somehow most of the world continues to miss the mark. In *Paradise Lost*, John Milton echoes the world's sentiments: "Man hath offended the majesty of God by aspiring to Godhead."<sup>169</sup> But why would the majesty of God be offended? What scriptures support, what logic evidences, or what spirit dictates such a proposition as this?

Milton has Satan present the argument for godhood via a dream to Eve, thus suggesting that the divine pursuit is contrary to God's plan. Satan tenders his best case for godhood. Interestingly enough, Milton never successfully refutes it. The key lines are as follows:

O fruit divine,  
Sweet of thyself, but much more sweet thus cropped,  
Forbidden here, it seems, as only fit  
For gods, yet able to make gods of men!  
And why not gods of men, since good, the more  
Communicated, more abundant grows,  
The author not impaired, but honoured more?<sup>170</sup>

The last line is the focal point. Is God impaired, degraded, lessened, dethroned because he has given to others the capacity to become like him? Or is he honored more? Who can honor more or worship with greater force, a creature of lower or more exalted status? Can a plant offer the same honor or worship with the same feelings as an animal? Can an animal have the same emotional charge and spiritual promptings as a human? Can a mere mortal experience the empyreal feelings or the spiritual fervency of a potential god? One's capacity to honor and worship is magnified with one's intellectual, emotional, cultural, and spiritual enlightenment. Accordingly, the more we become like God, the greater our ability to pay him homage. In that process of lifting men heavenward, God simultaneously multiplies his own honor and thus is "honoured more," not less.

God's crowning creation possesses the ultimate power to honor him and, in addition, to become like him. The purpose of this creation and the reason for God's sacrifice was obvious to C. S. Lewis: "[God] did not create the humans—He did not become one of them and die among them by torture—in order to produce candidates for Limbo, 'failed' humans. He wanted to make Saints; gods; things like Himself."<sup>171</sup>

The critic, unable to understand, responds, "But such a concept lowers God to the status of man, and thus robs Him of His divinity." "To the contrary," comes the reply, "does it not elevate man in his divine potential?" Paul anticipated the critic's argument and gave the answer that should have silenced him once and for all. Speaking to the Saints of Philippi he said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it *not* robbery to be equal with God" (Philippians 2:5–6). The Savior knew that for him to be a god would not rob God of His divinity. Paul carried this one step further. He suggested that each of us should view these things as Jesus did, for if we do we will also know that it is possible for us to become like God without robbing him of his divinity. That is good logic. After all, who is greater, that being who limits, or that being who enhances man's eternal progress?

Brigham Young addressed this issue: "[Man's godhood] will not detract anything from the glory and might of our heavenly Father, for he will still remain our Father, and we shall still be subject to him, and as we progress, in glory and power, it [sic] the *more* enhances the glory and power of our heavenly Father."<sup>172</sup> That is the irony of the critic's argument—godhood for man does not diminish God's status; to



the contrary, it elevates it by producing more intelligent, more sensitive, more respectful Saints who have enlarged capacities to understand, honor, and worship him.

Do not all Christian churches advocate Christlike behavior? If so, are we better Christians if we only desire to be 90 percent like Christ, rather than 100 percent? If it is blasphemous to think we can become as God now is, then at what point is it not blasphemous to become like God—90 percent, 50 percent, 20 percent, 1 percent? Is it more honorable to seek partial godhood than total godhood? Are we to walk the path of godhood with no hope of ever reaching the destination?

The scriptures, early Christian writings, poetry, history, and logic testify not only of the divine possibility but of the divine reality that man may become as God. If we are not destined for godhood, the critic must answer, "Why not?" Perhaps the following are answers for the critic's consideration.

Maybe man cannot become like God because God does not have the power to create a celestial offspring. It is beyond his present level of comprehension and intelligence. "Blasphemous," responds the critic. "He has all knowledge and all power."

Perhaps God does not create such a divine offspring because he does not love us. "Ridiculous," the critic replies. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16).

Well, perhaps God has not planted within us the divine spark because he wants to retain godhood for himself; he is threatened by our progress; he can retain his superiority only by asserting man's inferiority. "No, no," insists the critic. "Have you ever known a loving, kindly father who did not want his children to become all that he is and more?"

So it is with God, our Father. He has the power, the love, and the desire to make us as he is, and for these very reasons he has planted within each of us the seeds of godhood. To believe otherwise is to suggest that God does not have the power to make us like him, or worse yet, chooses not to do so. Yet this is the proposition asserted by much of the world.

To claim that the doctrine of man's deification is blasphemous is to swim upstream against the scriptures, the early Christian writers, poetry, history, and logic—all of which combine in remarkable unison to teach that man may become like God. Such was the teaching of the primitive Church, and such is the teaching of the restored Church. Its eventual absence from the theology of the ongoing church was yet another witness that the true Church was absent from the earth.

## Baptism

### The Doctrine As Originally Taught

There were a few doctrines that were universally taught by the early Christian writers. One was that baptism is an essential condition for salvation. There was no mistake about the early Church's stand on this subject. Unfortunately, with the passage of time this unequivocal commandment became downgraded to a recommendation by many in Christianity. David W. Bercot, a noted scholar specializing in the early Christian church, initially believed, like many other Christians, that baptism was a symbol of one's spiritual conversion, but not a necessity for salvation. He completely reversed his position, however, after reading the early Christian writers and rereading the scriptures on the subject. He made this revealing assessment:

A person wasn't viewed [by the early Christian writers] as saved or born again until the entire process, including water baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit, were fulfilled. . . . That, in a nutshell, is what the primitive church believed, and when I say the church believed it, I mean it was universally held. In the entire set of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*—in all ten volumes—I think just about every one of those writers somewhere discusses baptism, and every single one of them presents this same view—no exceptions.<sup>173</sup>

Those are powerful words. In the primitive Church baptism was not optional; it was not a symbolic gesture performed in the aftermath of one's conversion. It was an inseparable part of the salvation process. In fact, there was no salvation without it.

The scriptures and early Christian authors spoke of baptism as  
(1) essential for salvation and entrance into the kingdom of God,  
(2) necessary for the remission of sins, (3) a witness of one's faith, and (4) symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which resurrection was the equivalent of a new birth—a spiritual birth.<sup>174</sup>

### Essential for Salvation

In unmistakable terms, the Savior taught Nicodemus the necessity of baptism: "Except a man be born of water [baptism] and of the Spirit [the Holy Ghost], he *cannot enter into the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5). Just as one cannot enter this earthly kingdom without being born into it, so one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without being born again by way of baptism.<sup>175</sup> In essence, baptism is one's passport for entrance to the kingdom of God. One might ask, "How could the doctrine of baptism and its absolute necessity be made any clearer?"<sup>176</sup> This same message was expounded in the writings of *The Shepherd of Hermas* (A.D. 90–150): "It was necessary for them [the Saints] . . . to rise up through water that they might be made alive; *for otherwise they could not enter into the kingdom of God.*"<sup>177</sup> This ordinance was the indispensable gateway to the kingdom of God. It was man's evidence that he had rejected the secular kingdom and chosen the heavenly one. Cyprian wrote in this regard: "We had renounced the world when we were baptized."<sup>178</sup> Hippolytus emphasized the same theme: "Come all ye kindreds of the nations, to the immortality of the baptism. . . . Come into liberty from slavery, into a kingdom from tyranny, into incorruption from corruption. And how, saith one, shall we come? By water and the Holy Ghost."<sup>179</sup>

It would be difficult to read the New Testament and early Christian writers and not notice the distinctive pattern evidencing the necessity of baptism. Consistent with his instructions to Nicodemus, the Savior taught, "He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).<sup>180</sup> Tertullian likewise observed that faith and baptism were inextricably bound: "Accordingly, *all* thereafter who became believers were baptized."<sup>181</sup> This was the course of action followed by the disciples of Philip: "When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized" (Acts 8:12). It is exactly what happened to the eunuch Philip encountered. As soon as he declared, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," Philip "baptized him" (Acts 8:37–38). And it was the course of conduct followed by Paul after his heavenly vision. Even the visitation of the Lord himself to Paul (Acts 9:5) was not sufficient for salvation. He would yet be baptized at the hands of Ananias, who asked of Paul, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).<sup>182</sup> Ananias knew that Paul's sins would not be cleansed until he entered the waters of baptism.

Lydia, who had "worshiped God," was baptized, with her household, after she heard the gospel preached by Paul (Acts 16:14). Within the same hour that the jailer professed his belief in Christ, he "was baptized" (Acts 16:33). Likewise "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Paul told the

Galatians how to accept Christ: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). Later he told Titus how salvation comes: "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration [baptism], and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).<sup>183</sup>

The pattern is so repetitious, so consistent, so clear—faith in Christ followed by baptism—that it is hard to imagine anyone contending that baptism is an optional ordinance. Such a position would be entirely inconsistent with the multitude of scriptural witnesses in the New Testament.

Lest there be any question about the necessity of this ordinance, the Savior himself was baptized "to fulfil all righteousness" (2 Nephi 31:5). Tertullian noted: "The Lord Himself, though 'no repentance' was due from *Him*, was baptized." Then he concluded, "[So] was baptism not necessary for *sinners*?"<sup>184</sup> The Savior was the great exemplar. Our obligation is to follow in his footsteps—to do as he did. The Savior said to Peter, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done" (John 13:15).<sup>185</sup> Understanding this concept, Hippolytus rephrased the words of the Savior as follows: "Baptize me, John, in the order that no one may despise baptism. I am baptized by thee, the servant, that no one among kings or dignitaries may scorn to be baptized by the hand of a poor priest."<sup>186</sup> Nonetheless, the scriptures record that unfortunately "the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God, . . . being not baptized of him [John the Baptist]" (Luke 7:30). Accordingly, anyone who fails to be baptized by one having proper authority, such as John the Baptist possessed, rejects the counsel of God. Such a person cannot be a member of God's kingdom because he has chosen not to become subject to God's laws.

Baptism and the receipt of the Holy Ghost were never intended to be optional ordinances. Tertullian noted that we cannot live with God unless we have been baptized: "Whence it follows that they who have by faith attained to the resurrection, are with the Lord *after* they have once put Him on in their baptism."<sup>187</sup> Clement of Alexandria made it clear that if one were obedient, he was baptized: "And in the Acts of the Apostles you will find this, word for word, 'Those then who received his [Christ's] word were baptized; *but those who would not obey kept themselves aloof.*'"<sup>188</sup> *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) had harsh words for those who refused baptism: "He that out of contempt, will not be baptized, shall be condemned as an unbeliever, and shall be reproached as ungrateful and foolish."<sup>189</sup> The Savior unequivocally stated that without the ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, a man "*cannot* enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). That did not leave any wiggle room, any leeway for exceptions, any latitude for surrogate doctrines.

David W. Bercot illustrated the necessity of baptism by providing this insightful example:

Suppose a man and woman fell madly in love with each other; they rejoiced in each other's presence; they were inseparable. Now further suppose, that without taking any further action, they announced to their friends and associates they were married. The friends responded, "No, you may love each other, but you are not married until you go through a legal process called marriage." *Likewise someone may fall in love with Christ and his church; he may receive a spiritual confirmation and transformation, but neither will his sins be cleansed nor will he become a member of God's kingdom until he goes through the divine process known as baptism.*<sup>190</sup>

So essential was the ordinance of baptism that at one point in early church history an issue arose as to whether an individual who had been baptized in the name of Jesus in a heretical sect must be rebaptized into the "true" church. The issue about the necessity of baptism was assumed by all sides without question. The only debate was whether it must be done *again* on behalf of the initiate. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage,

called a council of bishops and other church leaders, who resolved as follows: "It is observed and held by us, that all who are converted from any heresy whatever to the Church must be baptized by the only and lawful baptism of the Church."<sup>191</sup> In other words, it was not enough just to be baptized, but in addition one must be baptized by the proper authority. Eusebius cited Cyprian as having the following opinion: "They should be admitted on no conditions, before they were first purified from their error by baptism."<sup>192</sup>

It seems logical that having taught the necessity of baptism, the Savior would then instruct his apostles to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). Cyprian confirmed the validity of this mandate: "The Lord has said that the nations are to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and their past sins are to be done away in baptism."<sup>193</sup> Peter, understanding this global injunction, asked the Gentiles, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?" The implication was clear—*no one* was exempt. That is why Peter then "*commanded* them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47–48). Note that Peter did not "suggest" or "recommend" they be baptized, or speak of it in terms of a post-conversion nicety, but rather he commanded it. Cyprian taught similarly: "The Lord, when He came, manifested the truth of baptism . . . in commanding that that faithful water, the water of life eternal, should be given to believers in baptism."<sup>194</sup>

As further proof of the necessity of baptism, Irenaeus reprimanded the Gnostics because they taught that "it is superfluous to bring persons to the water."<sup>195</sup> Perhaps Tertullian summarized the subject as succinctly as could be done: "The prescript is laid down that 'without baptism, salvation is attainable by none.'"<sup>196</sup> Cyprian taught the same message: "Unless therefore they receive saving baptism they cannot be saved."<sup>197</sup>

It is remarkable that so many men, in so many locations and in so many time periods, could be so consistent on the doctrine of the essentiality of baptism. Can there be any reasonable question how the leaders of the primitive Church viewed baptism? To suggest that baptism is not a necessary component of salvation is to contradict the clear and repeated mandate of the scriptures and early Christian writers; it is to completely disregard the historical and canonical records on the subject.

## Remission of Sins

But why was baptism essential? Because it was God's chosen method to remit sins and provide entrance to his kingdom. John the Baptist taught the underlying doctrine by his example: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke to a group of people who believed his words. At one point they asked Peter and his brethren, "What shall we do?"—meaning, what course of action should we take to be saved? Recognizing that these people had faith, Peter replied: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37–38).

Justin Martyr declared that we "obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed."<sup>198</sup> He likewise knew there was no alternative way to be cleansed: "There is no other [way] than this—to become acquainted with this Christ, to be washed in the fountain spoken of by Isaiah for the remission of sins."<sup>199</sup> Until baptism occurred, a man was not free of his sins. Tertullian wrote that baptism was imperative because it had the power of "setting man free."<sup>200</sup> He further added that without baptism a man "cannot be holy."<sup>201</sup>

Irenaeus compared the dipping of Naaman the leper in the River Jordan to baptism: "For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water . . . being spiritually regenerated . . . even as the Lord has declared 'Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of

heaven."<sup>202</sup> Justin Martyr was familiar with the same interpretation of John 3:5, for he wrote:

As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past. . . . Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated.<sup>203</sup>

On one occasion Cyprian wrote, "In baptism remission of sins is granted once for all."<sup>204</sup> Lest there be any question, the water itself had no cleansing powers. It was symbolic of the redeeming powers of the blood and atonement of Jesus Christ. As John wrote, "[He] washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

Justin Martyr made it clear that a believer did not partake of the sacrament until after he was baptized. Why? Because he had to be cleansed first in the waters of baptism, so he would be worthy to partake of the emblems that symbolize the Savior's atonement. In this regard Justin Martyr wrote, "No one is allowed to partake [of the sacrament] but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration."<sup>205</sup>

Cyprian spoke of the cleansing powers of baptism as though a new birth—a spiritual birth—were occurring: "All indeed who attain to the divine gift and inheritance by the sanctification of baptism, therein put off the old man by the grace of the saving laver, and, renewed by the Holy Spirit from the filth of the old contagion, are purged by a second nativity."<sup>206</sup> The early Christians knew that unless this second birth occurred, there could be no remission of sins and no salvation.

### A Witness of Our Faith

John the Baptist performed baptisms as a prerequisite to entering the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 3:2, 5–6).<sup>207</sup> The Savior set the example of baptism (Matthew 3:15–17) and thus taught its necessity (John 3:5). The scriptures act as a witness of the baptisms performed by the Savior and his disciples (John 3:22, 26; JST John 4:1, 3). Further, the apostles taught that baptism preceded both entrance into Christ's Church (Acts 2:41, 47) and receipt of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). But the subtle philosophies of men began to erode God's sure word of revelation. If a man had faith, that alone, some claimed, was sufficient. Baptism, they said, was no more than an external witness of a man's faith—an outward expression of his inward commitment. After all, it was the feelings of the heart that were paramount. It was a neat and tidy argument to reduce baptism to an evidence of our faith, rather than part of our faith, but that argument was nonetheless completely contrary to the scriptural injunctions. We cannot divorce our outward expressions from our inner feelings any more than we can separate our words from our thoughts. They are one integrated whole defining the entire man. Tertullian noted: "That baptismal washing is a sealing of faith."<sup>208</sup> Indeed, it is not only a confirmation of our faith—it is an act of our faith.

The Lord knows that man needs to engage in physical acts, such as baptism, both as a physical witness of his spiritual commitment<sup>209</sup> and as a strength to his resolve. Baptism is an external ordinance that fortifies our inward commitment. Once we have engaged in the physical act of baptism in the presence of witnesses, there is no turning back—we have set our hand to the plough (Luke 9:62). All of our contemplations and mental commitments cannot replace the need for participation in the physical ordinance. Baptism is a spiritual line God has drawn in the sand. We either step over it or we do not. We either accept his gospel on his terms or we do not. When we get to the other side, none of us can debate about our acceptance of Christ's gospel. If

we were sufficiently committed, we were baptized—if not, we withheld.

Likewise, one who was baptized in front of witnesses cannot argue at a later date, "Do not judge me harshly by the gospel standards—I thought of committing, I seriously considered it, but I never decided to completely yield my heart to God." Baptism is our irrevocable commitment, our binding signature on the spiritual contract from which there is no retreat. It is *not just evidence* of our inward commitment; it is an integral *part* of that commitment. Without it, our commitment falls short of Christ's repeated injunctions. To attempt to "soften" the requirement of baptism is an ill-advised attempt by man to circumvent the direct command of God: "Except a man be born of water, . . . he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Christ never softened the requirement of baptism; he never suggested an alternative way; he never made it an optional ordinance. Instead, he provided a means that all men might hear his gospel and be baptized before the final judgment. Unfortunately, in the turmoil of the apostasy, baptism was converted by many from a commandment to a recommendation. It was a momentous departure from the doctrine of the original Church.

Preaching the Gospel to the Dead

The Theories of Men versus the Doctrine of God

Peter spoke boldly to the Sadducees about Christ and his *exclusive* role as the Savior of the world: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). It is this doctrine that creates a dilemma for most of Christendom: What is to be done with the billions of people who have never had the opportunity to hear of Jesus Christ and to be baptized in his name? Do they go to hell? Should Christians dilute the doctrine of Christ's exclusive saving role in order to accommodate those who have never heard his message? Is there some other solution? Was the answer taught in the primitive Church?

A modern Christian evangelical writer, John Sanders, noted that the question, "What is the fate of those who die never hearing the gospel of Christ?" is "far and away . . . the most-asked apologetic question on U.S. college campuses."<sup>210</sup> Accordingly, the inescapable question arises, "Did Christ's gospel benefit only those who were fortunate enough to live in those times and places where it was taught?" If so, then it is likely that the great majority of the earth's population will never be saved—in fact, the majority never even had the opportunity to be saved. In this regard, John Sanders observed:

A large proportion of the human race has died without ever hearing the good news of Jesus. It is estimated that in A.D. 100 there were 181 million people, of whom 1 million were Christians. . . . By the year 1000 there were 270 million people, 50 million of whom were Christians. . . . In 1989 there were 5.2 billion people with 1.7 billion Christians. . . . Although there is no way of knowing exactly how many people died without ever hearing about Israel or the church, it seems safe to conclude that the vast majority of human beings who have ever lived fall into this category.<sup>211</sup>

In light of the foregoing, how does one reconcile the unique and exclusive nature of Christ's saving power with Peter's forthright declaration that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34)? In other words, how can Christ be our sole source of salvation, and love everyone equally, while at the same time many people never have the opportunity to learn of his saving message? The primitive Church taught the simple,

straightforward answer. It is recorded in the Bible and taught by many of the early Christian writers, but, tragically, the philosophies of men have corrupted the pure doctrine as taught by the apostles. Three modern-day Christian writers have suggested various answers to that critical question, "What about those who have never heard of Jesus Christ?" as follows:<sup>212</sup>

**First, exclusivism.** The proponents of the doctrine known as exclusivism or restrictivism contend that the only people saved are those who hear and accept the gospel of Jesus Christ while in the flesh. For all others, it is too late and too bad. This theory rests on the premise that God has predetermined his elect and, accordingly, such elect are placed in a position to hear the gospel on the earth. Such an approach certainly recognizes an absolute reliance on the Savior, but (1) it conflicts with the divine principles that all are children of God and that God desires for "all men to be saved" (1 Timothy 2:4); (2) it is in opposition to the mercy and fairness of God; and (3) it undermines the purpose of mortality, for if everyone is "preelected" and there can be no exceptions, then what is the purpose of earth life (or, in other words, why not have God save or damn everyone at birth, since the "die is already cast"?). A form of this doctrine was taught by the apostate Zoramites: "Thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast by thy wrath down to hell" (Alma 31:17). In essence, this doctrine of exclusivism damns people, even the innocent, who never had the opportunity to hear of Jesus Christ. This is hardly consistent with the nature of a loving God, who is no respecter of persons and who desires salvation for all men.

**Second, opportunity before death.** The advocates of this doctrine contend that everyone has the opportunity at some time to hear and then either accept or reject Christ's gospel *before* they die. For some this opportunity may come in the form of an angelic visitation, for others in dreams, for yet others in some form of "divine enlightenment" that allows them to have faith in Christ, even if it is only for a brief moment before they die. Hence, it is referred to by some as the "final option theory."<sup>213</sup> The problem with such a theory is that the scriptures do not support it and history does not verify it. What evidence is there in the scriptures or early Christian writings or histories of mankind that would suggest that everyone has heard of Jesus Christ before they died? To subscribe to such a philosophy is to disregard the annals of history and negate the saving nature of the gospel ordinances such as baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, replacing them instead with a belief in "death-bed" salvation, all of which is in direct opposition to the scriptures.<sup>214</sup>

**Third, inclusivism.** The proponents of this doctrine acknowledge that Christ is the exclusive Savior and Redeemer of the world, but argue that once he performed his atonement it was efficacious for all men, even if they never heard of Christ or had faith in him, provided they lived "good lives" and were true to the light they had received.<sup>215</sup> In essence, these "good" people become "anonymous Christians." This is somewhat akin to the "baptism by desire" theory, in which some people believe that those who live good lives but have not heard of Jesus are figuratively baptized into the kingdom because of their good works. This was in essence the false doctrine taught by the Book of Mormon heretic Nehor: "For the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life" (Alma 1:4).

Under these theories, the Atonement becomes all-inclusive for all moral people regardless of their belief in Jesus. To substantiate their position, these proponents rely in part on a statement made by Justin Martyr: "We have been taught that Christ is the first-born of God, and we have declared above that He is the Word of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists."<sup>216</sup>

Such a seemingly compassionate and fair response nonetheless undermines many central Christian doctrines

and ordinances.<sup>217</sup> To embrace the philosophy of inclusivism is to negate the basic principle of faith in Jesus Christ, as well as every ordinance and doctrine of the Church except for the atoning act of Christ. There is no question that the atonement of Jesus Christ is the focal point of all Christianity and is available to all, but the efficacy of that act in our lives is rooted in faith, repentance, baptism, and submission to all the gospel ordinances. What Christ did was crucially important, but so also is our acceptance of his way of life; otherwise we can never really come to know him or be like him.

**Fourth, universalism.** This doctrine declares that there is good in all religions throughout the world, regardless of whether or not they are Christian, and that God accepts all good; therefore, all people who are moral will be saved regardless of the atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>218</sup> Such an argument recognizes God as no respecter of persons, but it also completely undermines Christ's exclusive role as the Savior. It converts Christ's role from Savior and Redeemer to moral philosopher and teacher. C. S. Lewis appropriately addressed those who advocate such a position:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.<sup>219</sup>

**Fifth, postmortal evangelism.** At least one other doctrine exists—that of postmortal evangelism. Such a doctrine is taught in the New Testament and teachings of the early Christian writers. Likewise, it is confirmed by modern-day prophets. This doctrine teaches that Christ's gospel will be taught in the afterlife to those who did not have a fair opportunity to hear it on the earth. In other words, everyone will have the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive of its saving ordinances, either in mortality or the afterlife, and thus all will be judged by the same divine standards. Donald Bloesch, a noted evangelical, observed: "We do not wish to build fences around God's grace. . . . We can affirm salvation on the other side of the grave, since this has scriptural warrant."<sup>220</sup> Indeed, it does have scriptural warrant. And it was indeed taught in the primitive Church—again and again and again. It was taught with such frequency and with such fervor that it is hard to believe that every Christian church does not shout this glorious doctrine from every pulpit to every congregation.

### Where Do the Spirits of the Dead Go?

In order to understand the doctrine of postmortal evangelism, one must first understand where the spirits of the dead go when they separate from their mortal bodies. They do not go directly to their final abode in the hereafter, commonly referred to by many Christians as heaven or hell. This was an apostate doctrine taught by the Gnostics<sup>221</sup> and unfortunately is believed by many Christians today. Rather, the spirits of the dead go to a place of waiting until the time of their bodily resurrection. This waiting place is known as the "spirit world" or "paradise." The early Christian writers referred to it on occasion as the "lower parts of the earth" or "Hades" (a Greek word referring to the waiting place of the dead).<sup>222</sup>

It was this place where the Savior's spirit went immediately following his death. Matthew taught, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). It is clear from the scriptures that Christ did not directly



ascend to heaven at his death, as evidenced by his remarks to Mary in the garden: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). Likewise, Paul noted that *before* Christ ascended, "he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth" (Ephesians 4:9). Where had he descended? To the world of those spirits whose bodies were in the grave. So basic is this belief concerning Christ's visit to the spirit world that it is enunciated as part of the Apostles' Creed (adopted perhaps as early as A.D. 150 by the early Christian churches) and recited by many Roman Catholic and Protestant churches today. The pertinent portion reads as follows: "He [Christ] descended to Hell; the third day He arose again from the dead."<sup>223</sup> Some of the Protestant churches (such as the Episcopalians) insert the word *Hades* for *Hell* in their prayer book, since they believe it more accurately describes his descent to the world of spirits.

Other early Christian teachings are also instructive. Irenaeus noted that if Christ's spirit went to the spirit world, then ours must do likewise: "As our Master, therefore, did not at once depart, taking flight [to heaven], but awaited the time of his resurrection prescribed by the Father, . . . so ought we also to await the time of our resurrection."<sup>224</sup> Tertullian knew that every soul went to the spirit world before the resurrection: "All souls, therefore, are shut up within Hades: do you admit this? (It is true, whether) you say yes or no."<sup>225</sup> Lactantius (A.D. 250–325) taught similarly: "Nor, however, let any one imagine that souls are immediately judged after death. For all are detained in one and a common place of confinement, until the arrival of the time in which the great Judge shall make an investigation of their deserts."<sup>226</sup>

### The Spirit World Is Divided into Regions

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus explains that this place of confinement (the spirit world) is divided into two regions. One of these is referred to as hell (Luke 16:23) or the spirit prison (1 Peter 3:19), or occasionally it is referred to by the early Christian writers as the "guardhouse."<sup>227</sup> The other is referred to as Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22)<sup>228</sup> or paradise (Luke 23:43).<sup>229</sup> Between these two regions there is "a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence [paradise] to you [the rich man in hell] cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (Luke 16:26). Speaking of that region known as paradise, Victorinus (A.D. 304) wrote that it is "a place of repose for the Saints, wherein indeed the righteous are seen and heard by the wicked, but they cannot be carried across to them."<sup>230</sup> In other words, it was not possible to pass from one region to the other. Hippolytus referred to these two regions: "Now we must speak of Hades, in which the souls both of the righteous and the unrighteous are detained. . . . This locality has been destined to be as it were a guardhouse for souls. . . . *But the righteous shall obtain the incorruptible and unfading kingdom, who indeed are at present detained in Hades, but not in the same place with the unrighteous.* . . . And we call it [the place where the righteous reside] by the name *Abraham's bosom*."<sup>231</sup> Justin Martyr also spoke of these different locales: "The souls of the pious remain in a better place, while those of the unjust and wicked are in a worse, waiting for the time of judgment."<sup>232</sup> Origen taught precisely the same doctrine: "Those who, departing this world in virtue of that death which is common to all, are arranged in conformity with their actions and deserts—according as they shall be deemed worthy—some in the place which is called 'hell,' others in the bosom of Abraham, and in different localities or mansions."<sup>233</sup>

Speaking of Hades, Tertullian noted that it had "two regions, the region of the good or of the bad."<sup>234</sup> Tertullian also wrote: "Why, then, cannot you suppose that the soul undergoes punishment and consolation in Hades in the interval, while it awaits its alternative of judgment, in a certain anticipation either of gloom [in the spirit prison] or of glory [in paradise]?"<sup>235</sup>

Fortunately, we have additional scriptures supporting the foregoing principles. Alma spoke clearly and concisely on the state of the dead: "The spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow. . . . The spirits of the wicked . . . shall be cast out into outer darkness. . . . Thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection" (Alma 40:12–14).

### What Are These Spirits Doing in the Spirit World?

What are these spirits doing in this interim state while they await their resurrection and final judgment? The fact that they are assigned to two different regions, and experience either gloom or joy, is an indication that they are reaping, in part, the rewards or punishments attributable to their life on earth. Tertullian so noted: "In short, inasmuch as we understand 'the prison' pointed out in the Gospel to be Hades, and as we also interpret 'the uttermost farthing' to mean the very smallest offence which has to be recompensed there before the resurrection, no one will hesitate to believe that the soul undergoes in Hades some compensatory discipline, without prejudice to the full process of the resurrection."<sup>236</sup> But is that all the spirit is doing—suffering or rejoicing?

Tertullian asked the thought-provoking question: "What, then, is to take place in that interval [the spirit world]? Shall we sleep? But souls do not sleep even when men are alive: it is indeed the business of *bodies* to sleep."<sup>237</sup> Tertullian was right on point. The spirits of men are eternally active. While on earth, men think, ponder, and make choices. When men die, their spirits continue to think, ponder, and make choices.

Origen understood the active nature of these spirits. He believed that earth-departed spirits "will remain in some place situated on the earth which holy Scripture calls paradise, as in some place of instruction, and, so to speak, class-room or school of souls, in which they are to be instructed regarding all the things which they had seen on earth, and are to receive also some information respecting things that are to follow in the future, . . . all of which are revealed more clearly and distinctly to the Saints in their proper time and place."<sup>238</sup> This makes sense. The spirits of the dead have the capability to progress both mentally and spiritually, just as they did on earth. The suggestion that these spirits (which are eternal in nature) are in some state of suspended animation, or are leisurely floating on fluffy clouds listening to harp music, is both contrary to the scriptures and antithetical to the innate drive of every soul to constantly progress and develop. Many of these spirits were good men and women in mortality who never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ; many were believers who wanted to hear more; and so God provided a way to accomplish both in the spirit world.

### Christ Preached the Gospel in the Spirit World

The mortal Jesus announced the glorious time when the gospel would be taken to the dead: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. . . . Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice" (John 5:25, 28). Indeed the hour was soon at hand. Peter explained where Christ's spirit went when his body was placed in the tomb, "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and *preached unto the spirits in prison* . . . which sometime were disobedient . . . in the days of Noah"<sup>239</sup> (1 Peter 3:18–20).

Who were these spirits in prison, and why did the Savior go there? They were people who had died but who had never fully heard or embraced the truth. John had taught, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Until they heard and embraced the truth they were not free from ignorance or

sin or wickedness and, therefore, were spiritual prisoners. Isaiah noted that these prisoners "shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited" (Isaiah 24:22). Isaiah then related that the Savior would be the one to visit them, and he would "proclaim liberty to the captives" (Isaiah 61:1) and "open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (Isaiah 42:7). Eusebius spoke of this landmark moment when the Savior opened the spiritual prisons: "He was crucified, and descended into hell (hades), and burst the bars which had never yet been broken."<sup>240</sup> It must have been a glorious moment of liberation.

The Savior was having the gospel taught to those in the spirit world, so they could hear the truth and be free. The *Odes of Solomon*, which some believe to be the songs of Christian converts in the first century, taught this exact doctrine:

And I [Christ] made a congregation of living men amongst his dead men, and I spake with them by living lips: because my word shall not be void: and those who had died ran towards me: and they cried and said, Son of God, have pity on us, and do with us according to thy kindness, and bring us out from the bonds of darkness: and open to us the door by which we shall come out to thee. For we see that our death has not touched thee. Let us also be redeemed with thee: for thou art our Redeemer. And I heard their voice; and my name I sealed upon their heads: for they are free men and they are mine."<sup>241</sup>

Tertullian elaborated on Christ's descent when he said, "Nor did He [Christ] ascend into the heights of heaven before descending into the lower parts of the earth, that He might there make the patriarchs and prophets partakers of Himself."<sup>242</sup> While acknowledging that Christ preached the gospel to the dead, some scholars have taken Tertullian's comment to mean that the Savior's gospel was preached *only* to the patriarchs and prophets of past ages.<sup>243</sup> Reference, however, to the foregoing scriptures, plus the writings of other early Christian leaders, plus the sure word of modern-day prophets (all of which are discussed in greater detail below), reveal that the ministry of Christ and his representatives to the dead was to all people, not just the righteous.

The early Saints were acutely aware of this doctrine of postmortal evangelism. Hippolytus taught: "He [the Savior] was also reckoned among the dead, preaching the Gospel to the souls of the Saints."<sup>244</sup> Irenaeus noted: "It was for this reason, too, that the Lord descended into the regions beneath the earth, preaching His advent there also, and [declaring] the remission of sins received by those who believe in Him."<sup>245</sup> On another occasion he wrote: "But the case was, that for three days He [the Savior] dwelt in the place where the dead were, as the prophet says concerning Him: 'And the Lord remembered His dead Saints who slept formerly in the land of sepulture; and He descended to them, to rescue and save them.'"<sup>246</sup> There can be no question about Irenaeus' conviction that the Savior preached to the dead. He cited prophets who wrote of the Savior's life as follows: "'The holy Lord remembered His own dead ones who slept in the dust, and came down to them to raise them up, that He might save them.'"<sup>247</sup> Irenaeus explained why the dead must hear the gospel: "*For it was not merely for those who believed on Him in the time of Tiberius Caesar that Christ came, nor did the Father exercise His providence for the men only who are now alive, but for all men altogether, who from the beginning, according to their capacity, in their generation have both feared and loved God.*"<sup>248</sup>

The list of early Christian witnesses continues. Origen taught: "We assert that not only while Jesus was in the body did He win over not a few persons merely, but so great a number, . . . but also, that when He became a soul, without the covering of the body, He dwelt among those souls which were without bodily covering,

converting such of them as were willing to Himself."249

Clement of Alexandria unequivocally stated that "the Lord preached the Gospel to those in Hades,"250 and then testified that all those who repented and believed would be saved:

If then, the Lord descended to Hades for no other end but to preach the Gospel, as He did descend; it was either to preach the Gospel to all or to the Hebrews only. If, accordingly, to all, then all who believe shall be saved, . . . since God's punishments are saving and disciplinary, leading to conversion, and choosing rather the repentance than the death of a sinner. . . . It is evident that those, too, who were outside of the Law, having lived rightly, in consequence of the peculiar nature of the voice, though they are in Hades and in ward, on hearing the voice of the Lord, whether that of His own person or that acting through His apostles, with all speed turned and believed.251

Clement also expressed his opinion that God "save[s] with a righteousness and equality which extend to all that turn to Him, whether here or elsewhere. For it is not here alone that the active power of God is beforehand, but it is everywhere and is always at work."252 He then gave the compelling reason why the gospel must be preached to the dead:

For it is not right that these [those who never heard the gospel] should be condemned without trial, and that those alone who lived after the advent should have the advantage of the divine righteousness. . . . If, then, He preached the Gospel to those in the flesh that they might not be condemned unjustly, how is it conceivable that He did not for the same cause preach the Gospel to those who had departed this life before His advent? "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness."253

Justin Martyr tried to convince a Jew named Trypho of the divine Messiahship of Jesus Christ. In the course of their discussion, Justin observed that certain prophecies of Christ had been "cut out" of the Jewish scriptures, and that Trypho must have been aware of such a fact, because they still remained in some of the synagogues. Speaking of one such prophecy by Jeremiah about the crucifixion, he added, almost as a postscript, this valuable historical note: "And again from the sayings of the same Jeremiah *these have been cut out*: 'The Lord God remembered His dead people of Israel who lay in the graves; and *He descended to preach to them His own salvation*.'"254 What a remarkable admission that this glorious doctrine of preaching the gospel to the dead was already being removed from the scriptures shortly after the death of the Savior; but fortunately the doctrine was nonetheless preserved in some scriptural accounts and by many of the early Christian writers.

Did John the Baptist Announce Christ in the Spirit World?

Just as John the Baptist announced and prepared the way for the Savior in mortality, he also, according to the early Christian writers, announced and prepared the way for the Savior to teach the gospel in the spirit world. Hippolytus wrote: "He [John the Baptist] also first preached to those in Hades, becoming a forerunner there when he was put to death by Herod, that there too he might intimate that the Saviour would descend to ransom the souls of the Saints from the hand of death."255 The footnote to this quote observes: "It was a common opinion among the Greeks, that the Baptist was Christ's forerunner also among the dead."256 Origen taught similarly:

John is everywhere a witness and forerunner of Christ. He anticipates His birth and dies a little before the death of the Son of God, and thus witnesses not only for those at the time of the birth, but to those who were

expecting the freedom which was to come for man through the death of Christ. Thus, in all his life, he is a little before Christ, and everywhere makes ready for the Lord a people prepared for Him.<sup>257</sup>

### The Apostles and Others Preach the Gospel in the Spirit World

The early Christian writers taught that the preaching of the gospel to the dead was not limited to the Savior's few days in the spirit prison. *The Shepherd of Hermas* informs us that the apostles and others followed the Savior to the spirit world after their respective deaths, and they also taught the gospel to the spirits in prison: "The *apostles and the teachers* who preached the name of the Son of God, after they had fallen asleep in the power and faith of the Son of God, preached also to them that had fallen asleep before them. . . . So by their means they [the dead] were quickened into life, and came to the full knowledge of the name of the Son of God."<sup>258</sup> Clement of Alexandria taught that the apostles preached in the spirit world in similitude of the Savior, just as they preached in mortality after the example of the Savior: "And it has been shown also in the second book of the *Stromata* that the apostles, following the Lord, preached the Gospel to those in Hades. *For it was requisite, in my opinion, that as here, so also there, the best of the disciples should be imitators of the Master.*"<sup>259</sup>

### Missionary Work in Mortality Is a Prototype of Missionary Work in the Spirit World

Preaching the gospel in mortality was a prototype for preaching the gospel in the spirit world. Just as John the Baptist had introduced the Savior's ministry in mortality, so it seems he did in the spirit world. Just as the Savior labored in mortality to preach the gospel, so he did in the spirit world. And just as the Savior had organized his forces to preach the gospel in mortality (through apostles, seventies, and so forth), so he organized his forces in the world of spirits. It was there he commissioned his "apostles and the teachers,"<sup>260</sup> as taught by Hermas, and "the best of the disciples,"<sup>261</sup> as taught by Clement of Alexandria, to be the preachers of righteousness in the spirit world.

President Joseph F. Smith had a remarkable vision of the redemption of the dead that helps clarify how Christ organized his missionary forces during his limited time in the spirit world. President Smith wondered "how it was possible for him [Christ] to preach to those spirits and perform the necessary labor among them in so short a time." He said the answer was then revealed to him: "The Lord went not in person among the wicked and the disobedient. . . . But behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men" (D&C 138:28–30).

Just as the Savior and his apostles were not the sole emissaries of the gospel on earth, so they were not the sole preachers of righteousness in the spirit world. Many others who were worthy members of Christ's Church participated in spreading the gospel, both in mortality and afterwards. President Smith then elaborated: "I beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead" (D&C 138:57).<sup>262</sup> What do they teach? Faith, repentance, vicarious baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, "and all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them [the dead] to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (D&C 138:34).

Referring to missionary work in the spirit world, Brigham Young observed, "The spirits of good men . . . are

rallying all their powers and going from place to place preaching the Gospel."263 Joseph F. Smith noted, "The things we experience here are typical of the things of God and the life beyond us."264 The gospel is being proclaimed in the spirit world with fervor and zeal, just as it is here.

### The Glorious News: Everyone Will Hear the Gospel

As discussed above, the doctrine of preaching the gospel to the dead was unquestionably taught in the primitive Church by many early Christian writers.<sup>265</sup> Some people, nonetheless, have raised the following question: "Was the gospel taught only to the patriarchs and prophets who had died, as mentioned by some early Christian writers, or was it taught to everyone, as referenced by other early Christian writers?"

Peter taught that the gospel was preached in the spirit world to those who had been disobedient at the time of Noah (1 Peter 3:18–20). Obviously, if the gospel was taught to the disobedient on one hand, and to the righteous (such as the patriarchs and prophets) on the other, one must ask, "Would it not also have been taught to those in between?" John had declared that "*all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice" (John 5:28).<sup>266</sup>

Lest there be any doubt about the expansiveness of the Savior's mission to the dead in the spirit world, it is explained by the purpose of that mission as taught by Peter: "For for this cause was *the gospel preached also to them that are dead*, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6).<sup>267</sup> Note, there was no limitation as to who would receive the gospel—it was to be preached to all the dead. Why? So that all men could be judged by the same divine standards that govern those who heard it in mortality. How much more fair could it be? Everyone would have the opportunity to hear the gospel and either accept it or reject it before they were judged.

Peter, in the *Recognitions of Clement*, chided the god of Simon Magnus because his saving powers extended only to those who were fortunate enough to know him: "He [God] saves adulterers and men-slayers, if they know him; but good, and sober, and merciful persons, if they do not know him, in consequence of their having no information concerning him, he does not save! Great and good truly is he whom you proclaim, who is not so much the saviour of the evil, as he is one who shows no mercy to the good."<sup>268</sup> One of the apocryphal books believed to have been written in the third century, *The Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena*, talks about Christ's all-inclusive extension of the gospel, even to sinners in Hades: "Christ, the provider of the world, the searcher out of sinners and the lost, . . . has not only called to mind those upon earth, but also by his own presence has redeemed those in Hades."<sup>269</sup>

Just as the gospel message is taught to all in mortality (both to Jew and Gentile), so also it is taught to all in the spirit world. President Joseph F. Smith spoke directly on this issue. He declared that the missionary forces of the spirit world were commissioned to carry the gospel to "*all* the spirits of men" (D&C 138:30),<sup>270</sup> both "the unrighteous as well as the faithful" (D&C 138:35). In other words, he said the gospel would be preached "unto all who would repent of their sins and receive the gospel" (D&C 138:31).<sup>271</sup> As a result, everyone, without exception, whether they lived in the year 2000 B.C. or modern times, in the outbacks of Australia or the mountains of Nepal, will hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is fair and just and merciful. It was God's plan in the primitive Church; it is God's plan in the restored Church.

### Concerns about Postmortal Evangelism

Some are concerned that the doctrine of postmortal evangelism might provide a second chance for the

spiritually dilatory and thus be unfair, or perhaps even discourage evangelism in mortality. In responding to those concerns, the following observations may be helpful:

*First*, who among mortals knows what constitutes a second chance? If we heard the name of Jesus Christ on television or radio, was that a chance? If a missionary of Jesus Christ knocked on our door and we rejected him, was that a chance? Or did it make a difference that we were rushing to the hospital to see an injured son, or that we had had a bad day at the office and wanted to be alone? If Paul, who consented to Stephen's death and held the coats of them that slew him (Acts 22:20), had died shortly before his trip to Damascus, would he have been doomed to hell because he rejected Stephen's testimony? If Brigham Young had died after seventeen months of studying the gospel, but prior to accepting it, would he have received his one and only chance?

A woman once said to President Harold B. Lee, "I cannot accept the part of your teachings about the gospel of a second chance." He responded, "You misunderstand our teachings. We don't believe in the gospel of the second chance. We do not believe in the gospel of the first chance, but we believe in a chance or full opportunity for everyone to hear and to accept the gospel."<sup>272</sup>

It seems that God, in his wisdom and mercy, will provide a way for everyone to receive a full and fair opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, either in mortality or in the spirit world or both.

As long as everyone receives a full opportunity to hear the gospel, then no one should complain about when or where someone else receives the gospel message. This seems to be the spirit of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. Whether given the opportunity to work in the first hour or the eleventh hour, the wage (receiving the blessings of hearing and obeying the gospel) was the same. When some of the early workers complained because they received the same wage as those who worked fewer hours, the Savior reminded them that he had done them "no wrong" (Matthew 20:13). He had paid them exactly as he had agreed. When one recollects that his wage is "all that he [God] hath" (Luke 12:44), then one is quickly reminded that his work is insignificant compared to God's wage. If one employee were paid a billion dollars for working eight hours, and another employee were paid the same wage for one hour of work, would the first employee have right to complain? The wage was so disproportionate to the work performed that both employees should be nothing but eternally grateful. No wonder the Savior reprimanded the complainers with this rebuke: "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Matthew 20:15). The message of the parable was that everyone who wanted to work (hear the gospel and live it) would receive the same spiritual wage whether they heard it at eight years of age or eighty years of age—or in the spirit world.

*Second*, hearing the gospel in the spirit world does not mitigate the negative consequences of procrastination. In fact, the prophet Amulek made it clear that there is no advantage to procrastination; in fact, it is a substantial spiritual risk: "Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:34).

In other words, if someone had a fair chance to receive the gospel in mortality and rejected it, there is no magical wand that transforms such a spirit into a more receptive one in the spirit world. In reverse, if someone would have been receptive to the gospel on earth, but never received the opportunity, then he will still have that receptive attitude in the spirit world. His spirit will simply remain what it has always been.<sup>273</sup>

The Savior taught this principle in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man, who was in hell, pleaded with Abraham for the opportunity to return briefly to his five brethren in mortality and warn them "lest they also come into this place of torment." Abraham answered that "they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The rich man replied in essence, "You don't understand, if someone returned from the dead, it would be so dramatic that they would repent." Then Abraham gave to him the stinging truth: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, *neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*" (Luke 16:27–31).<sup>274</sup> If someone did not accept the gospel in mortality, it will not be any easier to accept it in the spirit world, even though one from the dead preaches it to him. In fact, it will be more difficult.

It is like the person who vows to diet tomorrow, but with each day of procrastination he gains more weight, which makes it all the more difficult to lose that weight in the future.

Jacob spoke harshly of those who had received the light of the gospel in mortality but failed to embrace it: "But wo unto him that has the law given, yea, that has all the commandments of God, like unto us, and that transgresseth them, and that wasteth the days of his probation, for awful is his state!" (2 Nephi 9:27).<sup>275</sup> The message is clear. God is merciful, and everyone will have a fair opportunity to hear the gospel; but if we procrastinate the day of our repentance, then we may have pronounced upon us that tragic condemnation: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and my soul is not saved!" (D&C 56:16).

*Third*, some might feel that spirits in the spirit world have an unfair advantage over mortals, because they have a better vantage point from which to hear and accept the gospel. If that were the case, then one might also argue that the people who lived at the time of the Savior had an unfair advantage over those who live now. After all, they heard the gospel from his lips and witnessed firsthand his miracles. Yet in spite of all that, few embraced the gospel during his mortal life (D&C 138:26). Of course, the atheist will know he is wrong about the afterlife when he gets to the spirit world, but knowledge and perspective alone do not bring conversion. The devils knew that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 19:15; James 2:19), but that truth did not change their lifestyle. The chief priests knew of Christ's miracles; they even knew he was raised from the dead (having paid money to the soldiers who witnessed the event to solicit their silence), but it had no converting power whatsoever over them.<sup>276</sup> The prime cause for conversion will not be one's environment, but one's change of heart.

Deathbed confession, or a last-minute acceptance of Christ in the spirit world, is a far cry from a life of good works. After all, in the end, "every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess" that Jesus is the Christ (D&C 88:104),<sup>277</sup> but confession alone will never be a substitute for a life of valiant service. The doctrine of postmortal evangelism in no way replaces or softens the need for a life of good works in response to the light we have received.

*Fourth*, some are concerned that preaching the gospel to the dead may have a deterrent effect on evangelism in mortality.<sup>278</sup> But if righteousness brings happiness, then why would we wait to share the gospel with our friends and neighbors until a later date? Samuel declared the eternal truth that his wicked Book of Mormon audience did not want to hear: "Ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head" (Helaman 13:38).<sup>279</sup>

No one gets away with anything because they lived a life of sin. As Harold B. Lee said, "There are no successful sinners."<sup>280</sup> It is to completely miss the point to suggest that someone who "lived it up" in this life and then accepted the gospel in the spirit world will somehow come out ahead of those who always lived good lives. To defer righteousness is to defer happiness. Accordingly, if we love our neighbors, we will want



them to have the gospel at the earliest possible date, so they can expedite the time of their eternal happiness.

There is yet another reason that the doctrine of postmortal evangelism has no adverse effect upon evangelism in mortality. Christ's gospel requires us to do all within our power to advance his kingdom. If someone did not hear the gospel in mortality, God's plan will mercifully provide for that person in the spirit world, but in the meantime we are not excused from sharing the gospel with every living person we possibly can. God has taught this principle repeatedly.

The raising of Lazarus from the dead is but one example. The Savior approached the grave where Lazarus had lain for four days. He instructed those who were nearby to remove the stone cover. Then, in a loud voice he cried out, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43), and the scriptures record that "he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin" (John 11:44). At that point Jesus commanded the onlookers to unbind him. One might ask, "Why didn't Jesus remove the stone? Why didn't Jesus unwrap the revived corpse? Why didn't he command these events to take place? Did he lack the power?" Of course not. It was but a demonstration of the divine law of economy, namely, that man must do all he can, and when he has reached his limits, when he has asserted all his mental, moral, and spiritual energies, then will the powers of heaven intervene. Man could remove the stone and unwrap the body, so he must do it; but only the power of God could call the dead to life.

In like manner, mortals have the duty to share the gospel with all their mental, moral, and spiritual energies, and if some are missed in the process or do not receive a full opportunity, then God will provide an opportunity in the spirit world. Accordingly, preaching the gospel to the dead should have no deterrent effect whatsoever on missionary work in mortality. To the contrary, it should increase the fervor of evangelism because the missionary now has a greater vision of the universal saving power of the gospel and thus a greater desire to preach it.

### Why Was This Doctrine Lost?

Can anyone seriously doubt that if the apostles had remained, the wonderful doctrine of postmortal evangelism would have remained in the forefront of Christian theology? Yet history confirms that this central, critical doctrine, which was taught with force and clarity in the early Church, became lost, and the man-made philosophies of exclusivism, inclusivism, and the other theories referred to above became the sorry substitutes. Speaking of the doctrine of salvation for the dead, David W. Bercot asked: "Why have most of us never heard this teaching before? . . . We've gone through Sunday School or catechism or whatever and so often we've never heard any of this explained before."<sup>281</sup> He then gave the reason for this doctrinal void in two talks entitled "Christ's Descent into Hades" and "Life After Death."<sup>282</sup> I summarize his conclusions as follows:

The early Christians believed that when a man died his spirit went to Hades (the place of the dead). If he had not yet heard the gospel of Christ while on the earth, then he might receive the opportunity in Hades. Contrary to this teaching, the Gnostics believed that upon death a man's soul went immediately to heaven or hell. These opposing doctrines presented a dilemma for the ongoing church. Many early Christian Saints were devoted to the kingdom. Because of their beliefs and lifestyle, they were ostracized from the world and, in addition, many endured intense persecution, even martyrdom. As a result they made tremendous sacrifices and commitments to belong to the faith. This substantially changed when Constantine made Christianity a legal religion. Within the space of a few decades, almost everyone in the empire called himself a Christian, with the exception, perhaps, of the Jews. The majority of the people had become nominal Christians. They

still lived pagan and immoral lives—in fact, their lives bore little relationship to the teachings of Christianity. The church knew that the vast majority of these people were not headed for heaven, but the church did not want to tell their parishioners they were doomed to hell, so the church compromised and invented the doctrine of purgatory. It proposed that the souls of men who did not go to heaven immediately at death went to an interim location called purgatory, a place where their souls were purged clean, a place where they had a "second chance," so to speak. Here they would suffer for their earthly sins, and, after suffering long enough to pay for their sins, their souls were freed to heaven.<sup>283</sup> If they or their relatives were fortunate enough to be wealthy, the time spent in purgatory might be reduced by a generous contribution to the church.

Is it any wonder that Bercot should observe that "the doctrine of purgatory produced a church, a type of church, a church that was not on fire for God, a church that was not separate from the world. . . . It produced . . . a religion that was only remotely similar to the Christianity of the apostles and the primitive church." The doctrine of purgatory did not require a change of heart; instead, it substituted suffering for conversion. Once one had suffered long enough, he supposedly earned the right to go to heaven.

Bercot went on to add that the Reformers saw "purgatory as a major corruption of the faith that was turning out lukewarm, unregenerate, godless Christians." So what did the Reformers do? David Bercot answered by proposing his "Newton's Law of Theology." For every action, he said, there is an opposite and equal reaction. He then added that for every error in the Catholic Church, the Reformers often propagated an equal error in the opposite direction. Instead of returning to the doctrine taught by the early Christians, in this case the intermediate state of the dead, the Reformers returned to the doctrine of the Gnostics, namely, that when we die we immediately go to heaven or hell. In the process they destroyed a basic Christian doctrine, the existence of Hades (the spirit world). Bercot concluded his comments with this remarkable observation:

It [the doctrine of preaching the gospel to the dead] is a wonderful teaching that helps us love God that much more. . . . This is what Christians originally believed. . . . It should be taught regularly in church. It is a subject, a doctrine to rejoice about. You know, I'm so curious why you never hear it taught in most churches today at all. Regardless, the good news is that God, in His mercy, has extended the opportunity of eternal life even to some of those in the grave. Maybe this was only to the ones who lived before Christ, or maybe it's to everyone who dies without hearing the Gospel. Either way, we can take comfort in knowing that we worship such a loving, merciful God.<sup>284</sup>

Frederic W. Farrar, an enlightened Church of England minister of the nineteenth century who is known for his landmark book on the life of Christ, recognized this great void in Christian doctrine and spoke of it with burning passion:

St. Peter has one doctrine which is almost peculiar to himself, and which is inestimably precious. In this he not only ratifies some of the widest hopes which . . . had been given to his brother Apostle . . . *but he also supplements these hopes by the new aspect of a much-disregarded, and, indeed, till recent times half-forgotten, article of the Christian creed;—I mean the object of Christ's descent into Hades. In this truth is involved nothing less than the extension of Christ's redeeming work to the dead. . . . I allude of course to the famous passage . . . that "Christ . . . went and preached to the spirits in prison."*

The distinguished Canon Farrar then alluded to 1 Peter 4:6, where it states that the gospel was preached to the dead, "that they may be judged according to men in the flesh." Commenting on this scripture, he observed:

Few words of Scripture have been so tortured and emptied of their significance as these. . . . *Every effort has been made to explain away the plain meaning of this passage. It is one of the most precious passages of Scripture, and it involves no ambiguity, except such as is created by the scholasticism of a prejudiced theology. . . . For if language have any meaning, this language means that Christ, when His Spirit descended into the lower world, proclaimed the message of salvation to the once impenitent dead.*

Farrar would not let this subject alone. It is as though a spiritual adrenaline was pumping through his soul and seizing his hand to write more and more until this doctrine was reenthroned to its rightful place. He continued:

No honest man who goes to Holy Scripture to *seek* for truth, instead of going to try and find whatever errors he may bring to it as part of his theological belief, can possibly deny that there is ground here to mitigate that element of the popular teaching of Christendom against which many of the greatest Saints and theologians have raised their voices [meaning that those who failed to hear the message of Christianity in mortality are irreversibly doomed for eternity]. . . . We thus rescue the work of redemption from the appearance of having failed to achieve its end for the vast majority of those for whom Christ died. By accepting the light thus thrown upon "the descent into Hell" we extend to those of the dead who have not finally hardened themselves against it the blessedness of Christ's atoning work. We thus complete the divine, all-comprehending circuit of God's universal grace!

Farrar then concluded why the doctrine has become lost—because we have "Christian theologians, so skilful [sic] in torturing the letter, and so blind at seizing the spirit."<sup>285</sup>

In spite of Canon Farrar's impassioned and reasoned explanation of 1 Peter 4:6, in spite of the scriptures, in spite of multitudinous early Christian writings on the subject, in spite of the underlying fairness of the doctrine, it is somewhat shocking that one well-known evangelical writer opined: "No responsible reading of Chapters 3–4 of 1 Peter can support a belief in salvation after death."<sup>286</sup> Such a statement might remind one of the words of the Lord: "They are walking in darkness at noon-day" (D&C 95:6).

### This Doctrine Is in All Our Bibles

Years ago Elder LeGrand Richards was invited to speak to a Bible class in Holland, where he was serving a mission. He was requested to speak about "the preaching of the gospel in the spirit world, and baptism for the dead." He commented on the unusual conclusion to his meeting:

As near as I can recall, not a question was asked me during that discussion. When I had finished I closed my Bible and laid it on the table and folded my arms and waited for a comment. The first comment came from the daughter of the house. She said, "Father, I just cannot understand! I have never attended one of these Bible classes in my life that you have not had the last word to say on everything, and tonight you haven't said a word."

The father replied: "My daughter, there isn't anything to say. This man has been teaching us things we have never heard of, and he has been teaching them to us out of our own Bibles."<sup>287</sup>

This glorious doctrine of salvation for the dead is in all our Bibles and was taught by the early leaders of the primitive Church. With the loss of the apostles and the passage of time, however, the reasoning of man wreaked havoc until the day came when the doctrine was no more.

As summarized by Joseph Smith, "It is no more incredible that God should *save* the dead, than that he should *raise* the dead."<sup>288</sup> Some doctrines are not only satisfying to the mind, but appealing to the heart. They not only reason well, but they feel good. In this regard, Joseph Smith taught: "I can taste the principles of eternal life, and so can you."<sup>289</sup> Certainly the glorious doctrine of preaching of the gospel to the dead is a case in point. Its absence from the ongoing church was a "red flag" that things were in a state of apostasy.

### A Physical Resurrection of the Dead

Most, if not all Christian religions acknowledge the reality of the resurrection. Paul taught, "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21–22).<sup>290</sup> Nonetheless, over time, the heresy emerged among many Christians that flesh was evil and, therefore, the resurrection was only of a glorified spirit body.<sup>291</sup> The scriptures and early Christian writers, however, universally spoke of a physical resurrection.<sup>292</sup>

Matthew recorded the events following the Savior's death: "The graves were opened; and many *bodies* of the Saints which slept arose" (Matthew 27:52). Paul preached, "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your *mortal bodies*" (Romans 8:11). Job bore a fervent testimony of this physical resurrection: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, *yet in my flesh shall I see God*" (Job 19:25–26).<sup>293</sup>

On the day of his martyrdom, Polycarp (A.D. 69–156) is reported to have said, "I bless Thee for that Thou hast granted me this day . . . a portion amongst the number of martyrs in the cup of [Thy] Christ unto resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and of body."<sup>294</sup> Commodianus (A.D. 240) was in complete agreement with his early Christian colleagues: "This has pleased Christ, that the dead should rise again, yea, with their bodies."<sup>295</sup> Justin Martyr argued that the flesh must be worthwhile because God created it, and then concluded:

The resurrection is a resurrection of the flesh which died. . . . Besides all these proofs, the Saviour in the whole Gospel shows that there is salvation for the flesh, why do we any longer endure those unbelieving and dangerous arguments, and fail to see what we are retrograding when we listen to such an argument as this: that the soul is immortal, but the body mortal, and incapable of being revived?<sup>296</sup>

Irenaeus taught that when we die we go to "the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection awaiting that event; then receiving their bodies, and rising in their entirety, that is bodily, just as the Lord arose."<sup>297</sup> Alma preached of the total restoration of our body and soul: "The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul, . . . yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost" (Alma 40:23).

Tertullian understood that we would rise with essentially the same bodies that we laid down: "Let our own people, moreover, bear this in mind, that souls are to receive back at the resurrection the self-same bodies in which they died. . . . And so the flesh shall rise again, wholly in every man in its own identity, in its absolute integrity."<sup>298</sup> Hippolytus concurred: "He [God] will accomplish a resurrection of all, not by transferring souls into other bodies, but by raising the bodies themselves. . . . God is able also to raise the body, which is composed of the same elements, and make [it] immortal. . . . We therefore believe that the body also is raised."<sup>299</sup> It is amazing that at a time when the principles of DNA were unknown, these early Christian writers unabashedly announced the foregoing spiritual truth, subject to the ridicule of the disbeliever that the

decomposing elements of a physical body could not be reconstituted. One does not propose to dictate how the Lord accomplishes this, but certainly the principles underlying DNA make such a proposition not only possible, but plausible.

The doctrine of a physical resurrection was so ingrained in the early Christian doctrine that Tertullian wrote, "He, therefore, will not be a Christian who shall deny this doctrine [of a bodily resurrection] which is confessed by Christians."<sup>300</sup>

As clear as the scriptures and early Christian writings are on the physical nature of a resurrected being, somehow this doctrine became distorted with time. Instead of the body being recognized as the "temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16), it became viewed as carnal and materialistic—doomed to dissolve to this mother earth—never again to rise. It was the Gnostics who propagated this latter doctrine. Accordingly, Irenaeus described the Gnostics as "heretics, despising the handwork of God, and not admitting the salvation of their flesh."<sup>301</sup> This Gnostic doctrine, or versions of it, has unfortunately crept into the beliefs of many Christians today who have difficulty accepting the notion of a physical resurrection.

To speak of a resurrection of the spirit alone, however, is nonsensical, since the spirit never dies and, therefore, does not need to be resurrected. The resurrection is a permanent reuniting of the spirit with a glorified, physical body of flesh and bones, which is not subject to death, disease, or pain. This was the doctrine taught in Christ's early church and it is the same doctrine that is taught in Christ's restored church today.

## Multiple Heavens

The churches that filled the void with the loss of Christ's Church eventually developed a doctrine of "one" heaven, but it was not so with the original Church. John, in his vision of future events and the afterlife, saw the dead and observed, "They were judged every man according to their works" (Revelation 20:13). In *The Epistle of Barnabas* the author similarly observed: "The Lord judgeth the world without respect of persons; each man shall receive according to his deeds."<sup>302</sup> Justin Martyr knew there was a relationship between works and heavenly rewards. Shortly before his martyrdom, he was examined by the Roman prefect Rusticus, who asked him: "Do you suppose, then, that you will ascend into heaven to receive some recompense [a reward in return for your works]?" Justin said, "I do not suppose it, but I know and am fully persuaded of it."<sup>303</sup> Origen confirmed that such was the teaching of the apostles: "The apostolic teaching is that the soul . . . after its departure from the world, will be recompensed according to its deserts."<sup>304</sup>

If we are judged according to our works and deeds, then there must be multiple rewards in the life to come. Such reasoning is consistent with what Jesus taught: "In my Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2). Tertullian understood that our heavenly mansions differed because they were predicated upon our works: "How will there be many mansions in our Father's house, if not to accord with a diversity of deserts?"<sup>305</sup>

Paul helps us understand that these many mansions are to be found within three heavens or degrees: "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:41–42).<sup>306</sup> Paul spoke of three possible glories for the resurrected man. Later he explained that he "knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the *third heaven*" (2 Corinthians 12:2).<sup>307</sup> Eusebius corroborated this scriptural account: "He [Paul] had attained even to the view of the third heavens, had been taken up to the

very paradise of God."<sup>308</sup> Obviously there could not be a third heaven unless there was also a first and second. While Origen did not attempt to define the exact number of heavens, he did acknowledge that the early Church taught a multiplicity of heavens: "The Scriptures which are current in the churches of God do not speak of 'seven' heavens, or any definite number at all, but they do appear to teach the existence of 'heavens.'"<sup>309</sup>

Perhaps Christ was referring to this hierarchy of heavenly rewards when he taught: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a *prophet's reward*; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a *righteous man's reward*" (Matthew 10:41). Logically it would seem to follow that he that knowingly receiveth an unrighteous man would receive an *unrighteous man's reward*. Thus, we can see three levels of rewards: a prophet's reward, a righteous man's reward, and an unrighteous man's reward. Such a division of rewards is in conformance with latter-day revelation, which speaks of those in the celestial kingdom (which is compared to the sun) as valiant in their testimonies (D&C 76:79). These are they who followed the prophets and their counsel. Next is the terrestrial kingdom (which is compared to the moon). Those assigned to this kingdom "are honorable men of the earth" (D&C 76:75)—men, as Christ described, who follow a righteous man. Finally, there comes the telestial kingdom (which is compared to the stars). Those assigned to this latter kingdom are "liars, and sorcerers, and adulterers, and whoremongers" (D&C 76:103)—men who are unrighteous. In a remarkably similar manner, Clement of Alexandria referred to three kinds of works, which dictate the degree of glory one would inherit. He then specified the type of behavior associated with those who go to the highest degree of glory: "And the perfect inheritance belongs to those who attain to 'a perfect man' according to the image of the Lord."<sup>310</sup>

Speaking of man's heavenly reward, Papias (early second century) wrote: "There is this distinction between the habitation of those who produce an hundred-fold, and that of those who produce sixty-fold, and that of those who produce thirty-fold; for the first will be taken up into the heavens, the second class will dwell in Paradise, and the last will inhabit the city; and that on this account the Lord said, 'In my Father's house are many mansions.'"<sup>311</sup> The concept of three heavens or rewards was a dominant motif in the early Christian church. Clement of Alexandria taught that "these chosen abodes [heavenly glories], which are three, are indicated by the numbers in the Gospel—the thirty, the sixty, the hundred."<sup>312</sup> While there is no scriptural support that links these numbers with a kingdom of glory, the essential point is that Clement and others like him were convinced of a multitiered heaven.

It is of some interest to note that latter-day revelation teaches that those assigned to the highest heaven dwell with God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ (D&C 76:92). Those in the "middle" heaven do not enjoy the "fulness of the Father" but "receive of the presence of the Son" (D&C 76:77), and those in the lowest kingdom are ministered to by the Holy Ghost, and thus do not enjoy the presence of God or Christ (D&C 76:112). Papias (early second century), who referred to three degrees of glory, alluded to various administrations of divine beings for each such kingdom: "The disciples of the apostles, say that this is the gradation and arrangement of those who are saved . . . and that, moreover, they ascend through the Spirit [in the telestial kingdom] to the Son [in the terrestrial kingdom], and through the Son to the Father [in the celestial kingdom]."<sup>313</sup> Origen also knew there were different administrations for the various heavenly kingdoms: "And some men are connected with the Father, being part of Him, and next to these, those whom our argument now brings into clearer light, those who have come to the Saviour and take their stand entirely in Him. And third are those of whom we spoke before, who reckon the sun and the moon and the stars to be gods, and take their stand by them. And in the fourth and last place those who submit to soulless [sic] and dead idols."<sup>314</sup>

The scriptures and the words of the early Christian writers are replete with references to multiple rewards and various kingdoms of glory, yet that doctrine vanished in the years that followed the death of the apostles. Soon, the erroneous doctrine of one heaven emerged. One can readily imagine why Satan would rejoice in such a doctrine. It minimized the need for good works—just believe in Christ and you will be saved equally with the men and women who devoted their entire lives to serving him. All someone had to do was believe, and then "eat, drink, and be merry, . . . for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 28:7–8). It was a backdoor attempt to undermine the need for good works—masterfully marketed by the Evil One. But in the end, it was simply one more heresy.

## Marriage

In the beginning God announced that marriage was ordained of him: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18), and furthermore, "Therefore *shall* a man leave his father and his mother, and *shall* cleave unto his wife" (Genesis 2:24). Marriage was not spoken of in terms of "may" but "shall." This was understandable, because the primal command was to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

Not only did the leaders of the primitive Church teach the doctrine of marriage and bearing children, but they lived it. In fact, the qualifications for a bishop required that he be "the husband of one wife" and that he "ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity" (1 Timothy 3:2, 4).<sup>316</sup> It was expected that such experience would be a training ground for bishops ruling a larger "house of God."

There is no question that Peter was married. Matthew records: "And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever" (Matthew 8:14).<sup>317</sup> Clement of Alexandria spoke of the apostles that lived in a married state. Eusebius recorded Clement's words in response to those who rejected marriage: "And will they," says he, "reject even the apostles!" Peter and Philip, indeed, had children, Philip, also gave his daughters in marriage to husbands, and Paul does not demur in a certain epistle to mention his own wife, whom he did not take about with him, in order to expedite his ministry the better. . . . Such was the marriage of these blessed ones, and such was their perfect affection."<sup>318</sup> Clement also wrote, "Now that the Scripture counsels marriage, and allows no release from the union, is expressly contained in the law."<sup>319</sup>

## Eternal Marriage

Since the beginning of time the prophets have taught that marriage was not only for mortality, but for eternity.<sup>320</sup> Earthly marriage is a prototype, a pattern of heavenly marriage; it is a preparation for the celestial state of affairs of which the Lord spoke: "That same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy" (D&C 130:2). Years ago as a young missionary I knocked on the door of a man who said he respected the Mormons but could not accept some of their doctrines, which he believed to be contrary to the Bible. I asked him what those might be. He responded by saying that the Bible did not teach the doctrine of eternal marriage. I replied that Paul taught "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). Quickly he retorted, "That scripture is not in my Bible." I suggested he get his Bible and we could examine it together. When he returned, I invited him to read 1 Corinthians 11:11. Slowly he read the scripture. To his obvious amazement and discomfort, it was also there in his Bible. Somewhat shell-shocked by the discovery, he finally blurted out, "I don't think that is what this scripture really means."

In my youthful exuberance I replied, "If that were the case, why didn't you make that argument before you retrieved your scriptures, rather than after?" Upon further reflection I would have better served the cause if I had borne my testimony. Nonetheless, the scripture remained.

As is usually the case, the Lord did not leave the Saints of the New Testament or the Saints of latter days with one scripture alone to verify his doctrine. Paul taught, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1). While speaking to husbands and wives, Peter observed that they would be "*heirs together* of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7). Note the language, "heirs together"—not singly, not separately, not each pursuing his or her own course, but jointly working out their salvation. Perhaps that is one of the reasons husbands and wives are referred to as "one" in the scriptures (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:6)—because exaltation is a cooperative effort between husbands and wives (D&C 131).

Some have become confused by an answer the Savior gave the Sadducees (that group which denied the reality of the resurrection) and assumed from that answer that there is no marriage in heaven. The Sadducees inquired whom a woman would be married to in the resurrection if her husband died, and thereafter she married his brother who subsequently died, and so on, until she had married the third through the seventh brothers. The Sadducees were unenlightened on the issue, because as President Joseph F. Smith noted: "They did not understand the principle of sealing for time and for all eternity. . . . They had wandered from that principle. It had fallen into disuse among them."<sup>321</sup> Accordingly, the Savior responded, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, *nor the power of God*. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:29–30). The Savior's response was in reference to people such as the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection or the "power of God" (specifically, the power to seal couples for eternity). In other words, for those who were not married with the "power of God" while on earth, but who chose to be married with man's power only (and thus for time only), there was indeed no marriage in heaven.<sup>322</sup> There is evidence, however, that in the meridian of time many Jews did believe in marriage while in heaven, along with the capacity to bear children there. Bible scholar J. R. Dummelow made the following observation:

The pre-Christian book of Enoch says that *the righteous after the resurrection shall live so long that they shall beget thousands*. The received doctrine is laid down by Rabbi Saadia, who says, "As the son of the widow of Sarepton, and the son of the Shunamite, *ate and drank, and doubtless married wives, so shall it be in the resurrection*; and by Maimonides, who says, "*Men after the resurrection will use meat and drink, and will beget children, because since the Wise Architect makes nothing in vain, it follows of necessity that the members of the body are not useless, but fulfill their functions*." The point raised by the Sadducees was often debated by the Jewish doctors, who decided that "*a woman who married two husbands in this world is restored to the first in the next*."<sup>323</sup>

But how is it possible that spouses be married for eternity? Who has the power to bind husbands and wives beyond the grave? The apostles had that power given to them by the Savior himself: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). That is why the Savior said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9). It was but a reminder of the same truth taught in the Old Testament: "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). Hippolytus reprimanded some heretics because they attempted "to dissolve marriages that have been cemented by the Deity."<sup>324</sup>

Marriage was not intended as a temporal institution, but for eternity. Marriages performed by those who



have the priesthood power are bound in heaven forever (based, of course, upon the worthiness of the spouses), while marriages performed by those who have no such power are valid only for this mortal life—"until death do you part."

Eternal marriage is not only scripturally correct, but it is also one of those doctrines that *feels* correct. The test for spiritual truth is not to be found in the mind alone, but also in the heart. The Lord spoke directly to this point: "Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart. . . . Behold, this is the spirit of revelation" (D&C 8:2–3).<sup>325</sup> On another occasion, he reprimanded Oliver Cowdery (a scribe to Joseph Smith who wanted to participate in the translation of the Book of Mormon) because he did not "study it out in [his] mind." The Lord then informed Oliver that the answer for the truth would not be given to him by means of a cerebral response alone, but also through a prompting of the heart: "Therefore, you shall *feel* that it is right. But if it be not right you shall *have no such feelings*" (D&C 9:8–9).

Paul warned the Ephesians not to be like certain Gentiles who had a "vanity [pride] of their mind," perhaps referring to those who in our day would be known as pseudo-intellectuals. He said that such men actually have their minds or intellect darkened as to spiritual matters because they cannot feel the truth when it is given to them. Paul's insightful caution warns against those who have "*the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling . . . have not so learned Christ*" (Ephesians 4:18–20).<sup>326</sup> Paul struck at the Achilles heel of the pseudo-intellectuals—when they dismiss one method of spiritual truth (the feelings of the heart), they diminish their capacity to respond to other methods. Men cannot selectively pick and choose among God's truths with impunity. Abinadi addressed that very issue: "Ye have not applied your hearts to understanding; therefore, ye have not been wise" (Mosiah 12:27).

Paul's warning about pseudo-intellectuals bears some kinship to the alleged story of a university professor who was proud of his agnosticism. He challenged returned missionaries with great vigor: "You say you have a testimony; well then, show it to me; let me see it, touch it, dissect it, put it under the microscope, subject it to the scientific method."

One day a student saw this professor crossing the campus. He stopped him and said, "I am sorry to hear that you and your wife are having serious marital problems."

"That is a lie," replied the professor. "We love each other."

"Oh," said the student, "if that is the case, then show it to me. Let me see it, touch it, dissect it, put it under the microscope, subject it to the scientific method."

The message was clear. Some things we know not because we see them or hear them or even because they *reason* well, but because they *feel* right.

Elder LeGrand Richards told of an interview with a prominent minister of another faith who admitted his church did not believe in any family ties beyond the grave. But then the minister added:

But in my heart I find stubborn objection. Take for instance the kitten. When you take it away from the cat, in a few days the mother cat has forgotten all about it. Take the calf away from the cow and in a few days the cow has forgotten all about the calf. But when you take a child away from his mother, though she lives to be a hundred years old, she never forgets the child of her bosom. I find it difficult to believe that God created

such a love to perish in the grave.<sup>327</sup>

This prominent minister was not alone in his spiritual instinct. Elizabeth Barrett Browning sensed that love between spouses would not wither in the grave. In her "Sonnets from the Portuguese," she shared that belief:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways,  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight. . . .  
I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.<sup>328</sup>

Fortunately God so chooses that we may love even "better after death."

After the passing of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, her beloved husband, Robert Browning, longed for the time of reunion with his soul mate. In anticipation of that glorious day he wrote:

O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
And with God be the rest!<sup>329</sup>

America's Founding Fathers were not exempt from these feelings of eternal love and companionship. Benjamin Rush, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, who helped facilitate the reconciliation of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson after they had been estranged for many years, wrote these poetic lines about his wife, Julia:

And when my mortal part shall lay  
Waiting in hope, the final day,  
Who shall mourn o'er my sleeping clay,  
my Julia.  
And when the stream of time shall end,  
And the last trump, my grave shall rend,  
Who shall with me to Heaven ascend?  
my Julia.<sup>330</sup>

The love between husbands and wives was not meant to perish in the grave but continue worlds without end. Such a love emanates from the "inner soul"—that soul which never dies. Why, then, when our flesh is temporarily laid to rest and the spirit lives on, should it no longer love and cherish as it has done in mortality? When Elder LeGrand Richards was ninety-three years of age, his wife, Ina, passed away after almost seventy years of blissful marriage. On one occasion he said, "When I get to the other side, I am going to put my arms around my Ina, and then she will be mine forever and ever and ever." And so it may be for every couple sealed by the power of God.

Now and then we read something that strikes a kinship with our inner soul. We cannot always explain how or why, but there is something in the nobility and majesty of the language, something in the tenor of the message that plumbs our deepest passions and confirms our truest convictions. It is one of those phenomena in life that verifies the reality of a sixth sense—our spiritual sense. Such was the case for me as I read the letter of Sullivan Ballou to his wife. It was almost as though the angels themselves had penned the words and

transmitted the feelings to the sacred page. Ballou was thirty-four. He was among the first of the six hundred thousand soldiers who died in the Civil War. He was fatally shot in the Battle of Bull Run. Shortly before his death, he wrote to his wife these tender words of both a prophetic and inspired nature:

My very dear Sarah: The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more. . . . My dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battle field, it will whisper your name. . . . But, O Sarah! if the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you, . . . always, always, and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath; as the cool air fans your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by. Sarah, do not mourn me dead; think I am gone and wait for thee, for we shall meet again.<sup>331</sup>

And why not meet again and embrace again as husbands and wives, for the Lord has declared the eternal nature of the marriage unit.

### Celibacy of the Priesthood

Paul understood how far afield people would go from the doctrine of marriage as taught in Christ's Church. Not only would they lose sight of its eternal nature, as evidenced by most marriage ceremonies (which incorporate the words, "until death do you part"), but even more troubling, Paul warned that "in the latter times some shall depart from the faith . . . forbidding to marry" (1 Timothy 4:1, 3). The Lord spoke in modern days of those who would advocate celibacy: "Verily I say unto you, that whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God" (D&C 49:15). Celibacy, in direct contradiction to God's edict, became a professed virtue in the ongoing church. A. Cleveland Coxe, in his chapter notes to the writings of Tertullian, observed that marriage was common among the clergy in the early church: "Hundreds of her priesthood, therefore, live in honourable marriage. Thousands live in secret marriage. . . . It was not till the eleventh century that the celibate [life] was enforced."<sup>332</sup> *Newsweek* magazine explained the origin of this corrupted doctrine:

Historically, there is no lack of precedent. Priests were married for Christianity's first thousand years. Jesus' Apostles had wives and families; Peter, whom Rome claims as the founding pope, probably did, too. The forces that pushed the church toward its 12th-century stand on celibacy were political as well as spiritual, including the worry that sons of clergy would inherit church titles and property. . . . So the clergy became celibate."<sup>333</sup>

An honest searcher of truth might ask, "Where was the revelation that allowed one to endorse celibacy and thus change the mandate of God, 'Therefore *shall* a man leave his father and his mother, and *shall* cleave unto his wife' (Genesis 2:24)?" Without the guiding hand of the apostles, another doctrine fell prey to the philosophies of men. Frederic W. Farrar knew that marriage was divinely sanctioned in the original Church: "In the world marriage was detested as a disagreeable necessity, and its very meaning was destroyed by the frequency and facility of divorce; in the Church it was consecrated and honourable—the institution which had alone survived the loss of Paradise—and was all but sacramental in its Heaven-appointed blessedness."<sup>334</sup> In speaking of certain apostate doctrines that crept into the church, Farrar focused on celibacy: "The tendency to disparage the wedded state, and to exalt celibacy into a counsel of perfection—is not only discouraged in Scripture but had its root in dangerous heresies, and runs counter to the express and repeated teachings of Holy Writ."<sup>335</sup>

It should not seem surprising that Satan is always tampering with God's doctrine. If he cannot convince the

people to be celibates, then at the very least he can whisper to those who insist on marriage, "until death do you part." The ongoing churches bought his propaganda "hook, line, and sinker," but it was not so in Christ's original Church.<sup>336</sup> What difference does this doctrine of eternal marriage make in our behavior, our happiness, and our hopes? Parley P. Pratt, a latter-day apostle who did not fully understand the doctrine until it was revealed to him by the Prophet Joseph Smith, answered that question:

It was from him [Joseph Smith] that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity; and that the refined sympathies and affections which endeared us to each other emanated from the fountain of divine eternal love. It was from him that I learned that we might cultivate these affections, and grow and increase in the same to all eternity; while the result of our endless union would be an offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sands of the sea shore.<sup>337</sup>

The doctrine of eternal marriage is one of those sublime truths for which the human heart longs. To those not entrapped by the philosophies of men or steeped in the traditions of past ages, it is eagerly embraced. Its power is profound. Mere reflection upon it strengthens resolve when commitments begin to waver; contemplation of its agelessness lifts our visions and hopes beyond those trials of the day that often stare us in the face and blind us to our eternal possibilities. With the hope of eternal companionship comes increased devotion and fidelity, a purer love that transcends the frailties of mortality, and a pressing passion to be a more celestial partner—whatever the cost may be. With an understanding of this divine doctrine comes a compelling prompting to invite God—he who ordained and sanctioned this glorious principle—into our marriages. Its loss from the theology of the Church was of no minor consequence. It was a severe blow to every husband and wife who longed for love beyond the grave, but who, with the loss of this doctrine, had no sure foundation upon which to build that hope. It was a costly casualty of the apostasy.

## Abortion

There are certain burning issues today that were likewise burning issues in the early Church. One such issue is abortion. Those who favor it refer to themselves today as "pro-choice," while those who oppose it refer to themselves as "pro-life." The right to choose and the right to life are cornerstones of our democracy, and for this reason there exist such intense feelings over which cause is right and which cause should prevail.

Difficult questions arise, such as when does life begin? At conception? Ten weeks later? With the first heartbeat? The first breath? Other difficult questions are encountered: Are there circumstances under which abortion might be appropriate (such as when the life of the mother is seriously endangered)? And the list of soul-searching questions continues.

There are sincere and brilliant people who are advocates for pro-choice, just as there are sincere and brilliant people who are advocates for pro-life. Each side argues its case with passion and seemingly exacting powers of reason. Each side has its own statistics and surveys on which it relies. Judges and legislators are divided on the issue. Some ecclesiastical leaders, even within the same faith, cannot reach accord.<sup>338</sup> But, in truth, it is not much different from the great debate on slavery. It, too, had its statesmen, jurists, philosophers, and ministers on both sides of the issue. While there were slave owners who were good and sincere men, the added vision of hindsight has made the answer clear. What honest observer today does not know with absolute moral certainty that slavery is wrong? All the logic of all the statesmen, jurists, philosophers, and ministers who argued for slavery—that seemed so appealing and so convincing in its day—has melted in the sunlight of history and been silenced by the compelling moral certitude that slavery is an egregious wrong.

As insightful as the powers of reason are, history has demonstrated that reason alone neither has nor ever will resolve issues such as abortion. Why is that? Because the issue of abortion is a moral one, just as was the slave issue, and like slavery, abortion requires the same God who spoke on Mount Sinai and delivered the Ten Commandments to speak with authority on this matter today. Nonetheless, those who choose to walk by the light of their own reason walk as by the starlight, rejecting the brightness of the sun.<sup>339</sup>

Fortunately, the Lord gives us certain moral mountains that we cannot cross with impunity, which cannot be rationalized away or circumvented. To the contrary, they loom with gigantic stature on the horizon—always to be seen, always to be there. They are our point of reference for spiritual and moral matters.

Imagine for a moment, if there had been no Ten Commandments—what might be the consequences today? The advocates of pro-choice might argue with their powers of reason that adultery was acceptable because it involved two consenting adults and, therefore, was but a manifestation of their God-given freedom of choice. Likewise, they might contend that coveting a neighbor's wife did no harm, since it was but a form of freedom of expression as "guaranteed" under the Constitution. Without this moral code given on Mount Sinai and other commands given by God, there would be no reference points for society—no checks and balances against the powers of passion and reason. Each man would live according to his own carnal desires and code of conduct.<sup>340</sup>

While it is true that not all moral wrongs are punishable under our modern legal society (for instance, adultery and coveting a neighbor's wife are not punished in the United States), the role of the true Christian is to live not just a *legal* life but also a *moral* life. Since that is the case, the true Christian must ask, "Has God spoken on the moral issue of abortion and, if so, what has he said?"

Through the prophets God has revealed his moral law (Amos 3:7). The moral issue of abortion is no exception. God did not leave a gaping hole in his moral law by failing to address this issue of monumental consequence. While the Bible itself does not conclusively resolve the abortion issue<sup>341</sup> (which, no doubt, results in some of the confusion today), we are fortunate that the early Christian writers did preserve the position of the primitive Church on this matter. They spoke clearly, unequivocally, and repeatedly on this sensitive topic. There is no ambiguity in their language, no whitewashing the issue, no rationalization of the doctrine, but rather a remarkable unity and directness on the subject. For example, *The Didache* (A.D. 80–140), a church manual of early Christianity, instructed the new proselyte before he was baptized: "Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born." Then, among others, it lists those who are "murderers of children"<sup>342</sup> as being subject to spiritual death. The author of *The Epistle of Barnabas* is equally clear in his condemnation of abortion: "Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion, nor again shalt thou kill it when it is born."<sup>343</sup> *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) records a similar warning: "Thou shall not slay thy child by causing abortion, nor kill that which is begotten."<sup>344</sup>

Athenagoras (A.D. 150–190) wrote to the Roman emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Commodus, pleading for a restraint against Christian persecution. In so doing, he was arguing against the false charge that some Christians were murderers. For part of his defense, he referred to the great reverence Christians had for life and then observed: "And when we say that *those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder, and will have to give an account to God for the abortion*, on what principle should we commit murder."<sup>345</sup> Tertullian likewise wrote the Roman emperors and defended the Christians against the false assertion they were murderers. He followed a similar rationale as Athenagoras to prove his point:

In our case [the case of Christians], murder being once for all forbidden, we *may not destroy even the foetus in the womb*, while as yet the human being derives blood from other parts of the body for its sustenance. *To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing*; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to the birth. That is a man which is going to be one; you have the fruit already in its seed.<sup>346</sup>

Elsewhere Tertullian addressed the same issue: "Consider the wombs of the most sainted women instinct with the life within them, and their babes which not only breathed therein, but were even endowed with prophetic intuition. . . . Even these [foetuses] have life, each of them in his mother's womb. . . . Now we allow that life begins with conception, because we contend that the soul also begins from conception."<sup>347</sup> Tertullian then reinforced his point so no one could misunderstand:

The soul, being sown in the womb at the same time as the body, receives likewise along with it its sex. . . . The embryo therefore becomes a human being in the womb from the moment that its form is completed. The law of Moses, indeed, punishes with due penalties the man who shall cause abortion, inasmuch as there exists already the rudiment of a human being, which has imputed to it even now the condition of life and death.<sup>348</sup>

Minucius Felix (A.D. 170–215), a Christian lawyer, condemned the heathens for their proabortion stance: "There are some women who, by drinking medical preparations, extinguish the source of the future man in their very bowels, and thus commit a parricide before they bring forth. And these things assuredly come down from the teaching of your gods."<sup>349</sup> The early Christian writers were making the point that a distinctive mark of the Christian was his belief in protection of the infant from inception. A hallmark of the early Christian church was its antiabortion, "pro-life" stance.

Clement of Alexandria gave the underlying rationale as to why abortion was so abhorred: "For the man who did not desire to beget children had no right to marry at first: certainly not to have become, through licentious indulgence, the murderer of his children. Again, the humane law forbids slaying the offspring."<sup>350</sup> Hippolytus taught the same principle: "Women, reputed believers, began to resort to drugs for producing sterility, and to gird themselves round, so to expel what was being conceived on account of their not wishing to have a child either by a slave or by any paltry fellow. . . . Behold, into how great impiety that lawless *one* has proceeded, by inculcating adultery and murder at the same time!" Another translator gave the following version of Hippolytus's first sentence above: "Women began to venture to bandage themselves with ligaments to produce abortion, and to deal with drugs in order to destroy what was conceived."<sup>351</sup>

Clement of Alexandria explained that this sanctity of life for the unborn was honored even by the Romans to some extent: "Thence also the Romans, in the case of a pregnant woman being condemned to death, do not allow her to undergo punishment till she is delivered."<sup>352</sup> No wonder Will Durant should note: "Abortion and infanticide, which were decimating pagan society, were forbidden to Christians as the equivalents of murder."<sup>353</sup>

How refreshing it is to know there are prophets in our times who have spoken as God's mouthpiece on this issue in perfect harmony with the leaders of Christ's primitive Church. President Spencer W. Kimball declared: "My brothers and sisters, I want you to know that abortion is wrong. We counsel girls and women never to consider having an abortion. . . . We admonish parents and priesthood leaders to firmly oppose this revolting and evil practice."<sup>354</sup> In 1991 the First Presidency of the Church declared: "In view of the widespread public interest in the issue of abortion, we reaffirm that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints has consistently opposed elective abortion. . . . We have repeatedly counseled people everywhere to turn from the devastating practice of abortion for personal or social convenience."<sup>355</sup> The seriousness of abortion may be included in the Lord's command, "Thou shalt not . . . kill, *nor do anything like unto it*" (D&C 59:6).<sup>356</sup>

As a counselor in a mission presidency I conducted selected interviews before baptism. Some of the people I interviewed had participated in abortions before they had received the fulness of the gospel truth. In almost every case, they felt intense sorrow over their deed. They acknowledged they had felt guilt, depression, sorrow, and a loss of the Spirit from the moment the tragic event occurred. It was not the powers of reason alone that told them it was wrong. It was much more. It was the power of the Spirit, and now as the Spirit had become even more prevalent in their life, it accentuated all the more the need for repentance and the desire to avail themselves of the cleansing powers of the Atonement.

The Lord is the Supreme Court on moral matters. He has made his position clear on abortion, both in the primitive Church, as recorded by the early Christian writers, and through modern prophets today. His message has not changed: abortion is an egregious sin. God has decreed it, and history will vindicate it. Any suggestions to the contrary by counselors, teachers, legislators, or even clerics are but the opinions of lower courts—they are of no weight whatever if they contravene the Supreme Deity in any way. It is startling that all Christian churches are not in perfect accord on this subject, which was taught forcefully and frequently in the early Church. It is surprising that every congregation of every Christian church does not have emblazoned in its doctrine and proclaimed from its pulpits that abortion is a terrible sin. Any deviation from the doctrine unitedly taught in the primitive Church, or "ecclesiastical winking" (preaching it, but not requiring abstinence from its practice among the lay membership), is simply one more manifestation of the great apostasy.

## Homosexuality

From the earliest of times, homosexuality has been condemned of the Lord. One of the reasons Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed by fire was because homosexuality was so prevalent among its citizens (Genesis 19:5–9; Jude 1:7).<sup>357</sup>

So serious was the offense of homosexuality under the law of Moses that capital punishment was the judgment for the offender: "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 20:13).<sup>358</sup> The command against homosexuality was clearly continued in the New Testament church. Paul wrote: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly" (Romans 1:26–27). Referring to this scripture, Origen wrote of those who engaged in such unchristian conduct: "Those who call themselves wise have despised these virtues, and have wallowed in the filth of sodomy, in lawless lust, 'men with men working that which is unseemly.'"<sup>359</sup> Paul warned the people of Corinth not to be "effeminate, nor abusers of [yourselves] with mankind" (1 Corinthians 6:9). He also warned the Saints in a letter to Timothy not to "defile themselves with mankind" (1 Timothy 1:10). The injunction was clear and repeated—homosexuality was an abomination before God. Some have attempted to rationalize away the foregoing scriptures, suggesting they referred only to men who lusted after other men, not men who "loved" other men, but in the end it is no more than a futile attempt to circumvent the unambiguous word of God. There were no such exceptions, no such twisted interpretations ever offered by the early Christian leaders.

The primitive Church continued for some time to teach the clear mandate of the scriptures. Polycarp wrote, "Refrain from lusts in the world, for every *lust warreth against the Spirit*, and *neither whoremongers nor effeminate persons nor defilers of themselves with men shall inherit the kingdom of God.*"<sup>360</sup> Tertullian noted: "I should suppose the coupling of two males to be a very shameful thing,"<sup>361</sup> and he then added, "The Christian confines himself to the female sex."<sup>362</sup> Tertullian also wrote of that "monstrous abomination both of adultery and unnatural sin with man and beast."<sup>363</sup> *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) spoke of the divinely ordained relationship between man and woman. Then it commented: "But we do not say so of that mixture that is contrary to nature. . . . For the sin of Sodom is contrary to nature."<sup>364</sup> Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) spoke of those unchaste souls who have a "madness of vice, . . . men with frenzied lusts rushing upon men."<sup>365</sup> Aristides (c. A.D. 125) wrote of those who "polluted themselves by lying with males."<sup>366</sup> Athenagoras condemned those "who do not abstain even from males, males with males committing shocking abominations, outraging all the noblest and comeliest bodies in all sorts of ways, so dishonouring the fair workmanship of God."<sup>367</sup> And Origen spoke of the "great sin[s]" that "are committed by fornicators, adulterers, abusers of themselves with men, effeminate, idolaters, murderers."<sup>368</sup>

From the beginning of time any sexual relationship between man and man, or woman and woman, was considered unnatural and condemned by the Lord in the severest of terms. There is no suggestion, no intimation, no crack in the door that would offer any possibility, any proof that homosexuality was ever approved by the Lord. The evidence of its condemnation, as voiced by the early Church leaders, is staggering. It should be no surprise that Durant wrote in conclusive terms: "Homosexual practices were condemned with an earnestness rare in antiquity."<sup>369</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* came to the same conclusion: "The church fathers universally condemned male homosexual behavior. . . . They clearly regarded it as contrary to the created constitution and function of men and women. . . . *All the evidence indicates that the teaching mind of the early church unreservedly condemned homosexual activity.*"<sup>370</sup> Accordingly, if one chooses to engage in such conduct, he willfully chooses to disobey God. No amount of rationalization, no submission to political correctness, no masquerading the facts with claims of tolerance can change God's decree. So errant was homosexual behavior that the early Church leaders "deemed it [homosexuality] an index of the moral disorder of humanity."<sup>371</sup> No wonder Paul spoke of those "without natural affection" as one of the signs preceding Christ's second coming, when "perilous times shall come" (2 Timothy 3:3).

So strong was the prohibition against homosexuality that the Church also forbade men to dress like women, or the reverse. The law of Moses addressed this issue: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 22:5). The same prohibition continued in the primitive Church and was spoken of by Tertullian: "I find no dress cursed by God except a woman's dress on a man: for 'cursed' saith He, is every man who clothes himself in woman's attire."<sup>372</sup> Clement of Alexandria gave the underlying reason for such a mandate: "What reason is there in the law's prohibiting a man from 'wearing woman's clothing'? Is it not that it would have us to be manly, and not to be effeminate neither in person and actions, nor in thought and word?"<sup>373</sup> Cyprian added his concurrence: "For since, in the law, men are forbidden to put on a woman's garment, and those that offend in this manner are judged accursed, how much greater is the crime, not only to take women's garments, but also to express base and effeminate and luxurious gestures."<sup>374</sup>

Unfortunately, the theaters of ancient time attempted to feminize a man, so he could play a woman's part. Cyprian wrote of this evil: "Men are emasculated, and all the pride and vigour of their sex is effeminated in



the disgrace of their enervated body; and he is most pleasing there who has most completely broken down the man into the woman. . . . Such a one is looked upon—oh shame!"<sup>375</sup> Lactantius was equally vocal in his condemnation of such conduct: "And what other effect do the immodest gestures of the players produce, but both teach and excite lusts? whose enervated bodies, rendered effeminate after the gait and dress of women, imitate unchaste women by their disgraceful gestures."<sup>376</sup>

With uniformity the early Church leaders condemned homosexuality and any conduct associated with it. Nonetheless, with the passage of time, abhorrence of this practice eventually evolved into acceptance by many Christian leaders. There even arose a defiant attitude that, in spite of the scriptures, in spite of the clear mandate of the early Christian writers, somehow it was uncharitable, un-Christlike not to condone homosexuality. Such a position, however, is no less than a retreat to Sodom. It reminds one of the observation made by Abraham Lincoln about the conditions in his day: "Sinners were calling the righteous to repentance."<sup>377</sup>

If all were to choose a life of homosexuality, then God's first command, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28) would be completely thwarted. Sometimes the best way to determine the validity of a moral law is to ask, "What would be the consequence if everyone were to follow the proposed way of life?" This response helps one visualize how such conduct either promotes or thwarts God's purposes. In this case, civilization would be annihilated in one generation.<sup>378</sup> The whole purpose of God's creation would be frustrated. Can anyone believe that such a doctrine would be sanctioned by God? In spite of the repeated injunctions of God forbidding homosexuality, and the repeated directives commanding marriage between a man and woman, homosexuality gradually gained tolerance, and then acceptance, until there were many homosexuals, even in the ongoing church, who had infiltrated the ranks of the clergy. While current events have revealed the staggering number of homosexuals in certain clerical ranks today, the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* noted that such problems (perhaps on a lesser scale) existed as early as the fifth century: "The frequency with which John Chrysostom [A.D. 347–407], for example, attacked homosexual behavior shows that some in the church, including monks, indulged in it."<sup>379</sup> The emergence of homosexuality within the church, particularly the clergy, constituted a tragic state of affairs. It was yet another sign of the apostasy.

## Conclusion

During the period of the apostasy "many plain and precious things" were deleted from the Bible. Nephi described the consequence of such spiritual omissions: "An exceedingly great many do stumble" (1 Nephi 13:28–29).<sup>380</sup> Fortunately, Nephi was promised that during the last days a restoration would take place, including the restoration of the original word of God: "And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first [the Bible], which are the twelve apostles of the Lamb, *and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them*" (1 Nephi 13:40). The Book of Mormon is the principal record to restore such lost doctrines. Elder Bruce R. McConkie offered this significant test to those who may question that assertion:

Here . . . is a suggested personal study program that will open the eyes of the spiritually blind and unstop the ears of the spiritually deaf. Choose the one hundred most basic doctrines of the gospel, and under each doctrine make two parallel columns, one headed *Bible* and the other *Book of Mormon*. Then place in these columns what each book of scripture says about each doctrine. The end result will show, without question, that in ninety-five of the one hundred cases, the Book of Mormon teaching is clearer, plainer, more

expansive, and better than the biblical word. If there is any question in anyone's mind about this, let him take the test—a personal test.<sup>381</sup>

I have taken the foregoing test with respect to the central doctrine of all Christianity—the atonement of Jesus Christ. Suffice it to say that without the Book of Mormon, the rest of the Christian world is left with many misconceptions concerning this keystone doctrine.<sup>382</sup>

President Ezra Taft Benson explained the need for a restoration of God's word:

Much of the Christian world today rejects the divinity of the Savior. They question His miraculous birth, His perfect life, and the reality of His glorious resurrection. The Book of Mormon teaches in plain and unmistakable terms about the truth of all of these. It also provides the most complete explanation of the doctrine of the Atonement. Truly, this divinely inspired book is a keystone in bearing witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ.<sup>383</sup>

Absent such a restoration there was no hope for a recovery from the apostasy. Thomas Jefferson observed the terrible state of confusion in which Christianity was mired:

The religion-builders have so distorted and deformed the doctrines of Jesus, so muffled them in mysticisms, fancies and falsehoods, have caricatured them into forms so monstrous and inconceivable as to shock reasonable thinkers. . . . *Happy in the prospect of a restoration of primitive Christianity*, I must leave to younger athletes to encounter and lop off the false branches which have been engrafted into it by the mythologists of the middle and modern ages.<sup>384</sup>

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878–1969), a well-known Baptist minister and author, must have felt similarly when he lamented:

A religious reformation is afoot, and at heart it is the endeavor to recover for our modern life the religion of Jesus as against the vast, intricate, largely inadequate and often positively false religion about Jesus. Christianity today has largely left the religion which he preached, taught and lived, and has substituted another kind of religion altogether. If Jesus should come back to earth now, hear the mythologies built up around him, see the creedalism, the denominationalism, sacramentalism, carried on in his name, he would certainly say, "If this is Christianity, I am not a Christian."<sup>385</sup>

Erasmus (A.D. 1466–1536), a respected monk, noted how convoluted the doctrine had become in his day because of the man-made process to resolve disputes:

If a decision must be made, I would like to see it done reverently, not arrogantly, and based on Holy Scripture, not on some trifling reasons fabricated by men. But nowadays there is no end to the quibbling questions. . . . Every day decree after decree is issued, one begetting another. In short, things have gotten so bad that the chief point in any affair will not depend on Christ's command but on the definitions of the scholastics and the power of the bishops, no matter what their qualifications may be. *Everything is now so entangled with these questions and decrees that we dare not even hope to call the world back to true Christianity.*<sup>386</sup>

What an admission! The teachings of the church had been so corrupted that Erasmus knew there was no hope of returning to primitive Christianity under the existing state of affairs. The Lord pinpointed the

underlying cause for such doctrinal turmoil: "Satan doth stir up the hearts of the people to contention concerning the points of my doctrine; and in these things they do err, for they do wrest the scriptures and do not understand them" (D&C 10:63). The apostasy had taken its toll—many doctrines had been polluted, some even lost.

In order to minimize the loss, some have suggested that the true test of Christianity is not in the doctrine, but in the lifestyle. Of course, lifestyle is important, but it cannot be divorced from doctrine, for it is the doctrines that change hearts and forge lifestyles. It is the doctrines to which we cling for support, the doctrines to which we hold for hope, the doctrines that embolden our resolve. Dilute the doctrine and you dilute the lifestyle. Accordingly, when the doctrines became corrupted, lifestyles became corrupted. That is why the wickedness of the clergy and lay membership for century after century is such a significant evidence of corrupted doctrines.

Distinguishing between the doctrines of Christ's primitive Church and those of the fifth-century church is somewhat akin to the dilemma of the farmer who could not distinguish one horse from another. They ran at the same speed; they carried the same load; their teeth were of the same appearance. Finally, as a last resort he measured them, and sure enough, the white horse was six hands higher than the black one. Such was the difference between the doctrines of first-century Christianity as compared to those of the fifth-century. The apostasy had taken a heavy toll on the truth.

#### Notes to Chapter 14: Sixth Evidence

1. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 32:118; emphasis added.
2. Fox, *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, 18.
3. Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:601.
4. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 350.
5. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 39.
6. Van Paassen, *A Crown of Fire*, 89.
7. Cousins, *In God We Trust*, 156; emphasis added.
8. Howells, *His Many Mansions*, "A Comparative Chart of 10 Christian Religions on 23 Doctrinal Subjects."
9. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:286.
10. What would be the significance of the heartfelt observation that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16), if, in fact, he had given himself? Who is the "only begotten Son" (John 3:16), if the Father and the Son are the same person? John recorded that the Son shall "sit down *with* [the] Father in his throne" (Revelation 3:21). How could he sit down with the Father if they are the same individual? How could Jesus be the mediator with the Father (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5) if he is, in fact, the Father? John said that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). Why make such a distinction if the Father and the Son are one and the

same?

11. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:606.

12. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:600; Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) also wrote, "Does not the very fact that they have the distinct names of *Father* and *Son* amount to a declaration that they are distinct in personality?" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:604). Evidencing the distinct difference between the Father and the Son, Arnobius (260–330 A.D.) wrote, "Do these [pagans], then, hear with offended ears that Christ is worshipped, and that He is accepted by us and regarded as a divine person?" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 6:422)—meaning a person distinct from the Father.

13. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:264.

14. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 6:92.

15. See also Luke 12:10.

16. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 6:94, as quoted by Athanasius; emphasis added.

17. See also Matthew 19:6; 1 John 5:7–8.

18. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:226; emphasis added.

19. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:643–44.

20. Edwin Hatch wrote, "The first point that is obvious to an inquirer is, that the change in the centre of gravity from conduct to belief is coincident with the transference of Christianity from a Semitic to a Greek soil" (Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 2).

21. As found in Weber, *History of Philosophy*, 85, as cited in Barker, *Apostasy from the Divine Church*, 230.

22. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 14.

23. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 133, 207–8.

24. The Nicene Creed states, "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things, visible and invisible: and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father; God of God; Light of light; very God of very God; begotten, not made; *being of one substance with the Father*; by whom all things were made, both things in heaven and things in earth: who for us men and for our salvation came down, and was incarnate, and was made man: he suffered, and rose again the third day: and ascended into heaven: and shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost. . . ." (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:524; emphasis added). This was slightly modified at Constantinople in A.D. 381.

25. The study of Christ's relationship to the Father, the nature of Christ's divinity and the nature of his humanity, is sometimes referred to as Christology. Christ's relationship to the Father was decided upon at the Nicene Council. The nature of his divinity and humanity, and whether he had two wills or one, however, was

a subject of intense debate for decades. The controversy centered upon the assumption that Christ had two different natures, one human and one divine (probably an outgrowth of Aristotle's view that man had two souls, one animal and one rational). If that were so, how then could Christ, a perfect God, have as part of him an imperfect human nature? Finally, the Council of Chalcedon ( A.D. 451) ended the controversy—it determined that Christ had two wills and two natures, but his human will was completely submissive to his divine will, and therefore his perfection was maintained.

26. Constantine had also authorized a general council in Arles, Gaul, in A.D. 315, but it involved far fewer clerical representatives than were present at Nicea. Arles had fewer than fifty ecclesiastical leaders; Nicea had more than three hundred.

27. James I. Barker, in his book *Apostasy from the Divine Church*, makes the following note: "*Omoousios* is sometimes spelled in English books with an h, *homoosios*; in the spelling, the 'h' is used to indicate a breath sound, similar to the sound of English h, indicated in Greek by an accent mark over the o" (p. 299).

28. "The Athanasian Creed," in *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, 106. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) incorporated the same incoherent reasoning in his discussion of the Godhead: "There are, however, two gods or two Lords, is a statement which at no time proceeds out of our mouth: not as if it were untrue that the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and each is God" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:608). In other words, he declared that there was one God in his first "breath" but then proceeded to name three gods in his second "breath." It does not matter how erudite someone may be; that language is simply confusing and contradictory. Novatian (d. A.D. 257) also wrestled with the issue of whether there was one God or multiple gods. Finally, he gave his opinion, which is just as confusing as that of Tertullian: "Making Himself [Jesus] obedient to His Father in all things, although He also is God, yet He shows the one God the Father by His obedience, from whom also He drew His beginning. And thus He could not make two gods" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:644).

29. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith*, 48.

30. *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, "The Athanasian Creed," 106. In addition, Edwin Hatch noted, "These evils [strife, murder, devastation, and the like, found within the church] mostly came from that which has been a permanently disastrous fact in Christian history, the interference of the State, which gave the decrees of Councils that sanction which elevated the resolutions of the majority upon the deepest subjects of human speculation to the factitious rank of laws which must be adopted on pain of forfeiture, banishment or death" (*The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 279–80).

31. Isaiah 43:10; 44:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6.

32. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 312. For a further discussion on the hierarchy of gods, see the subsection entitled "The Doctrine of Deification (Becoming Like God)" in this chapter.

33. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:241; emphasis added.

34. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:262, 277; emphasis added. Origen (A.D. 185–255) went so far as to refute Celsus's argument that Christians believed in a material God: "After this Celsus relates at length opinions which he ascribes to us [Christians], but which we do not hold, regarding the Divine Being, to the

effect that, 'he is corporeal in his nature, and possesses a body like a man.' . . . He undertakes to refute opinions which are none of ours" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:621).

35. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:284; emphasis added.

36. Weber, *History of Philosophy*, 116–17, as cited by Barker in *Apostasy from the Divine Church*, 231.

37. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 282.

38. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 240.

39. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 192, footnote; emphasis added. Nonetheless, Tatian (A.D. 110–172) commented, "The perfect God is without flesh" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:71).

40. At the time this statement was made, God the Father had a glorified physical body, while the Savior had a spirit body only (a body made of more refined matter; see D&C 131:7–8). When the premortal Savior showed himself to the brother of Jared, he said, "Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image. 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 3:15–16).

41. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:316.

42. Most Christian churches teach that "man is created in the image of God only in the moral and spiritual sense, and not in the physical sense" (Howells, *His Many Mansions*, "A Comparative Chart of 10 Christian Religions on 23 Doctrinal Subjects").

43. In spite of the scriptures, Aristides (c. A.D. 125) wrote, "He is neither male nor female. The heavens do not limit him" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:264). Arnobius (A.D. 260–330) was similarly in error when he wrote, "When we speak of Him we use a masculine word. . . . For the Deity is not male" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 6:466).

44. See also Matthew 18:10. The Lord had previously spoken "unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exodus 33:11). Later, however, the Lord was unwilling to show his face, "as at other times; for I [the Lord] am angry with my people Israel" (JST Exodus 33:23; see also JST Exodus 33:20).

45. See also Matthew 4:4.

46. See also Hebrews 1:3.

47. And why would God tell Moses "my face shall not be seen" (Exodus 33:23), if, in fact, he has no face? What figurative purpose would there be in such a statement? In spite of the multiple references to the bodily image of God, Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) wrote, "For the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither has come to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor rises up, but remains in His own place, wherever that is, quick to behold and quick to hear, having neither eyes nor ears, but being of indescribable might" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:263).

48. See also Acts 10:41.

49. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:584. This should read *bone*, not *blood*, since "blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50).

50. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:299. While Origen (A.D. 185–255) specifically referred to Christ's mortal body, the implications of his reasoning would likewise apply to Christ's resurrected body.

51. For more information on the resurrection, see the subsection in this chapter titled "A Physical Resurrection of the Dead."

52. Some have quoted 1 Corinthians 15:50, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," as evidence that neither Jesus nor any resurrected body can be composed of flesh and bones and dwell in heaven. This scripture states that flesh *combined* with blood cannot inherit eternal life. That is a correct statement. It does not state, however, that flesh combined with bones cannot inherit eternal life. In fact, a resurrected body is composed of flesh and bone and spirit, not blood. Joseph Smith taught, "When our flesh is quickened by the Spirit, there will be no blood in this tabernacle" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 367).

53. As cited in an article by J. B. Haws, "Defenders of the Doctrine of Deification," in *Prelude to the Restoration*, 84.

54. See also Moses 1:11.

55. Fortunately John, in subsequent writings, helps us understand what he means. In John 6:46, he states that "[no] man hath seen the Father, *save he which is of God*, he hath seen the Father." Some might contend that the foregoing exception refers only to the Son because he is the only one who is "of God." But John, in speaking to members of the Church, defines the phrase "of God" to be more expansive: "He that doeth good is of God" (3 John 1:11). In other words, good or righteous men may see God, as the scriptures affirm on multiple occasions.

56. 1 Timothy 6:16 was clarified to read, "Whom no man hath seen . . . *only he who hath the light and the hope of immortality dwelling in him*" (JST 1 Timothy 6:16); 1 John 4:12 was corrected as follows: "No man hath seen God at any time, *except them who believe*" (JST 1 John 4:12 ).

57. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:277.

58. See the section entitled "A Physical Resurrection of the Dead" in this chapter.

59. See also 2 Nephi 9:13; Mormon 6:21.

60. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:547.

61. See D&C 88:27–31.

62. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:262.

63. *World Book Encyclopedia*, 1:566.

64. See also 1 John 1:5; 4:8.

65. Joseph Smith observed, "I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors" (*History of the Church*, 6:57). Barry Bickmore, a scholar of the ancient church, noted, "Since there is no indefinite article in ancient Greek, John 4:24 could just as easily be translated, 'God is Spirit.' Certainly this statement must be interpreted in the same sense that John also said, 'God is light' (1 John 1:5) and 'God is love' (1 John 4:8). Indeed, many modern translations do translate it thus. These do not characterize God's 'being,' but rather His actions and relationship with men. . . . 'God is Spirit' because He enlightens men through His Holy Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.' (John 4:24 NEB)" (*Restoring the Ancient Church*, 94).

66. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:153. Nonetheless, this one mistranslation has misled many people. As a result of this scripture, Novatian wrote, "He [God] is known to be constructed assuredly of no associations of bodily parts. For He is simple and without any corporeal commixture, being wholly of that essence, which, whatever it be,—He alone knows,—constitutes His being, since He is called Spirit." Sensing, however, that this was an inadequate answer, Novatian further opined, "But when the Lord says that God is a Spirit, I think that Christ spoke thus of the Father, as wishing that something still more should be understood than merely that God is a Spirit" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:615, 616).

67. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:34. Origen (A.D. 185–255) disagreed with such a description, because he recognized that Tertullian described a material being: "The Son is not generated from Him by 'prolation,' as some suppose. For if the Son be a 'prolation' of the Father (the term 'prolation' being used to signify such a generation as that of animals or men usually is), then, of necessity, both He who 'prolated' and He who *was* 'prolated' are corporeal" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:376).

68. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:376.

69. Fortunately, the Doctrine and Covenants speaks the clear truth on this subject: "There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine and pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; we cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter" (D&C 131:7–8).

70. Richards, in Conference Report, October 1972, 142.

71. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:68.

72. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 236.

73. See also Romans 9:10–13.

74. The Savior did not correct the disciples' understanding of a premortal existence (because it was not in error), but he did explain that in this case the man's blindness was neither attributable to any sin committed in the premortal existence nor to the man's parents, but rather "that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3). The Savior then proceeded to heal him.

75. Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," in *A Treasury of Great Poems*, 655.



76. Some have wondered whether the third part cast out of heaven was a third part of all the spirit children of God assigned to all worlds or rather a third part of the spirit children destined only for this earth. Brigham Young gave the answer: "It was one-third part of the spirits who were prepared to take tabernacles upon this earth, and who rebelled against the other two-thirds of the heavenly host. . . . One-third part of the spirits that were prepared for this earth rebelled against Jesus Christ" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 54–55).

77. See also Luke 10:18.

78. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 25.

79. While some believe that Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100) is the author of this work, most scholars believe that the writer is unknown.

80. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:85; emphasis added.

81. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:240–41.

82. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:336–37; emphasis added.

83. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:292; emphasis added. Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) also contemplated the possibility of the soul's existence before mortal birth: "If the world is begotten, souls also are necessarily begotten; and perhaps at one time they were not in existence, for they were made on account of men and other living creatures, if you will say that they have been begotten wholly apart, and not along with their respective bodies" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:197).

84. See *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 285.

85. Packer, "The Mystery of Life," *Ensign*, November 1983, 16.

86. Bickmore, *Restoring the Ancient Church*, 145–46.

87. *The Lost Books of the Bible and The Forgotten Books of Eden*, "Secrets of Enoch," 23:2.

88. *The Gospel of Thomas* (2:2), *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 123. The Nag Hammadi Library is basically a collection of Christian and Gnostic texts that was discovered in 1946 near Nag Hammadi, Egypt.

89. *The Wisdom of Solomon*, 43:197.

90. "The Assumption of Moses," *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2:415.

91. "The Odes of Solomon," Ode 8, in *The Lost Books of the Bible and The Forgotten Books of Eden*, 124. Other apocryphal literature contains references to heavenly councils before the foundation of the earth, and to the pre-earth status of the Church as well as the pre-earth status of the City of Jerusalem, and of temples. For excellent material on these citations, see Joseph F. McConkie's article "Premortal Existence Foreordinations" in Griggs, ed., *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, 173–98, and Bickmore, *Restoring the Ancient Church*, 138–48.

92. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:56. This is confirmed by Howells, *His Many Mansions*, "A Comparative Chart of 10 Christian Religions on 23 Doctrinal Subjects."

93. Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 28.
94. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:306.
95. Quoted in Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life*, 349.
96. The words "save," "saved" and "salvation" have multiple meanings as used in the scriptures, but for purposes of this discussion, "salvation" means to live in the presence of God.
97. Fosdick, *Martin Luther*, 52–53. Fosdick also cautioned, "We must not think of the Roman Catholicism in Luther's day as being merely a matter of indulgences, pilgrimages, sacred relics and all that kind of thing. Multitudes of plain folk in Germany were not simply Roman Catholics in these outward matters; they were genuine Christians in their lives" (*Martin Luther*, 149).
98. Other scriptures quoted by those who believe in salvation by grace alone are Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:20, 27–28; 10:9–13; Galatians 2:16; and Titus 3:5.
99. See also James 1:22–27.
100. Smith, *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther*, 269.
101. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 54:424.
102. See also Revelation 22:12, 14.
103. See also 1 John 3:24; 5:3.
104. See also Matthew 25:33–46; Luke 13:24.
105. See also 1 Peter 4:19.
106. See also Romans 6:16–17; 1 Corinthians 15:2; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 4:11.
107. See also Titus 3:1, 8, 14.
108. See also John 8:51.
109. See also Matthew 10:22; 1 Timothy 4:16; Hebrews 6:15; James 1:12; D&C 53:7.
110. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, 56–57; emphasis added.
111. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, 58–60.
112. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:422; emphasis added.
113. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:148.
114. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:468; emphasis added.

115. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, 60; emphasis added. It should not seem surprising that Christian apocryphal writings also make reference to the need for works. For example, in the "Odes of Solomon" we read, "And they walked in my life and were saved" ("The Odes of Solomon," Ode 10, in Platt, ed., *The Lost Books of the Bible and The Forgotten Books of Eden*, 125).

116. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, 60–61. Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100) taught, "We, having been called through His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified through ourselves or through our own wisdom or understanding or piety or works which we wrought in holiness of heart, but through faith, whereby the Almighty God justified all men that have been from the beginning" (*The Apostolic Fathers*, 26).

117. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, 61–62. After explaining to a group of believers the early Christian belief on salvation, namely, that "salvation depends on both man and God" (*Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, 65), Mr. Bercot observed that one of the ladies in attendance was obviously disturbed by his presentation. He reported, "She exclaimed in annoyance, 'It sounds to me like they needed to read their Bibles more!'" Bercot responded, "But the early Christians did read their Bibles." He pointed out that Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150–212) had 2,400 quotations from the scriptures, while Tertullian (A.D. 160–220) quoted the New Testament more than 7,000 times. He then cautioned, "So please don't accuse the early Christians of not reading their Bibles" (*Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, 62–63).

118. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:445.

119. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:661; emphasis added.

120. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:322; emphasis added.

121. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 131.

122. See 2 Nephi 2:8.

123. The term "earn" is used in the sense of contributing something of equal value. The term "eligible" is used in the sense of contributing something of less than equal value but still sufficient to qualify for the desired prize, because the giver has so allowed it.

124. See also Romans 3:1, 20, 28, 30; 7:4; Galatians 2:7, 21; 3:2, 24–25; 5:2–4.

125. Samuel had told his people, "Stand still, that I may reason with you" (1 Samuel 12:7); Solomon commanded that we "seek out wisdom, and the reason of things" (Ecclesiastes 7:25); Paul was so effective as a preacher of righteousness because, in addition to bearing his testimony, he "reasoned with them [the Jews] out of the scriptures" (Acts 17:2; see also 18:4); in addition, Peter admonished the Saints to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

126. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, 66.

127. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, 67.

128. Much of the information for this section came from the author's book *The Infinite Atonement*, 230–46.

129. The word "perfect" as used in this scripture comes from the Greek word *telios*. Some have suggested this might be translated as "finished" or "completed," resulting in a connotation other than moral perfection—perhaps meaning a complete or mature Saint. While this might be one interpretation, the scripture does not preclude a reference to moral perfection. In fact, when read in context, this passage seems to require moral perfection. It specifically delineates the type of completeness or perfection to which it is referring when it makes the comparison "*even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*" (emphasis added). God is not perfect like a mature Saint or in a relative sense. He is absolutely perfect. Furthermore, the corollary passage to Matthew 5:48 as found in the Book of Mormon was not originally in Greek but rather reformed Egyptian, yet the key word is still translated "perfect." If Joseph Smith had needed to change the word or meaning, he could have easily done so. This is particularly true since he must have focused on the verse as evidenced by the addition of a few words: "even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect." (3 Nephi 12:48). Again, the standard of perfection was God the Father and, in addition, His glorified Son. It was not man or any mortal attribute. This Book of Mormon passage only strengthens the argument that God was inviting us to partake of godly perfection, not some mortal or watered-down substitute. For a further discussion of this, see Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount*, 57–62.

130. President Joseph F. Smith understood the significance of this scripture, for he observed, "The grand object of our coming to this earth is that we may become like Christ, for if we are not like him, we cannot become the sons of God, and be joint heirs with Christ" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 18).

131. See also Revelation 22:5; D&C 132:19–20.

132. The Lord was most specific on this issue: "He [God] makes them equal in power, and in might, and in dominion" (D&C 76:95).

133. See also JST Hebrews 6:1, 3.

134. See also Matthew 19:17; Romans 3:30; 1 Timothy 2:5.

135. The early Christian writers, as referred to in the following subsection, also discussed this concept of a hierarchy of gods.

136. Vajda, *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, 9–10.

137. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 143.

138. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:170.

139. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:105.

140. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:237.

141. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:469. This bears remarkable similarity to the Savior's mandate as recorded in the Book of Mormon: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27).

142. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:522.

143. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:539; emphasis added.
144. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:215.
145. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 119.
146. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:567.
147. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:271; emphasis added. Heraclitus was a Greek philosopher who lived about B.C. 500.
148. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:153; emphasis added.
149. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:323. This observation is remarkably similar to Joseph Smith's declaration that "He [Christ] proposed to make them [men] like unto himself, and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings" (*Lectures on Faith*, 79). Tertullian also alluded to this hierarchy: "While I recognize the Son, I assert His distinction as second to the Father" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:602).
150. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:323; emphasis added.
151. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:323.
152. Hinckley, "Don't Drop the Ball," *Ensign*, November 1994, 48.
153. Vajda, *Partakers of the Divine Nature* (introduction and 10), 56.
154. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 176–77; emphasis added.
155. Lewis, *The Joyful Christian*, 197; emphasis added.
156. Lewis, *The Joyful Christian*, 77–78; emphasis added.
157. Quoted by Hugh B. Brown in Conference Report, April 1967, 50.
158. Clark and Thomas, eds., *Out of the Best Books*, 1:463. Lorenzo Snow, both prophet and poet, seized upon this glorious principle and lyricized it as follows:
- The boy, like to his father grown,  
Has but attained unto his own;  
To grow to sire from state of son,  
Is not 'gainst Nature's course to run.  
A son of God, like God to be,  
Would not be robbing Deity;  
And he who has this hope within,  
Will purify himself from sin.  
(*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, 9.)
159. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, 33–34.

160. Roberts, *The Mormon Doctrine of Deity*, 35.
161. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 175.
162. Sill, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 222–23.
163. In 1909 the First Presidency of the LDS Church reiterated man's godly potential and the related timetable: "Undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a god" (*Improvement Era*, "The Origin of Man," November 1909, 81).
164. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, 335; emphasis added.
165. Packer, *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled*, 289.
166. *The Nag Hammadi Library*, "Gospel of Philip," 145.
167. Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement*, 165.
168. Lactantius (A.D.250–325) taught, "Accordingly, Lucretius does not err when he says: 'In short, we are all sprung from a heavenly seed; all have that same father'" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:173).
169. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 91.
170. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 146–47.
171. Lewis, *The Quotable Lewis*, 308. He expressed similar sentiments on yet another occasion: "Whatever may have been the powers of unfallen man, it appears that those of redeemed Man will be almost unlimited. Christ, re-ascending from His great dive, is bringing up Human Nature with Him. Where He goes, it goes too. It will be made 'like Him'" (*The Quotable Lewis*, 525).
172. *Journal of Discourses*, 10:5; emphasis added.
173. From Bercot, *What the Early Christians Believed about Baptism*, as modified by David W. Bercot in a fax message to the author dated February 22, 2005.
174. The symbolism of baptism is discussed at length in chapter 15 under the section "Baptism by Immersion."
175. Moses 6:59 points out the parallel between physical birth into the world and spiritual birth into the kingdom of heaven: "Inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit . . . 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." Some have elaborated on the parallel by observing that just as the woman has pains and loses blood in giving birth, so the Savior experienced great pains and shed blood to make us his spiritual sons and daughters.
176. Some contend that the phrase "born of water" does not mean physical water but rather the word of God. Such a reading, however, would be contrary to the interpretations given by the early Christian writers, who spoke clearly of water baptism, as discussed in detail in this section entitled "Baptism."

177. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 232; emphasis added.
178. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:285.
179. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:237.
180. Some have quoted Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," as evidence that belief alone is sufficient for salvation, but in the process they have neglected to mention that two verses later (Acts 16:33) Paul took such individuals "the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway."
181. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:676; emphasis added.
182. See also Acts 9:18.
183. See also Hebrews 10:22; 1 Peter 1:3.
184. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:675.
185. This scripture was made in the context of the Savior's washing his disciples' feet, but the principle seems applicable to the entire way he lived. For the Savior said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).
186. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:236. On another occasion, Hippolytus (in a work believed to be his but whose authorship is questioned by some) also emphasized the need for all people to follow the Savior into the waters of baptism. He declared that the prophets preached of the Savior's advent into mortality "and His manifestation by baptism, and the new birth that was to be to all men" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:242).
187. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:559; emphasis added.
188. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:321; emphasis added.
189. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:456–57.
190. Bercot, *What the Early Christians Believed About Baptism*; emphasis added.
191. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:389.
192. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7:272. To the contrary, Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) quoted Dionysius of Alexandria (d. A.D. 264), who referred to those who were "expelled from the church" as being allowed "to commune, without deeming another baptism necessary for them. For they had already before received the Holy Spirit" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7:275). The issue, however, was not whether baptism was essential—that was admitted on all sides. The issue was whether or not a *rebaptism* was necessary.
193. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:301.
194. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:360.
195. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:346.

196. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:674–75.
197. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:566.
198. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:183.
199. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:217.
200. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:96.
201. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:220.
202. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:574. Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) also wrote, "The baptism instituted by the visible Jesus was for the remission of sins" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:345).
203. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:183.
204. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:476. And on another occasion, Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) wrote, "In the baptism of water, is received the remission of sins" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:497).
205. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:185. Justin Martyr's statement, however, was merely a reiteration of the counsel that had already been given in *The Didache* (A.D. 80–140): "Let no one eat or drink of this eucharistic thanksgiving [the sacrament], but they that have been baptized into the name of the Lord" (*The Apostolic Fathers*, 126)—a reminder that baptism was the gateway and forerunner to the other ordinances of the Church. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) gave the same mandate: "We receive the heathen when they wish to repent, into the church indeed to hear the word, but do not receive them to communion until they have received the seal of baptism, and are made complete Christians" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:414).
206. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:436.
207. See also Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3.
208. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:662.
209. See Mosiah 18:10; 21:35.
210. Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* 7.
211. Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* 9.
212. See Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, as summarized in *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* 12–15, 20.
213. Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* 14. A slight variation of this theory is that God "presents" himself to those whom he knows will accept the gospel.
214. See subsection in this chapter titled "Grace versus Works." The Book of Mormon prophet Amulek warned, "Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end" (Alma 34:33). The futility of



deathbed repentance was also exposed by one of Dante's damned souls:

When I perceived that I had reached the age  
When every man of prudence takes in sail  
And gathers in his tackle for the storm,  
What I once revelled in now caused me shame:  
In penance I confessed, surrendering all.  
Ah, hapless me—for still I was not saved!  
(*The Divine Comedy*, 48.)

215. The inclusivists rely on such scriptures as 2 Corinthians 5:15; Romans 5:18; 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:11; and 1 John 2:2; which state that Christ's atonement was for all.

216. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:178.

217. A myriad of scriptures such as "This is life eternal, that they might *know* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3) and "He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16) become meaningless expressions to the proponents of inclusivism.

218. There is no question that there is good in most religions and, likewise, that there are many moral people who are not Christians. The point is that our spiritual progress is limited if we do not accept Jesus Christ after being taught of his divine role. At some point, acceptance of Jesus Christ is essential for us to maximize our spiritual growth.

219. Lewis, *The Quotable Lewis*, 340.

220. Bloesch, "Soteriological Problem of Evil," in *The Religious Educator*, 2:79.

221. Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) taught that the Gnostics "affirm that immediately upon their death they shall pass above the heavens . . . to that Father whom they have feigned" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:560). Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) likewise condemned the Gnostics because they did not "admit" of the interim spirit world: "[The Gnostics] say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:239).

222. David W. Bercot explained that the Bible has three different Greek words, "Gehenna," "Hades," and "Tartarus," that were all translated by the King James translators as "hell." He likewise said this was a serious mistake, because *Gehenna* meant a lake of fire (that is, hell) and was therefore translated correctly, but *Hades* meant the place where the spirits of the dead resided while awaiting their resurrection. Because of this mistranslation, the concept of a spirit world for the dead became incredibly confused (Bercot, from a talk on a tape titled *What the Early Christians Believed about Christ's Descent into Hades*). The word *Tartarus* also referred to hell and, no doubt, derived its name from the angel referred to in *The Vision of Paul* (an apocryphal book) as the guardian of outer darkness: "Let him [the wicked] therefore be handed over to the angel Tartaruch, who is set over the punishments, and let him place him in outer darkness" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:155).

223. *World Book Encyclopedia*, 1:566.

224. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:560–61.

225. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:234.

226. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:217.

227. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:221.

228. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) wrote, "It must therefore be evident to every man of intelligence . . . that there is some determinate place called Abraham's bosom, and that it is designed for the reception of the souls of Abraham's children. . . . By Abraham's bosom is meant some temporary receptacle of faithful souls, wherein is even now delineated an image of the future, and where is given some foresight of the glory of both judgments" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:406).

229. Joseph Smith commented on Luke 23:43 as follows: "There is nothing in the original word in Greek from which this was taken that signifies paradise; but it was—this day thou shall be with me in the world of spirits" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 309). Accordingly, *paradise* in this instance means the world of spirits, but usually *paradise* is used to mean that portion of the spirit world where the righteous reside (Alma 40:11–14). Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) noted, "We speak of Paradise, the place of heavenly bliss appointed to receive the spirits of the Saints" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:52).

230. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:351.

231. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:221–22; emphasis added.

232. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:197.

233. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:372.

234. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:233.

235. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:234.

236. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:235.

237. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:235. Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) believed that these spirits "possess the form of a man so that they may be recognised, and retain the memory of things in this world" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:411).

238. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:299.

239. See also D&C 138:29–30.

240. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1:47.

241. "The Odes of Solomon," Ode 42, in *The Lost Books of the Bible and The Forgotten Books of Eden*, 140.

242. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:231.

243. The words of Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) might also be used as support for this position if considered alone and not in conjunction with the scriptures and other writings on the subject: "Since those who did that which is universally, naturally, and eternally good are pleasing to God, they shall be saved through this Christ in the resurrection equally with those righteous men who were before them, namely Noah, and Enoch, and Jacob, and whoever else there be, along with those who have known this Christ" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:217).

244. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:209.

245. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:499.

246. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:560. A. Cleveland Coxe stated that Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) attributed the foregoing scripture to Isaiah on one occasion and Jeremiah on another. He also noted that Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) refers to a similar scripture. Nonetheless, Coxe concluded that this scripture was spurious because it can be found in no ancient version of the Jewish Targum. This seems a somewhat hasty conclusion, since (1) there were evidently many ancient versions of the scriptures that have not survived through the ages (any one of which could have contained this scripture); (2) neither Irenaeus nor Justin has a reputation for quoting scriptures that are deemed spurious; (3) it is mentioned at least five times by Irenaeus and once by Justin, so it seems not to be an isolated reference; (4) the theme of the scripture is consistent with what Isaiah and other prophets have spoken on the subject; and (5) the scripture is consistent with the doctrine taught by many other early Christian writers. Justin's assertion that this scripture was "cut out" of the scriptures (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:235) is not inconsistent with the historical fact that many scriptures were indeed removed or deleted. See also Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 118–20.

247. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:510.

248. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:494; emphasis added.

249. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:448. Origen also wrote of Christ's "descent to Hades, whatever that Hades be, and the journey with the Spirit to the prison. . . . This is why He put on both living and dead, that is, the inhabitants of the earth and those of Hades, that He might be the Lord of both dead and living" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:367–68).

250. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:490.

251. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:490–91.

252. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:491.

253. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:491–92.

254. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:235; emphasis added.

255. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:213.

256. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:213, note 7.

257. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:344.

258. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 232; emphasis added.

259. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:490; emphasis added.

260. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 232.

261. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:490.

262. Wilford Woodruff observed, "Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Father Smith, David Patten and the other elders who have been called to the other side of the veil have fifty times as many people to preach to as we have on the earth. . . . We have only about a thousand millions [that is, a billion] of people on the earth, but in the spirit world they have fifty thousand millions [fifty billion]" (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 151).

263. *Journal of Discourses*, 3:372.

264. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 461.

265. In possible opposition to this doctrine, Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100) recorded, "After that we have departed out of the world, we can no more make confession there, or repent any more" (*The Apostolic Fathers*, 47). Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) also wrote, "When you have once departed thither, there is no longer any place for repentance, and no possibility of making satisfaction. Here [in mortality] life is either lost or saved" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:465). "A Treatise on Re-Baptism by an Anonymous Writer" also mentioned that "after the death of a man . . . there cannot be added to him anything at all, nor supplemented" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:671). These quotations, however, could be consistent with the many other references confirming postmortal evangelism if they are read to mean that someone who heard the gospel on earth, but chose not to accept it, does not have a second chance to confess or repent in the afterlife. Obviously, if the gospel is preached to the dead (righteous or wicked), then there must be the opportunity for repentance; otherwise, there is no sense in preaching a message that is designed to cause a change in people's lives. This would be true for the righteous as well as the wicked, since a man always has room for repentance until perfection is attained. If the foregoing references are intended to mean there is no preaching of the gospel to the dead, then they are contrary to the scriptures, contrary to the living prophets, contrary to the host of other Christian writers who have addressed the subject, and contrary to the principles of mercy that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).

266. Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) rightfully placed no limit on who would receive the gospel message—it would be taught to all "those who believe in Him" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:499).

267. In attempting to give an alternative interpretation of the clear meaning of 1 Peter 4:6, one evangelical work states that "'the dead' in [1 Peter] 4:6 could more naturally refer to people who were spiritually dead" (Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* 98). Such an interpretation, however, would be totally incompatible with the interpretation given by the early Christian writers, who again and again affirmed Christ's descent to the physically dead. In addition, such a reading would not be in context with the wording of the scripture. If this scripture were interpreted to read, "For this cause was the gospel also preached to them that are spiritually dead (not physically dead) that they might be judged according to men in the flesh," then it makes little sense, because the spiritually dead are also among the men in the flesh and, therefore, there is no reason to add the comparison "that they might be judged according to men in the flesh." It makes much more sense to read this scripture as meaning that those who have physically

died (and thus are no longer in the flesh) will be judged by the same standards as those who receive the gospel in mortality (in the flesh), and thus all people will be judged by the same standards, regardless of when or where they hear the gospel. Some theologians have attempted to interpret 1 Peter 3:18–19 and 4:6 to mean that only Noah (with the spirit of Christ) went to preach the gospel to the dead, but such an interpretation, to my knowledge, receives no support from the scriptures or the early Christian writers.

268. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 8:113.

269. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:207.

270. See also D&C 138:37.

271. D&C 138:32 further provides, "Thus was the gospel preached to those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets."

272. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 571–72.

273. Joseph Smith saw his brother Alvin (who had died before being baptized) in the celestial kingdom and marveled how this could be. The Lord answered him as follows: "All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God" (D&C 137:7).

274. See also Helaman 13:24–26.

275. Samuel (a Book of Mormon prophet) was speaking to a group of people who had had multiple prophets in their midst but had scorned them. Evidently they had received a fair opportunity to hear the gospel and rejected it, so Samuel made this tragic pronouncement upon their heads: "Your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure" (Helaman 13:38).

276. See Matthew 28:11–15.

277. See also Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10; Mosiah 27:31; D&C 76:110.

278. Ronald Nash, a noted evangelical minister observed, "Many Christians who encounter inclusivism and PME [postmortal evangelism] for the first time find it easy to think that these positions weaken missionary and evangelistic resolve" (Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* 135).

279. See also Alma 41:10; Isaiah 57:20–21. Lactantius (A.D. 250–325) was in full accord: "The reward of virtue is a happy life" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:80).

280. Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places*, 221.

281. Bercot, *What the Early Christians Believed about Christ's Descent into Hades*.

282. Bercot, *What the Early Christians Believed about Christ's Descent into Hades and Life After Death*.

283. In later years this doctrine was softened to suggest that purgatory was not just a lake of fire and

brimstone but also a place of perfection and instruction.

284. Bercot, *What the Early Christians Believed about Christ's Descent into Hades* as modified by David W. Bercot in a fax message to the author dated February 22, 2005; emphasis added.

285. Farrar also made it clear that Christ's descent was not limited to preaching to the righteous alone: "But alas! Human perversity has darkened the very heavens by looking at them [the scriptures] through the medium of its own preconceptions; and the clear light of revelation has streamed in vain upon the awfulness of the future. *The attempts to make the descent of Jesus into Hades a visit merely to liberate the holy patriarchs, or to strike terror into the evil spirits, are the unworthy inventions of dogmatic embarrassment*" (Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:139–43; emphasis added).

286. Fackre, Nash, and Sanders, *What About Those Who Have Never Heard?* 98.

287. Richards, *Just to Illustrate*, 61.

288. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 191.

289. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 355.

290. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) wrote, "Now the body is that which loses life, and as the result of losing it becomes dead. To the *body*, therefore, the term dead is only suitable. Moreover, as resurrection accrues to what is dead, and dead is a term applicable only to a body, therefore the body alone has a resurrection incidental to it. . . . But if we are all so made alive in Christ, as we die in Adam, it follows of necessity that we are made alive in Christ as a bodily substance, since we died in Adam as a bodily substance" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:447).

291. See Howells, *His Many Mansions*, "A Comparative Chart of 10 Christian Religions on 23 Doctrinal Subjects."

292. Will and Ariel Durant observed that "Christian burial was the culminating honor of the Christian life. Since the new faith proclaimed *the resurrection of the body as well as of the soul*, every care was taken of the dead" (*Caesar and Christ*, 3:601; emphasis added).

293. Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100), in his epistle to the Corinthians, quoted Job as follows: "*And thou shalt raise this my flesh which hath endured all these things*" (*The Apostolic Fathers*, 25).

294. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 114.

295. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:218.

296. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:298.

297. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:560. Athenagoras (A.D. 150–190) was in complete agreement with the foregoing church brethren: "There must by all means be a resurrection of the bodies which are dead, or even entirely dissolved, and the same men must be formed anew" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:162). Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200) was also in accord with this doctrine: "In the resurrection the soul returns to the body, and both are joined to one another according to their peculiar nature, adapting themselves through the

composition of each, by a kind of congruity like a building of stones" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:571).

298. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:232, 593.

299. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:222.

300. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:547. Origen (A.D. 185–255) added, "The doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh . . . has been preached in the churches, and . . . is more clearly understood by the more intelligent believer" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:550).

301. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:560.

302. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 140. See also the subsection in this chapter titled "Grace versus Works," which sets forth numerous scriptures and quotations on the necessity of works.

303. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:306.

304. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:240.

305. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:639. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200) wrote similarly, "There are various abodes according to the worth of those who have believed" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:506).

306. Origen (A.D. 185–255) confirmed that this scripture was referring to various heavenly rewards: "Our understanding of the passage indeed is, that the apostle, wishing to describe the great difference among those who rise in glory, i.e., of the Saints, borrowed a comparison from the heavenly bodies, saying, 'One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, another the glory of the stars'" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:294).

307. The apocryphal book known as *The Vision of Paul* also records Paul's ascent to the third heaven: "And I followed the angel, and he raised me to the third heaven" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:155).

308. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:108.

309. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:582–83.

310. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:506.

311. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:154. Papias was making reference to the parable of the sower, which appears in Matthew 13:3–8 and Mark 4:13–20.

312. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:506.

313. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:154.

314. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:324.

315. The Hebrew word means "fill." The same Hebrew word is used in verse 22 and translated as "fill," but evidently in verse 28 it was translated as "replenish" for the sake of variety, not accuracy. Accordingly, it would be inappropriate to rely upon the word "replenish" as a means of suggesting that the earth was

previously inhabited *before* Adam, and now the Lord was instructing Adam and Eve to populate the earth again (i.e., replenish or refill it).

316. The requirements for a deacon were quite similar, as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:11–12.

317. See also Luke 4:38.

318. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:115–16. Unfortunately, some have misinterpreted some of Paul's statements to suggest that an unmarried life was better than a married life. In sympathy with this, Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) wrote, "In short, there is no place at all where we read that nuptials are prohibited; of course on the ground that they are a 'good thing.' What, however, is *better* than this 'good,' we learn from the apostle, who *permits* marrying indeed, but *prefers* abstinence" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:40).

319. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:379. It is also known that Tertullian (A.D. 140–230), a member of the clergy, wrote two of his treatises to his wife.

320. Moses taught that "the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning. . . . And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof" (Moses 5:58–59). If the gospel was preached from the beginning (the days of Adam and Eve), and the gospel included all the teachings that were necessary to save and exalt an individual (including marriage for eternity), then it seems likely that such doctrine was taught in the meridian of time. Joseph Fielding Smith also gave this insight: "Marriage as established in the beginning was an eternal covenant" (*Doctrines of Salvation* 2:71).

321. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 280. Obviously if the Sadducees had wandered from that principle (eternal marriage) and it had fallen into disuse, it must have been taught and practiced in prior times.

322. President Harold B. Lee gave this additional insight in reference to the Sadducees' question: "Marriage is not performed in the heavens hereafter. If you would be united for eternity as husband and wife and family, that sealing must be performed here upon this earth by authority of the holy priesthood" (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 243). Joseph F. Smith noted that the Savior did not directly answer the Sadducees because "he did not cast his pearls before the swine that tempted him" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 280).

323. Cited in McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 1:605. Because Origen (A.D. 185–255) adopted some of the doctrines of the immaterialist, he believed there was no marriage in the afterlife, for when speaking of alleged heretics, he said, "They say, that after the resurrection there will be marriages, and the begetting of children" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:297). Origen also stated, "We know that in this way the angels are superior to men; so that men, when made perfect, become like the angels. 'For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but the righteous are as the angels in heaven,' and also become equal to the angels" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:509). Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) also fell victim to the same false philosophy as Origen. On this particular matter he opined, "But to Christians, after their departure from the world, no restoration of marriage is promised in the day of the resurrection, translated as they will be into the condition and sanctity of angels" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:39).

324. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:112.

325. See also D&C 11:13.



326. See also 1 Nephi 17:45; Moroni 9:20.

327. Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, 203–4.

328. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Sonnets from the Portuguese," in *A Treasury of Great Poems*, 800–801.

329. Robert Browning, "Prospice," in *A Treasury of Great Poems*, 877.

330. William J. Bennett, ed., *Our Sacred Honor*, 141. Jefferson placed the following epitaph, taken from Homer's *Iliad*, on his wife's grave:

In the melancholy shades below,  
The flames of friends and lovers cease to glow,  
Yet mine shall sacred last; mine undecayed.  
Burn on through death and animate my shade.  
(*Our Sacred Honor*, 142.)

331. Excerpted and reprinted in Ward et al., *The Civil War: An Illustrated History*, 82–83.

332. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:49. This quotation by Coxe was specifically referring to the clergy in Rome. Tertullian, however, did write, "We do not reject marriage, but simply refrain from it. Nor do we prescribe sanctity as the rule, but only recommend it, observing it as a good, yea, even the better state, if each man uses it carefully . . . but at the same time earnestly vindicating marriage" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:294).

333. *Newsweek*, "A Case of Change," May 6, 2002, 29. Frederic W. Farrar observed that "Peter . . . was engaged in missionary journeys, in which he was accompanied by a Christian sister, who (since we know that he was married) was in all probability his wife" (*The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:112).

334. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:107.

335. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:501. Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) spoke of one of those heretical groups: "Springing from Saturninus and Marcion (A.D. 110–165), those who are called Encratites (self-controlled) preached against marriage, thus setting aside the original creation of God and indirectly blaming Him who made the male and female for the propagation of the human race" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers* 1:353).

336. There is some trend today for churches to delete the phrase "until death do you part" because such a concept is so foreign to the human spirit, but the fact remains that no ordained minister has the power to bind or seal marriages forever unless he has been given the priesthood authority to do so.

337. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley Pratt*, 260. Elder Pratt then gave this enlightening and tender explanation of how this glorious doctrine changed him: "I had loved before, but I knew not why. But now I loved—with a pureness—an intensity of elevated, exalted feeling, which would lift my soul from the transitory things of this grovelling sphere and expand it as the ocean. I felt . . . that the wife of my bosom was an immortal, eternal companion; a kind ministering angel, given to me as a comfort and a crown of glory for ever and ever" (*Autobiography of Parley Pratt*, 260).

338. It is startling that some churches do not take a stand on this critical moral issue, while one or more others have authoritative declarations condemning abortion, but the rank and file frequently disregard it without reprimand or disciplinary consequence.

339. The author believes he heard this statement or a similar one in a talk some years ago, but he cannot locate the author's name or the exact citation.

340. Such was the state of affairs among the Lamanites when Ammon preached the gospel to them: "They supposed that whatsoever they did was right" (Alma 18:5). Will and Ariel Durant knew that the "wisdom of generations after centuries of experiment in the laboratory of history" cried out for moral laws and restraint if a civilization was to prosper and survive. With great insight, they observed, "A youth boiling with hormones will wonder why he should not give full freedom to his sexual desires; and if he is unchecked by custom, morals, or laws, he may ruin his life before he matures sufficiently to understand that sex is a river of fire that must be banked and cooled by a hundred restraints if it is not to consume in chaos both the individual and the group" (*The Lessons of History*, 35–36).

341. Leviticus 17:11 declares that the "life of the flesh is in the blood." Elder Russell M. Nelson taught, "Approximately twenty-two days after the two cells have united, a little heart begins to beat. At twenty-six days the circulation of blood begins. . . . Abortion sheds that innocent blood" (Conference Report, April 1985, 15). Paul condemned those "without natural affection" (Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3). Certainly mothers who purposefully arrange for the destruction of their own offspring are lacking in perhaps the most "natural affection" of all humans—a mother's love for her baby.

342. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 124, 125. In speaking of the high degree of specialization among physicians in the Roman Empire, Will and Ariel Durant wrote, "There were many women physicians; some of them wrote manuals of abortion. . . . There were many ways of procuring abortion. Philosophers and the law condemned it, but the finest families practiced it" (*Caesar and Christ*, 313, 364).

343. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 154.

344. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* 7:466. *The Epistle to Diognetus* [mid- to latter second century), while speaking of Christians, reveals, "They do not cast away their offspring" (*The Apostolic Fathers*, 254.)

345. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:147; emphasis added.

346. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:25; emphasis added.

347. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:207.

348. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:217–18.

349. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:192.

350. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:368.

351. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:131.

352. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:368.

353. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 598. John Calvin, one of the great Reformers, observed, "If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a *fetus* in the womb before it has come to light" (quoted by Elder Russell M. Nelson in Conference Report, April 1985, 13).

354. "A Prophet Declares: Abortion is Wrong," *Church News*, March 27, 1976, 6.

355. "LDS Position on Abortion," *Deseret News*, 12 January 1991, B-6.

356. The leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have said that there are some "exceptional circumstances" under which an abortion might justifiably be performed, such as: (1) if pregnancy is a result of incest or rape, (2) if the mother's life or health is in serious jeopardy, and (3) if the fetus has such serious defects it will not survive beyond birth. However, these exceptional circumstances "do not automatically justify an abortion." Those who find themselves faced with such circumstances should consider an abortion only after discussing this matter with their local Church leaders and after earnest prayer and confirmation that such a decision is correct ( *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference*, 4).

357. See also Ezekiel 16:49. Evidently similar conditions existed in Florence during the Middle Ages, for Savonarola (A.D. 1452–1498) wrote, "Sodomy is Florence's besetting sin" (Van Paassen, *A Crown of Fire*, 178). A contemporary historian of Savonarola's time observed, "The prevalence of the practice of sodomy is more destructive of Florence than armies of rapacious mercenaries" (*A Crown of Fire*, 178). Another contemporary historian wrote, "Every social class is infected with this evil, the clergy not excepted. Even children indulge in this unnatural impudicity to which the city destroyed by the divine wrath gave its name" (*A Crown of Fire*, 178). *The Vision of Paul* (an apocryphal book) mentions those who are condemned to "a pit of pitch and sulphur" and comments, "These are they who committed the iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah, the male lying with the male, for which reason they unceasingly pay the penalties" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:161).

358. See also Leviticus 18:22.

359. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:631.

360. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 97.

361. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:509.

362. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:51.

363. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:294.

364. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:462–63.

365. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:278.

366. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:269.

367. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:147.

368. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:500.
369. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 598.
370. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 542–43; emphasis added.
371. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 543.
372. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:71. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) also said on this subject, "Still more disgraceful was the case when lust transfigured a man in his dress . . . who exchanged for womanly attire the whole proud heritage of his name!" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:9).
373. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:365
374. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:356.
375. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:277.
376. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:187.
377. Ingersoll, "Abraham Lincoln," *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll*, 3:135.
378. The same conclusion is reached if one were to ask, "What if everyone became a celibate?"
379. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 543. Chrysostom was a beloved early Christian writer born in Antioch, Syria (now in Turkey).
380. See also 1 Nephi 13:32, 34; 14:1, 23; 2 Nephi 26:20.
381. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 466–67.
382. For more information, see Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 12–14, 17–18.
383. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 18.
384. Cousins, *In God We Trust*, 157, 162.
385. As quoted in Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, 29.
386. In a letter to Martin Dorp (1514), Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 155–56; emphasis added.

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**Seventh Evidence: Many Ordinances Were Perverted,**

## Others Lost, and New Ones Invented

Isaiah prophesied, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, *changed the ordinance*, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5).<sup>1</sup> Isaiah knew the time was coming when the holy ordinances would be tampered with. Paul sensed what would happen to the ordinances in the future when he enjoined the Saints: "Keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2). Unfortunately the ordinances were not kept in their pristine state. Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100) noted that the Corinthian Saints "neither [walk] in the ordinances of His commandments nor [live] according to that which becometh Christ."<sup>2</sup> Astonishingly, even Pope Adrian VI in A.D. 1522 acknowledged the corruption of ordinances: "We know well that for many years things deserving of abhorrence have gathered round the Holy See. *Sacred things have been misused, ordinances transgressed, so that in everything there has been a change for the worse.*"<sup>3</sup>

It was a candid confession of the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Following are some of the ordinances that were changed, lost, or invented after the death of the apostles.

### Blessing Babies

Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Christ always set the example for his disciples to follow. Conscious of this responsibility, and in the presence of those whom he desired to tutor, "he took them [little children] up in his arms, *put his hands upon them, and blessed them*" (Mark 10:16). At first, the disciples rebuked those who brought their children to the Savior and who requested him to "put his hands on them, and pray," but the Savior replied, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me." Matthew then recorded, "he laid his hands on them" (Matthew 19:13–15).<sup>4</sup> The pattern had been set—a little child was to have hands laid upon him and be given a blessing so he might commence his journey in mortality with the benediction of God upon him.

But where is such an ordinance today? Babies are named, they are christened, they are baptized, but who, in the pattern of the Savior, takes them into their arms, lays their hands upon them, and with the priesthood of God blesses them? That ordinance became lost in the dark cloud of the apostasy. Fortunately, it was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith: "Every member of the church of Christ having children is to bring them unto the elders before the church, who are to lay their hands upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, and bless them in his name" (D&C 20:70).

### Infant Baptism

#### Why Some Believe in Infant Baptism

Instead of the divinely inspired ordinance of blessing babies, there arose a new ordinance not practiced in the original Christian church—infant baptism. Some have contended that infant baptism must have existed in the primitive Church, because on five occasions the Bible mentions the baptism of an individual and *his household*, or words to that effect (Acts 11:14–16; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16). Surely, these people argue, some of these households must have had infants, and thus, if the entire household were baptized, infants also must have been included.<sup>5</sup> One of these proponents acknowledged that infant baptism is not found in the scriptures, but rested his theological view on the "likely" possibility that the household theory referred to above is correct: "Though infant Baptism . . . 'cannot be demonstrated from the Bible, . . .

[it] is in perfect conformity. . . . In the first place, when, as was frequently the case (Acts 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:16), whole families were baptized, it is likely that occasionally there were little children among them."<sup>6</sup>

This assertion, however, requires two assumptions: first, it requires that one or more of these households had an infant and, second, even if an infant were present, it requires the phrase, "baptism of a household" to be so inclusive as to include even those without the capacity to believe. Such an interpretation, however, is contrary to the multitude of scriptures that require belief as a prerequisite to baptism.

A closer examination of the scriptures cited by the proponents of infant baptism will reveal that those scriptures on which they rely diminish, rather than augment, the possibility of infant baptism. For example, Peter told Cornelius that "all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). But further review of this account reveals that Peter prefaced his remarks by stating "whosoever believeth in him [Christ] shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Obviously infants cannot believe and, therefore, must not have been baptized. Similarly, Acts 18:8, another of the scriptures cited by proponents of infant baptism, speaks of Crispus who "*believed on the Lord with all his house,*" and then it states that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." Even if there were infants in the home of Crispus, they could not believe and, therefore, must not have been baptized. Likewise, Acts 16:33 (another scripture cited by such proponents) records that the jailer and his house were baptized—but such proponents often neglect to cite the next verse, which observes that these new members of the Church "*rejoiced, believing in God with all his house*" (Acts 16:34).<sup>7</sup> How could infants rejoice or believe? They could not, and, therefore, it is apparent there were also no infants in this household who were baptized.

The dilution of the "household" argument continues further. In 1 Corinthians 1:16 (yet another scripture relied on by such advocates), we read that Paul "baptized also the household of Stephanas"; however, Paul later refers to this faithful family as follows: "Ye know the house of Stephanas . . . and that they have addicted [a Greek alternative word is *devoted*] themselves to the ministry of the Saints" (1 Corinthians 16:15). How could infants devote themselves to the ministry? Accordingly, the rational interpretation of this scripture would suggest there were no infants baptized in the household of Stephanas.

Contrary to the assertion of these advocates for infant baptism, the language of four of the five scriptures cited by them specifically excludes, rather than includes, infants from being baptized. Why is that? Because *only* those who believed or rejoiced or were devoted to the ministry joined the Church.

The foregoing analysis means that the supporters of infant baptism have *one* scripture (Acts 16:14–15), and one scripture only (which refers to Lydia and her household), from which to draw the inference that the term "household" must have included infants who were baptized. Suffice it to say, this is a slender and tenuous thread at best on which to hang their "eternal doctrine." This is particularly so when one realizes that Lydia was most likely unmarried with no children (but with household servants, as was often the custom). If she were married, the scriptures in a male-dominated society would have referred to her husband's household, not "her household," and to his vocation, not her vocation as "a seller of purple." If she were a widow with children, the scriptures could easily have identified her as such, as was done on multiple previous occasions (Ruth 4:15; 1 Kings 17:9; Mark 12:43; Luke 2:37). For those who believe she was married and her husband was temporarily on a business trip, Professor Kurt Aland of the University of Münster, who wrote a book entitled *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?*, gave this enlightened response: "But that is a counsel of despair; he [the husband] would then come back and find that his entire family—including his household servants—had renounced their former religion and been converted to Christianity. A surprise of that kind,

and so independent an action of a wife while temporarily in charge of the household, may be dismissed from consideration."<sup>8</sup>

Where, then, are the scriptures that speak of infant baptism? They are not to be found.

Again and again the scriptures refer to baptism *after* someone has exercised faith and repented,<sup>9</sup> neither of which acts is possible for an infant child. Accordingly, someone can base his faith and testimony on the hypothetical possibility that a certain household may have had infants, multiplied by the further unknown possibility that such infants were baptized (even though they had no capacity to believe), multiplied by the historic fact that there are no known infant baptisms in the early Church. Or alternatively, someone can base his testimony on the clear and concise statements of repeated scriptures: namely, that faith and repentance are prerequisites to baptism, and thus infants were not baptized.

It is of some interest to note that when Philip preached the gospel to the people in the city of Samaria, there was "great joy in that city" (Acts 8:8). Evidently many heard the message and believed. The scriptures then record that "they were baptized *both men and women*" (Acts 8:12). If infant baptism were in effect, why would not this descriptive scripture have said "men, women, and infants." Certainly there were infants belonging to the convert parents in an entire city that eagerly embraced the gospel.

The fatal weaknesses of the argument for infant baptism are both historical and doctrinal. First, not a single case of an actual infant baptism before the end of the second century has yet been cited. Second, the doctrine of original sin, which became the springboard for infant baptism, was not "invented" and adopted by the church until the end of the second century. It was the adoption of this apostate doctrine that gave rise to the heretical ordinance of infant baptism. Each of these issues is discussed in greater detail below.

### No Historical Evidence of Infant Baptism in Christ's Church

Scholars have gone to great extremes to prove infant baptism was practiced in the primitive Church. Several quote Polycarp (A.D. 69–156), who at the time of his martyrdom responded to those who sought from him a denial of his faith, as follows: "Fourscore and six [eighty-six] years have I been His servant, and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?"<sup>10</sup> From this testimony the proponents of infant baptism conclude that Polycarp was unlikely to be older than eighty-six (since few people lived beyond that age) and, therefore, he must have been baptized at infancy and been God's servant from that day forward. Such a conclusion seems a desperate "stretch" for two reasons: First, it seems unreasonable that a person would refer to himself as a servant of God when he was an infant. Second, the weakness of such an argument is further exposed when exactly the same reasoning is applied to Anna, the prophetess. The scriptures state that Anna was married for seven years and that thereafter "she was a widow of about fourscore and four years [eighty-four years]" (Luke 2:36–37). This suggests that since the date of her marriage she had lived ninety-one years. If the same logic above were applied, it would proceed as follows: "Since Anna was unlikely to be older than ninety-one (meaning, few people lived beyond that age), she must therefore have been married on the date of her birth."

Joachim Jeremias wrote a book titled *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*. He proposed five arguments contending that infant baptism was preached in the original Church, with one of his principal evidences supporting such arguments being the "household theory" referred to above.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after Jeremias's book was published, Kurt Aland, a professor at the University of Münster, decided to write a work on the same subject. He said he began with an open mind, "with little idea as to the results to which a

study of the early history of infant baptism would lead." He was aware of the landmark work of Joachim Jeremias and acknowledged that Jeremias "appeared to make this position [infant baptism in the primitive church] impregnable." In the preface to his book, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* Professor Aland observed: "The result of the present author's labours was surprising, indeed dismaying. The more his work on the subject advanced, the greater became his perplexity."<sup>12</sup> Why such perplexity? Because Aland discovered that the sources allegedly supporting the five arguments proposed by Jeremias in favor of infant baptism in the primitive Church actually supported the proposition that there was *no* infant baptism in the original Church. It was a startling revelation to him.<sup>13</sup>

No doubt Professor Jeremias and Professor Aland were each brilliant men. Each, perhaps, was sincere in his belief. Each reviewed the same sources, but each came to totally opposing conclusions on all five points. Such a state of affairs is a powerful reminder that genius and reason are insufficient, in and of themselves, to discover spiritual truths. Somewhere, somehow, one must pay the price to receive a spiritual confirmation if he desires an absolute conviction of the truth.

After an in-depth study of all the available sources, Aland came to this conclusion:

It can be no accident . . . that all our information about the existence of infant baptism comes from the period between A.D. 200 and 250. . . . *For the time before this we do not possess a single piece of information that gives concrete testimony to the existence of infant baptism. . . . To this day [1963] nobody can prove an actual case of the baptism of an infant in the period before A.D. 200. . . .* That our entire sources, at least when allowed their literal sense, have in view only the baptism of adults, or at best the baptism of older children, can as little be contested.<sup>14</sup>

The foregoing conclusion was also reached by Menno Simons (1496–1561), one of the reformers of a group known as the Anabaptists, who wrote: "Since, then, we do not find in all scripture a single word by which Christ has ordained the baptism of infants, or that His apostles taught and practiced it, we say and confess rightly that infant baptism is but a human invention, an opinion of men, a perversion of the ordinance of Christ."<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther concurred: "It cannot be proved by the sacred Scriptures, that infant baptism was instituted by Christ or begun by the first christians [sic] after the apostles."<sup>16</sup> John Winebrenner, an ardent student on the subject, summarized it well when he said: "While from the earliest period, the baptism of *believers* appears on every page of history, her voice is dumb respecting *infant* baptism for *two hundred* years after Christ. Throughout the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and all the writings of the Fathers, down to Tertullian [A.D. 140–230], there is not even an allusion to this subject."<sup>17</sup> Will Durant knew that infant baptism was *not* an ordinance in Christ's primitive Church. He wrote, "The old custom of deferring baptism to the later years of life had now been replaced by infant baptism."<sup>18</sup>

## How the Doctrine of Infant Baptism Commenced

Why then did the doctrine of infant baptism arise? For many years the great growth of the Church was through its missionary efforts, which resulted in many adult converts. But at some point, its internal growth (from births from existing Christians) began to be a significant factor. The issue of membership for this emerging group of infants arose. Without the apostles, this issue became fertile ground for heresy. Some church leaders acknowledged that infants were innocent of individual sin, but nonetheless argued that newborns inherited the sin of Adam (original sin) and thus required baptism for the remission of this inherited sin. Professor Aland cited both Cyprian and Origen as sponsors of this doctrine: "Cyprian declares a newborn child 'has not sinned, except that, being born after the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the



contagion of the ancient death at its earliest birth. . . . It is not his own sins that are forgiven him but the sins of another [Adam]." Aland continued by quoting Origen as another advocate of original sin: "No one is pure from stain, yea though he be but one day old."<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, the origin of the false doctrine of original sin (which is that all men inherit the sin of Adam) emerged about the end of the second century and quickly led to the equally heretical ordinance of infant baptism.<sup>20</sup>

### Why Infants Were Not Baptized in Christ's Church

The doctrine of original sin, however, was not taught in Christ's Church. Christ taught that little children are pure and innocent in every way: "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). Barnabas wrote in his epistle, "Forasmuch then as He renewed us in the remission of sins, He made us to be a new type, so that we should have the soul of children, as if He were re-creating us."<sup>21</sup> What sense would there be for a man to receive "remission" of his sins and acquire the soul of a child as though he were a newborn ("re-creating us," to use the language of Barnabas) if newborns possessed the sin of Adam? To the contrary, Barnabas was saying that baptized members who receive remission of sins have no sins whatever for which they are accountable, and thus they are like newborn babies. On another occasion Tertullian suggested that little children defer baptism until "they have become able to know Christ," and then he added this significant statement about their spiritual standing before God: "Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the 'remission of sins'?"<sup>22</sup> This was a clear declaration that little children are innocent and, therefore, not in need of baptism.

The early Church clearly taught that baptism was only for the initiate who believed and was prepared. *The Didache* (A.D. 80–140) sets forth a list of teachings that must be "first recited"<sup>23</sup> to a baptismal candidate. As Professor Aland observed, "The presupposition of baptismal instruction itself automatically rules out infants and little children."<sup>24</sup> Cyprian spoke of the "baptismal interrogatory"<sup>25</sup> that preceded one's immersion in the water to assure his faith in Christ. One might appropriately ask, "Could an infant respond to a series of questions as a required condition of his baptism?"

Professor Aland summarized Justin Martyr's description of baptism in the early Church as follows:

Only they are permitted to be baptized who are convinced of the truth of the Christian teaching and who undertake to lead a life in accordance with it ("All who are persuaded and believe that the things taught and declared by us are true, and who promise that they can live accordingly are instructed. . . ."). Candidates for baptism seek with fasting and forgiveness from God for the sins they have earlier committed. They are then led to the water and afterwards to the gathering of the believers, where after prayer, the giving and receiving of the kiss of brotherhood, and offering of the elements and the thanksgiving, they finally receive the eucharist in bread, wine and water. *All these features make the presupposition of a participation of infants in the baptismal event appear unthinkable.*<sup>26</sup>

*The Didache* prescribed: "Thou shalt order him that is baptized to fast a day or two before"<sup>27</sup>—hardly appropriate or even possible for an infant. Aland further pointed out that the Church Order of Hippolytus (written shortly after A.D. 200) sets forth a probationary period of three years before baptism. During this probationary period, the former lives of the baptismal candidates were evaluated, witnesses were required to guarantee the resolve of the investigator, and the candidate was required to live the church law as though he were a full member.<sup>28</sup>

Tertullian understood the innocence of children and the need for faith *before* baptism. He cautioned: "Know

that baptism is not rashly to be administered." He spoke of the need for spiritual preparation and faith, and then concluded: "And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children." He also gave the simple, but understandable rationale for such delay: "Let them become Christians [through baptism] when they have become able to know Christ."<sup>29</sup>

Satan's argument for infant baptism was not limited to a geographic region or a particular people or a designated age. Centuries before the New Testament times, when the great patriarch Abraham lived, the practice of infant baptism raised its ugly head. The scriptures record that certain heretics had "turned from the commandments, and taken unto themselves the washing of children" (JST Genesis 17:6). Infant baptism surfaced again in the New World. Mormon wrote to his son Moroni, "For, if I have learned the truth, there have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children." Then he added, "Ye should labor diligently, that this gross error should be removed from among you." Mormon then gave the underlying doctrinal rationale as to why infant baptism is abhorred by the Lord: "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*" (Moroni 8:5, 6, 8).<sup>30</sup> In other words, "little children are alive in Christ" (Moroni 8:12); they do not inherit the transgression of Adam.

To baptize infant children is to deny the cleansing powers of the Atonement. Mormon elaborated on this very point: "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" (Moroni 8:20). Mormon declared with caustic condemnation: "I know that it is a solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children" (Moroni 8:9).

### What Happens When a Doctrine Is Changed?

Every time a doctrine or ordinance is corrupted, it seems other doctrines are also corrupted. Heresy is a virus that infects and contaminates everything it touches. The doctrine of original sin and the introduction of infant baptism were no exceptions. Once the door to heresy was opened a crack, Satan thrust in his wedge and the door sprang wide open. Like the domino effect, one heresy led to another. The doctrine of original sin and infant baptism negated the power of the Atonement as it applied to little children; it unwittingly condemned to hell every child who was not baptized; it completely undermined the need for faith and repentance as prerequisites to baptism; and, finally, it propagated the false doctrine that one man might be spiritually liable for the sins of another (Adam). Durant summarized the sad state of affairs as follows:

St. Augustine reluctantly concluded that infants dying before being baptized went to hell. St. Anselm thought that the damnation of unbaptized infants (vicariously guilty through the sin of Adam and Eve) was no more unreasonable than the slave status of children born to slaves—which he considered reasonable. The Church softened the doctrine by teaching that unbaptized infants went not to hell but to limbo, . . . where their only suffering was the pain of the loss of paradise.<sup>31</sup>

Can anyone believe in his heart that infants who die without baptism cannot go to heaven—that somehow these innocent children are excluded from God's presence? Does this sound like the doctrine of a loving and merciful God? Mormon concluded: "For awful is the wickedness to suppose that God saveth one child because of baptism, and the other must perish because he hath no baptism" (Moroni 8:15).

A theologian, John Jansen (who wrote the preface to Professor Aland's book), made this astute observation: "Indeed, the question of infant baptism is a problem of theology. It will not be settled finally by historical demonstration—even if more evidence is forthcoming. It will be settled by the meaning of baptism, for it is ultimately a doctrinal decision."<sup>32</sup> The doctrine on this matter was clear and direct in Christ's original Church—only those who had faith and repented were baptized.<sup>33</sup> Infant baptism was yet another perversion that gave witness of the apostasy.

## Baptism by Immersion

### The Form of Baptism in the Early Church Was Immersion

The necessity of baptism as a doctrine was discussed in the previous chapter, but the mode of baptism as an ordinance is of equal import. Paul taught that there is "one Lord, one faith, *one baptism*" (Ephesians 4:5). Paul explained why the nature of this ordinance is so critical. When we are baptized, we are "baptized into his [Jesus Christ's] death." Then he adds, "We are buried with him by baptism into death." This analogy of burial requires that our bodies be laid underneath the water; otherwise, the analogy is flawed. Paul explained that "as Christ was raised up from the dead, . . . even so we [who are baptized] also should walk in newness of life" that "we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:3–5).<sup>34</sup> When we stand in the water, we represent the "old" man (the carnal man); when we are laid underneath the water, it is symbolic of burying or putting to death that old man; and when we rise out of the water, it is symbolic of the "new" man (the spiritual man) who is "resurrected" to a new life in Jesus Christ. That is why baptism was done by immersion in Christ's Church, so that the symbolism of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection would be ingrained in the heart and mind of the initiate. Consistent with this symbolism, Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, wrote: "Let us, then, who in baptism have both died and been buried in respect of the carnal sins of the old man, who have risen again with Christ in the heavenly regeneration, both think upon and do the things which are Christ's."<sup>35</sup>

The author of *The Epistle of Barnabas* also spoke of the necessity of being immersed: "Blessed are they that set their hope on the cross, and go down into the water, . . . because *we go down into the water* laden with sins and filth, *and rise up from it* bearing fruit in the heart resting our fear and hope on Jesus in the spirit."<sup>36</sup> Later this same author confirmed that "there is no other repentance, save that which took place when we went *down* into the water and obtained remission of our former sins."<sup>37</sup>

Every example of baptism in the New Testament verifies that immersion was the mode adopted by Christ's Church. The Savior was baptized in the River Jordan, where he "went up straightway out of the water" (Matthew 3:16). How could he come up straightway out of the water unless he went first down under the water? Since the Savior is the great exemplar, who would have the right to change this mode of baptism? John the Baptist baptized the new converts "in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (John 3:23). Why would he feel the necessity to go to a place of much water if sprinkling or pouring were sufficient? The eunuch asked Philip for the privilege of being baptized. The scripture reads: "They went down both into the water" (Acts 8:38). Does this sound like sprinkling or pouring?

As explained in the LDS Bible Dictionary, the word *baptism* is derived from a Greek word meaning "to dip or immerse."<sup>38</sup> No matter what vantage point we approach it from—the meaning of the word *baptism* (to immerse), the wording of the scriptures (they went *down* into the water or came *out* of the water), the factual circumstances under which it was performed (John baptized "in Aenon near Salem, because there was much water there"), the symbolism of the act (the death, *burial*, and resurrection of Christ), or the

historical confirmation from early Christian writers such as Tertullian ("we are . . . immersed" in the water<sup>39</sup>)—it all leads to the same conclusion: baptism was performed by immersion in the original Church.

Luther understood this, for he wrote: "The term baptism is a Greek word. It may be rendered *a dipping*, as when we dip something in water, that it may be *entirely* covered."<sup>40</sup> On another occasion he said, "On this account, I could wish that such as are to be baptized *should be completely immersed into the water*, according to the meaning of the word, and the signification of the ordinance, *as also without doubt it was instituted by Christ*."<sup>41</sup> Calvin concurred: "The very word baptize . . . signified to immerse; and it is *certain* that immersion was the practice of the ancient Church."<sup>42</sup> And John Wesley noted in his journal, "Mary Welch was baptized, according to the custom of the first church, and the rules of the church of England, by immersion."<sup>43</sup>

### Why the Doctrine of Baptism by Immersion Became Corrupted

Not many years after the death of the apostles, certain church leaders yielded to other forms of baptism, primarily as a matter of convenience. *The Didache* instructed the Saints to be baptized "in living (running) water," but then added that if none is readily available, "pour water on the head."<sup>44</sup>

In about A.D. 250, Cyprian was asked a difficult question: Could those who were sick and infirm merit God's grace and be "accounted legitimate Christians"<sup>45</sup> if they had only been sprinkled and not immersed? Likely, the church had not sprinkled prior to this date (A.D. 250), or there would have been no need for such a question. This was apparently a novel issue being presented to Cyprian.<sup>46</sup> Unsure of the answer, he began his response as follows: "As far as my poor understanding conceives it, . . . ought it to trouble any one that sick people seem to be sprinkled or affused [poured upon]."<sup>47</sup> For his authority he cited some Old Testament scriptures,<sup>48</sup> which observe that sprinkling of water has a purifying power. These scriptures, however, have nothing to do with the ordinance of baptism as taught by the Savior. They are largely in reference to Hebrew ritual cleansing procedures used in offering sacrifices or taking care of the dead. But Cyprian was in a difficult situation. He knew that the only legitimate form of baptism in the Church for its two hundred-plus years of existence was immersion. He knew that the Savior had been immersed. He knew that every example of baptism in the New Testament was by immersion and that the underlying symbolism of baptism required the initiate to be buried in the water. He knew there was no scripture in the New Testament authorizing a departure from the prescribed mode of immersion. But his heart went out to the disabled believer, who seemed incapable of undergoing the immersion process—and so he sacrificed the law of God for the rationale of man.

But man did not need to invent a solution. God had a solution, not only for the infirm who might not have the opportunity to be immersed in mortality but for the millions and billions of good souls who never heard of Jesus Christ in mortality and thus never received the opportunity for baptism by immersion in this life.<sup>49</sup>

Cyprian concluded his letter concerning sprinkling with this caveat: "I have replied, dearest son, to your letter, so far as my poor ability prevailed; and I have shown, as far as I could, what I think; prescribing to no one, so as to prevent any prelate [high ranking church leader] from determining what he thinks right, as he shall give an account of his own doings to the Lord."<sup>50</sup> The door had been opened only a crack. Soon it was thrust wide open. It is amazing that with such a disclaimer as Cyprian gave, and such a departure from over two hundred years of history, that sprinkling should quickly become the primary method of baptism in the ongoing church. In short, Cyprian sanctioned a new ordinance in the church, man-made in origin, that had never been adopted or approved by the Savior or his apostles. Where was the revelation to make such a

drastic change?

Will Durant was not fooled by the change. He observed: "By the ninth century the early Christian method of baptism by total immersion had been gradually replaced by aspersion—sprinkling—as less dangerous to health in northern climes. . . . The old custom of deferring baptism to the later years of life had now been replaced by infant baptism."<sup>51</sup> The introduction of sprinkling was resisted for a while by many who knew the only true form of baptism was immersion. On one occasion, an issue arose as to whether a man who had been "baptized" by sprinkling could thereafter receive the priesthood. Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) quoted Cornelius, a bishop of Rome, in this regard: "All the clergy and many of the laity resisted it, since it was not lawful that one baptized in his sick bed by aspersion (sprinkling), as he was, should be promoted to any order of the clergy."<sup>52</sup> Even those who "sprinkled" knew it was not the equivalent of immersion. Sprinkling had been introduced as a matter of convenience—to accommodate the infirm, the aged—but it was just that—an invention of man. As often happens, the exception became the rule.

Once the purifying hand of the apostles was gone, mortals could not resist the urge to add to this simple, but beautiful, ordinance of baptism by immersion. B. H. Roberts observed that following baptism some new converts were "decorated with a crown and a white robe," long preparation periods were required for others, rather than the simple need for faith and repentance, and "in the fourth century it had become the custom . . . to put salt—an emblem of purity and wisdom—in the mouth of the baptized, and everywhere a double anointing was administered."<sup>53</sup> John Laurence Mosheim, a respected historian and author of six volumes entitled *An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern* (dated 1755), noted that even exorcists were employed to prepare one for baptism: "The driving out of this *demon* was now considered as an essential preparation for baptism, after the administration of which, the candidates returned home, adorned with crowns, and arrayed in white garments."<sup>54</sup> Tertullian noted that immediately before baptism "we disown the devil. . . . Hereupon we are thrice immersed . . . and from that day we refrain from the daily bath for a whole week."<sup>55</sup> On another occasion he added, "Indeed it is not once only, but thrice times, that we are immersed."<sup>56</sup>

Edwin Hatch wrote about a baptismal ritual recorded in the ninth century that required rites of exorcism and renunciation, a formal procession of priests, blessing of the water, signing with the cross, and circles of lights. He then commented, "Baptism had felt the spell of the Greek ritual."<sup>57</sup> The simple and sacred ordinance of baptism had been enmeshed in a host of distracting embellishments.

Once the form of the ordinance was changed, the meaning was changed. How could pouring or sprinkling be symbolic of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ as spoken of by Paul (Romans 6:3–5)? Perhaps innocently, but nonetheless incorrectly, man changed an ordinance of God, and in so doing destroyed the symbolism and efficacy of the ordinance. One does not erase God's line in the sand without revelation from God to do so. Nor does one soften the rules of heaven or adorn the ordinances of God because human wisdom seems to dictate. And so another ordinance fell prey to the apostasy.

### Baptism for the Dead

While Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost, his listeners were "pricked in their heart" as they heard his message about the resurrected Christ. Having the seeds of faith sown in their hearts, they asked what they should do to be saved. Peter responded: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37–38). In that short interchange were given the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, namely, faith, repentance, baptism,

and the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is these principles and ordinances that are necessary for salvation—by which all men in the flesh will be judged.

After men die, their spirits go to a spirit world to reside. Individuals in this spirit world can have faith and they can repent (D&C 138:33), but they cannot be baptized. Why is that? First, since they are spirits, they do not have physical bodies that can be immersed and, second, the spirit world does not have the physical element of water to symbolically cleanse the candidate. Zechariah wrote, "By the blood of thy covenant [because of the Savior's atonement] I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit *wherein is no water*" (Zechariah 9:11). In referring to this scripture Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted: "How aptly and succinctly this crystalizes the thought that the saving water, which is baptism, is an earthly ordinance and cannot be performed by spirit beings while they dwell in the spirit world."<sup>58</sup> But the Savior had the solution—namely, baptism for the dead by proxy of the living.

Baptism for the dead was practiced by the Saints at Corinth. Nonetheless, these Saints had momentarily questioned the resurrection. In order to reawaken their testimonies of the resurrection, Paul asked them: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" (1 Corinthians 15:29). In other words, Paul was asking them why they were performing baptism for the dead (a correct ordinance), if there were no resurrection. Paul did not attack the act of baptism for the dead as being incorrect, but rather their understanding of the resurrection. And so he used their correct understanding of one doctrine (baptism for the dead) to prove another correct doctrine, namely the resurrection.

The picture was complete: if the spirits in prison had faith and repented, then the proxy baptisms performed for them on earth would be valid. Such spirits have their agency, of course, to accept or reject the work that is done for them, just as any man or woman in mortality has the agency to accept or reject the Savior's redemption. Until those baptisms occur, however, there is a "great gulf fixed" (Luke 16:26) between the baptized and the unbaptized. Joseph Fielding Smith explained that after Christ visited the spirits in prison, the gulf referred to in the scriptures was "bridged so that the captives, after they . . . have accepted the gospel of Christ, having the ordinances [baptism for the dead, etc.] attended to in their behalf by their living relatives or friends, receive the passport that entitles them to cross the gulf."<sup>59</sup> Paul understood the absolute necessity of these proxy ordinances, for he declared "that they [the spirits in prison] without us [mortals] should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:40).

The author of *The Shepherd of Hermas* (A.D. 90–150) bore witness that the apostles were baptized on behalf of the dead, and then, after their own mortal deaths, they preached the gospel to those spirits for whom they had performed the proxy baptism:

It was necessary for them [the Saints] "to rise up through water" that they might be made alive; for otherwise they could not enter into the kingdom of God. . . . So these likewise that had fallen asleep [died] received the seal [baptism by water] of the Son of God and entered into the kingdom of God. For before a man . . . has borne the name of [the Son of] God, he is dead; but when he has received the seal, he layeth aside his deadness, and resumeth life. The seal then is the water; so they go down [the living on behalf of the physically dead who have not been baptized] into the water dead and they come up alive. Thus to them [the physically dead] also this seal was preached, and they availed themselves of it that they might enter into the kingdom of God.

Then the Shepherd explained further:

The apostles and the teachers who preached the name of the Son of God, after they had fallen asleep [died] in the power and faith of the Son of God, preached also to them that had fallen asleep before them, and themselves gave unto them the seal of the preaching. Therefore they went down with them into the water, and came up again. But these [the apostles while they were living in mortality] went down alive [and again came up alive]; whereas the others that had fallen asleep before them [meaning died before the apostles] went down dead [by way of a living proxy person on behalf of the unbaptized dead] and came up alive. So by their means they [the dead] were quickened unto life, and came to the full knowledge of the name of the Son of God.<sup>60</sup>

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200) knew that *The Shepherd of Hermas* taught the doctrine of baptism for the dead, and likewise Clement must have accepted its correctness as a Church doctrine, for he wrote: "Since God is no respecter of persons, the apostles also, as here, so there [in the spirit world], preached the Gospel to those of the heathen who were ready for conversion. And it is well said by the Shepherd, 'They went down with them therefore into the water, and again ascended. But these descended alive, and again ascended alive. But those who had fallen asleep, descended dead, but ascended alive.'<sup>61</sup>

Our secular laws understand and accept this principle of proxy work. Years ago I had a friend in the military, who while overseas married his fiancée (then living in the States) by proxy (a friend stood in for him during the marriage ceremony). Spiritual laws also recognize and accept the principle of proxy work. In fact, such a principle lies at the heart of Christianity. It was by proxy that the Savior suffered for our sins. In accord with this divine principle, Saints on earth can perform proxy baptisms for the deceased who never had this privilege. There is no need to "soften" or lessen the requirements of baptism or to be apologetic about the Church's stand in regard to those who never heard the gospel message. As Hugh Nibley observed, we are not "forced to choose between a weak law that allowed the unbaptized to enter heaven, and a cruel God who damned the innocent."<sup>62</sup> The plan is simple and beautiful and fair— *everyone* will have the privilege of hearing the truth; everyone will have the opportunity to be baptized—so that all men might be "judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6). Because God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34),<sup>63</sup> it could not be otherwise without negating the necessity of the ordinances of the gospel.

A few authors have tried to argue that baptism for the dead, as taught by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:29, cannot be taken literally. In particular, the Catholic scholar Bernard M. Foschini, who wrote an extensive treatise on the subject, used the following rationale as the keystone of his argument:

If the Mormons suppose that the unbaptized dead now want to accept the Gospel and be baptized through the works of their proxies, they contradict Scripture which teaches that "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27); and that the foolish virgins were excluded from the marriage feast *forever!* . . . Neither the words of Hermas nor of any other private writer can prove the necessity of a Baptism for the dead because, as we have shown, according to the Scriptures the time for doing good works is over after death.<sup>64</sup>

In order to justify such a position, Foschini argued that Christ did not preach the gospel to the dead (as Peter clearly stated and as numerous Christian writers asserted),<sup>65</sup> but rather he merely announced his redemption to the dead, "since the condition of the dead is unalterable."<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, this author has completely missed the point. Of course, there is no deathbed or post-death repentance for the foolish who have received the gospel truths in mortality but unequivocally rejected them. The preaching of the gospel to the

dead, however, is primarily for those who have not received a fair opportunity to hear the gospel in mortality. It is not a "second chance" but a fair and full chance for those souls who have never completely heard. That is why Peter and a host of early gospel writers confirmed that the gospel *must* be taught to the spirits of the dead so they might be "judged according to men in the flesh but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6). Clement of Alexandria expressed it similarly: "If, then, He preached the Gospel to those in the flesh that they might not be condemned unjustly, how is it conceivable that He did not for the same cause preach the Gospel to those who had departed this life before His advent?"<sup>67</sup>

Almost all authors of treatises on the subject of baptism for the dead, who do not accept the literal interpretation, have concluded that 1 Corinthians 15:29 is an extremely difficult scripture to interpret. Bernard M. Foschini surmised: "Having explained and critically evaluated all the opinions (more than forty!) offered in explanation of [1 Corinthians] 15:29, our conclusions may be summarized thus: Exegetes have considered this verse of St. Paul obscure and fraught with difficulties, and, in consequence, the explanations offered for it have been numerous and at great variance with one another."<sup>68</sup> Warren Dane, another author on the subject, added: "It is apparent that the decision as to the interpretation of 15:29 is at best a difficult one. The solutions proposed and analyzed all have problems." Dane then suggested as his solution that the word "martyrdom" should be substituted instead of "baptism."<sup>69</sup> To what lengths will people go to manipulate the word of God? One might appropriately ask: "Where is the divine authorization to change the Holy Writ; where is the scriptural support to insert the word "martyrdom" for "baptism"; where is the historical evidence to suggest it as a plausible alternative? The truth is—there is none. It is but a classic case of revisionist theology.

If Christ's Church had remained on the earth, would the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:29 be confusing? Would the doctrine of baptism for the dead be misinterpreted, misunderstood, and even maligned? Without the steadying hand of the apostles, this glorious doctrine of salvation became miserably lost in the tumult of man-made opinions.

Honest searchers after truth, however, have felt a spiritual kinship with this doctrine. Elder LeGrand Richards told of meeting a new member who instantly seized upon the truth after earnestly seeking for divine answers. Her story was recorded by Elder Richards as follows:

She was raised a Baptist, and lost a twenty-one-year-old son who had died without baptism. According to the teachings of her church, he had forfeited all chances of salvation. She was very much concerned and worried. One morning while doing her house work she went into her bedroom, got down on her knees, and asked the Lord that if there was anything she could do for her son who had died without baptism, would he please let her know. While she was still praying, a knock came at the door. When she went to the door there stood two lady missionaries from our church, the one holding in her hand a tract entitled "Baptism for the Dead." This lady read this heading and said, "Come in—tell me all about that—that is just what I want to know." After a few visits from the missionaries, she joined the Church.<sup>70</sup>

With the loss of baptism for the dead as a church ordinance, one is forced to accept one or the other of the following alternatives, neither of which is appealing. Either he must conclude that baptism is not essential to salvation, and thus be at odds with the veritable mass of scriptures and early Christian writers on the subject, or he must conclude that everyone who is not baptized, even the innocent and good, are damned. The latter dilemma was illustrated by Virgil in Dante's *Inferno*. Virgil, in escorting Dante through hell, remorsefully commented upon a group of good people, including himself, who had lived before the Savior and never been



baptized:

I wish to tell you that they have not sinned.  
Though they are worthy, this does not suffice,  
Because they never have received the joy  
Of holy baptism, essence of your faith.  
But those who lived before the time of Christ,  
Could never worthily adore their God:  
And I myself am of this company.

The closing lines are chilling:

For this defect [lack of baptism], and for no other wrong,  
Our souls are lost: for this we must endure  
A hopeless life of unfulfilled desire.<sup>71</sup>

Does it seem reasonable that a merciful God would allow the latter to happen? Alternatively, can anyone who honestly reads the scriptures and early Christian writers believe baptism is optional? Yet with the loss of baptism for the dead as a sacred ordinance, the members of the ongoing church were forced to tragically embrace one or the other of the following options—either deny the necessity of baptism or damn the innocent who never received the opportunity. It was exactly the dilemma Satan wanted. It is somewhat like the story of the man who could choose whether he wanted to be shot or hanged. Both consequences were devastating. It was another lost doctrine, another stunning victory for the Evil One, another evidence of the apostasy.

### The Sacrament

The sacrament, also known as the eucharist or communion, fared no better than most of the other ordinances. As instituted by the Savior it was simple and solemn—one took the bread and wine and blessed it in remembrance of him.

In the third century there were introduced (1) long sacramental prayers, (2) pomp and ceremony, (3) vessels of gold and silver, (4) disputations as to what time—morning, noon, or evening—the sacrament should be administered, and (5) the doctrine of transubstantiation.<sup>72</sup> This latter doctrine taught that the bread and wine were mystically transformed into the flesh and blood of Christ, and that such transformation somehow added to the spirituality of the participant. This doctrine seems all the more mysterious when one realizes that the church that was propagating a belief in transubstantiation was the same church that was claiming Jesus had *no* body of flesh and blood, but was instead a spirit. One might appropriately ask: "How was the bread and wine converted into the flesh and blood of a being who had no flesh and blood?" This puzzling doctrine was discussed by Lanfranc, Abbot of Bec, as follows:

We believe that the earthly substance . . . is, by the ineffable, incomprehensible . . . operation of heavenly power, converted into the essence of the Lord's body, while the appearance, and certain other qualities, of the same realities remain behind, in order that men should be spared the shock of perceiving raw and bloody things, and that believers should receive the fuller rewards of faith. Yet at the same time the same body of the Lord was in heaven . . . inviolate, entire, without contamination or injury.<sup>73</sup>

Unfortunately, the Bible scriptures, as they exist today, and the writings of the early Christian leaders did not always distinguish clearly between the literal and figurative use of terms such as flesh and blood when used in context of the sacrament. Jesus said: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life. . . . For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:54–55). Was he speaking literally or figuratively? Paul, quoting Jesus, implied that the sacramental tokens were symbolic, not literal representations of Christ's flesh and blood: "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye; as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25). On one occasion Ignatius (A.D. 35–107) wrote, "They [the Gnostics] abstain from eucharist (thanksgiving) and prayer, because they allow not that the eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which flesh suffered for our sins, and which the Father of His goodness raised up."<sup>74</sup> On another occasion, however, he wrote, "I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, *which is incorruptible love and eternal life.*"<sup>75</sup> The first quote could easily give rise to a literal interpretation; the second was certainly figurative.<sup>76</sup>

Confusion arose because it was difficult for many to know when the prophets and early Christian writers were speaking literally and when they were speaking figuratively. Accordingly, the question remains: "Does the bread and wine of the sacrament literally become the flesh and blood of Christ or, rather, are they tokens, given to remind us of Christ's atoning sacrifice?" In order to answer the foregoing question one might further inquire: "What historically has been the divine purpose of tokens, such as bread and wine, and is there any modern-day revelation that will clarify the issue?"

Tokens are usually things that are *symbolic* of a spiritual truth or reality, but they are *not* the reality itself. For example, the lamb's blood upon the doorposts of the Israelites, which saved the firstborn from physical death, was a token (meaning symbol) of the blood of Christ that would save them from spiritual death, but it was *not* the actual blood of Christ (Exodus 12:5–14). The lambs that were sacrificed in Israel were tokens of the Lamb of God and his sacrifice, but they did not become the Savior himself.<sup>77</sup> An angel told Adam: "This thing [meaning sacrifice] is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten" (Moses 5:7).<sup>78</sup> The foregoing tokens were symbols and nothing more. Likewise, the bread and wine are tokens or symbols of the flesh and blood of Christ—nothing more.

As one partakes of the bread he is reminded of the flesh of Christ, which was crucified and resurrected, thus bringing about immortality for all. As one drinks the cup he is reminded of the blood of Christ that was shed in the Garden and on the cross, thus bringing about the opportunity of eternal life (life in the presence of God) for all. Thus, the bread reminds us of Christ's triumph over physical death, and the water (or wine) reminds us of his triumph over spiritual death. As we stretch forth our hand to partake of these tokens or emblems, we recommit ourselves to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and to follow his example. Such a process helps bring us into spiritual alignment with Christ. These acts of remembering Christ and committing to be more like him invite God's Spirit into our lives. Accordingly, there is no need for a mystical transformation of the tokens.

The focus of the sacrament was *not* intended to change the nature of the bread and water; it was intended to change the nature of one's heart. But unfortunately, the superstitious and inventive minds of the people ran wild without the restraining hand of the apostles. With the newly created doctrine of transubstantiation, the symbols of the sacrament became "bigger than life"—much more than just symbols—and in the process detracted from the simple beauty of the ordinance.<sup>79</sup>

Fortunately, modern scriptures have clearly addressed the issue. The Savior instituted the sacrament at the

Last Supper, and taught his disciples, "Take, eat, this is my body" (Matthew 26:26). Joseph Smith clarified this particular verse to read: "Take, eat; this is in remembrance of my body which I gave a ransom for you" (JST Matthew 26:22).<sup>80</sup> Likewise, the Savior instructed the Nephites: "And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body" (3 Nephi 18:7). In 1830 the Lord taught Joseph Smith the true purpose of the sacramental tokens: "It mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory—remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins" (D&C 27:2).<sup>81</sup>

At the end of the Second World War, President Ezra Taft Benson visited the war-torn Saints of Germany. He noticed that numerous false practices had slipped into the local units during years of isolation from Church headquarters. Finally he lamented that if the war had persisted much longer, there would have been "'crowns and crosses' on every pulpit,"<sup>82</sup> and all this after only a few years of apostolic absence. When there is no revelation from heaven, the philosophies of men quickly fill the void. The observance of the sacrament was no exception.

### The Laying On of Hands

In Christ's original church there was a doctrine and ordinance known as "the doctrine . . . of laying on of hands" (Hebrews 6:2). This doctrine included at least three ordinances that were performed by the laying on of hands: first, confirmation (the giving of the gift of the Holy Ghost); second, priesthood ordinations and settings apart of those in various callings of the ministry; and third, the healing of the sick and other related blessings of personal comfort and direction. In each case, the laying on of hands was symbolic of the Lord's hands being laid on the recipient's head (D&C 36:2) and the dispensing of divine power and direction to the recipient.

### The Gift of the Holy Ghost

Philip had been sent to preach the gospel in Samaria. He baptized those who believed, but baptism alone did not confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. The scriptures record: "For as yet he [the Holy Ghost] was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16). The scriptures then inform us of the divine mechanism for unlocking the gift of the Holy Ghost—Peter and John "laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:17). The identical procedure was followed in Ephesus. Paul baptized a group of believers and "when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them" (Acts 19:6). This same pattern was acknowledged by Tertullian: "In the next place [following baptism] the hand is laid on us, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through benediction."<sup>83</sup> Origen (A.D. 185–255) spoke of this same ordinance: "In the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit was given by the imposition of the apostles' hands in baptism."<sup>84</sup> Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) was an additional witness of this holy ordinance: "Wherefore, in the name of the same Christ, are not hands laid upon the baptized persons among them, for the reception of the Holy Spirit?"<sup>85</sup> Durant recognized that this was a common practice in the early Church: "It was apparently the practice of the early Christians to add to baptism an 'imposition of hands' whereby the apostle or priest introduced the Holy Spirit into the believer; in the course of time this action was separated from baptism and became the sacrament of confirmation."<sup>86</sup>

In spite of this divine procedure initiated by the Savior and his apostles, it quickly fell into disuse. Few references are made to it after the early centuries following Christ. One only needs to ask, "Do any churches today convey the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands and, if so, do they have the priesthood of God to make that ordinance of divine validity?"

## Priesthood Ordination

Hands were also laid on one's head to ordain him to the priesthood and/or to set him apart for a specific calling in the ministry. The Lord commanded Moses to lay his hands upon Joshua and set him apart as the next prophet of Israel: "And he [Moses] laid his hands upon him [Joshua], and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses" (Numbers 27:23).<sup>87</sup> As the number of converts increased in the early Church, the apostles found need to call "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost" who could administer to the needs of the widows. After the seven men were chosen, the apostles "laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:3, 6) to set them apart in their new callings. Paul and Barnabas similarly had hands laid on them (Acts 13:3) as they were set apart as missionaries to preach the gospel. Paul reminded Timothy he should be "a good minister of Jesus Christ" and then cautioned him to "neglect not the gift [his calling in the ministry] that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Timothy 4:6, 14).<sup>88</sup> So sacred was a calling to the ministry that Timothy was warned to "lay hands suddenly on no man" (1 Timothy 5:22).<sup>89</sup> In other words, he was not to quickly ordain any man to the priesthood by the laying on of hands without first making sure that man was qualified.

There seems to be little question about what procedure was followed in the early Church to confer the priesthood upon a man—hands were laid on his head by one having the authority. Eusebius so noted: "There were appointed [the priesthood leaders] also, with prayer and the imposition of hands, by the apostles, approved men, unto the office of deacons."<sup>90</sup> It was another reminder that priesthood ordination comes only by laying on of hands. Remnants of this ordinance are found today; but in Christ's Church it was not an occasional event—it was the only divinely authorized means to confer the priesthood of God.

## Priesthood Blessings

In the ancient Church, hands were laid on the sick and the faithful to give them blessings of health and comfort and direction. The Savior laid his hands upon the sick and they were healed (Mark 6:5; 8:23; Luke 13:13). Likewise, the Savior instructed his apostles to "lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:18). With this power and divine injunction to heal, the scriptures tell us, "by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people" (Acts 5:12). With this power Paul visited the father of Publius, who was "sick of a fever and of a bloody flux . . . and laid his hands on him, and healed him" (Acts 28:8). This power of healing and the method of exercising it (by the laying on of hands) was not restricted to the apostles. Other worthy priesthood holders had the same power and received the same mandate to heal. When Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus, he was led by the hand to the home of Ananias, who put "his hands on him. . . . And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith" (Acts 9:17–18). So accessible was this power that James advised the members of the Church: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14).<sup>91</sup> Irenaeus (A.D. 120–202) was aware of this wonderful power in the Church: "Wherefore, also, those who are in truth His disciples . . . heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole."<sup>92</sup>

What happened to laying on hands to heal the sick by men who had the power of God? The truth is, this simple but beautiful ordinance, which had been performed with frequency in the primitive Church, vanished into the spiritual abyss of the apostasy. The laying on of hands for the healing of the sick was replaced with Satan's counterfeits—relics that could supposedly heal, graven images, beads with allegedly mystical powers, and shrines that could purportedly cure. They were sorry substitutes for God's decreed ordinance and a

powerful witness that another ordinance of Christ's Church had fallen by the wayside.

## Temple Ordinances and Covenants

An ordinance is a physical act, symbolic of a spiritual truth, that is required by God in order to make a man or woman eligible for additional blessings of heaven. The New Testament refers to certain ordinances, such as blessing children, baptizing, conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost, laying hands on the sick, priesthood ordinations, and the sacrament, all of which have been previously discussed. In addition, there were certain other ordinances in the primitive Church of such a sacred nature that they were not mentioned or were only briefly alluded to in the scriptures and by the early Christian writers. These ordinances included baptisms for the dead and, in addition, may have included the ordinances of washings and anointings, endowments, and sealings (which includes marrying spouses for eternity and binding children to parents for eternity). It seems that at least some of these ordinances, all of which are currently performed in Latter-day Saint temples, were available since the days of Adam.<sup>93</sup>

When there were no physical temples on the earth or when they were not operating under the direction of the Melchizedek Priesthood (as was the case at the time of the Savior), then, under such circumstances, certain temple ordinances took place at other locations approved by the Savior. For example, Elder Bruce R. McConkie believed that "Peter, James and John, while on this holy mount [the Mount of Transfiguration], received their endowments and were empowered from on high to do all things for the building up and rolling forward of the Lord's work in their day and dispensation."<sup>94</sup> While the Latter-day Saints were in Nauvoo, the Lord permitted baptisms for the dead to occur in the Mississippi River and endowments to take place in what is now known as the Red Brick Store, until the temple was completed. When the Saints first entered the Salt Lake Valley, some temple ordinances for a time were performed on Ensign Peak, and thereafter temple ordinances were performed in a special building known as the Endowment House, until the first temple in Utah was finished.

At the time of the Savior, the temple was directed by those who held the Aaronic Priesthood (the preparatory priesthood), not the Melchizedek Priesthood. Accordingly, it seems likely that those ordinances normally associated with Latter-day Saint temples today (requiring the Melchizedek Priesthood) may have been performed in other locations approved by the Savior and his apostles, such as in available rivers or ponds for baptisms for the dead and on mountaintops or secluded places for the other ordinances.<sup>95</sup>

Both the New Testament and early Christian writings speak of a body of Church theology that was reserved for those who were spiritually prepared. Paul spoke of these people as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1).<sup>96</sup> Celsus, a pagan, charged the Christians with having a secret tradition or doctrine. Origen responded by saying that such an allegation was true but meaningless, because other philosophies also had their secret doctrines: "In these circumstances, to speak of the Christian doctrine as a *secret* system, is altogether absurd. But that there should be certain doctrines, not made known to the multitude, which are (revealed) after the exoteric [public] ones have been taught, is not a peculiarity of Christianity alone, but also of philosophic systems, in which certain truths are exoteric and others esoteric."<sup>97</sup> Origen then explained that these "higher" doctrines revered in pagan circles were taught to some, regardless of preparation or maturity, but in Christian circles they were reserved and taught only to those who had proved themselves worthy: "*Whoever is pure not only from all defilement, but from what are regarded as lesser transgressions, let him be boldly initiated in the mysteries of Jesus, which properly are made known only to the holy and the pure.*"<sup>98</sup>

If the mysteries were only for the holy and the pure, what happened to them when wickedness prevailed in the church and heresies flourished? Unfortunately, the higher doctrines and ordinances and associated covenants in the church known as the "mysteries" were slowly but surely removed from the people. Nephi, one of the first prophets of the Book of Mormon, saw this sad occurrence: "They have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away" (1 Nephi 13:26). As the righteousness of the people waned, the spiritual mysteries vanished.

Why were certain doctrines treated as mysteries and reserved only for the spiritually prepared? There seem to be several reasons. First, the Lord cautioned his disciples not to cast their "pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet" (Matthew 7:6). Out of respect and reverence for these sacred doctrines, they were not to be given to those who would fail to appreciate them or to those who were not spiritually prepared to understand them. To do so would be tantamount to giving a treasured family heirloom to a child who would be remiss in its care or to a person who could not wait to sell it. Second, certain spiritual ordinances and doctrines were performed in a nonpublic setting so they would not be easily altered or corrupted by those who did not have the spiritual authority to administer them or the spiritual maturity to respect them. And third, perhaps the Lord in his mercy did not make them available to the spiritually unprepared because they may have proved a curse rather than a blessing.

As one might imagine, fragments or remnants of the "mysteries" (the temple ordinances and covenants) were passed down from one generation to the next. At the time of Joseph Smith a few of these fragments were available. After his time many others surfaced. Did Joseph Smith merely reconstruct the fragments in his day into an integrated, cohesive temple ceremony, which reintroduced the temple ordinances of the past, or did he gain an understanding of these ancient mysteries by revelation? Hugh Nibley gave this enlightening answer:

Very few of the fragments were available in his day, and the job of putting them together was begun . . . only in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Even when they are available, those poor fragments do not come together of themselves to make a whole; to this day the scholars who collect them do not know what to make of them. The Temple is not to be derived from them, but the other way around. If the Temple as the Latter-day Saints know it had been introduced at any date later than it was, or at some great center of learning, it could well have been suspect as a human contrivance; but that anything of such fulness, consistency, ingenuity, and perfection could have been brought forth at a single time and place—overnight, as it were—is quite adequate proof of a special dispensation.<sup>99</sup>

One does not discuss in detail the sacred ordinances and covenants that take place within the walls of the temple. They are available, however, for all those who desire to make themselves eligible. To those who do, there comes a quiet but certain witness that these ordinances are indeed the most sacred ordinances in which a mortal can participate. The temple ordinances are found in their fulness in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. In many ways they constitute a restoration of what Paul referred to as the "mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1).

#### Other Corruptions of the Ordinances

Once the foundation of apostles was gone, cracks started to appear everywhere in the institutional church. After the passage of a few centuries it was hard to find a doctrine or ordinance that had not undergone some corruption. Following are some additional examples.

## Worship Services

In the ancient Church the Saints were humble, the worship services simple, and the spirit powerful. But misguided men changed this with time. For some reason they believed complexity was better than simplicity, mystical more heavenly than plain, ostentatious more divine than unadorned. There appeared, as B. H. Roberts noted, "splendid vestments of the clergy, . . . pageantry of altars, surrounded with burning tapers, clouds of incense" and "the worship of martyrs."<sup>100</sup> Edward Gibbon, who wrote his masterpiece on the fall of the Roman Empire, offered the following timely comparison: "If, in the beginning of the fifth century, Tertullian, or Lactantius, had been suddenly raised from the dead, to assist at the festival of some popular saint or martyr, they would have gazed with astonishment and indignation on the profane spectacle which had succeeded to the pure and spiritual worship of a Christian congregation."<sup>101</sup> Erasmus (A.D. 1466–1536) commented:

The Church added to it [the original gospel] many things, of which some can be omitted without prejudice to the faith. . . . What rules, what superstitions, we have about vestments! . . . What shall we say about vows, . . . the abuse of absolutions and dispensations. . . . Would that men were content to let Christ rule by the laws of the Gospel, and that they would no longer seek to strengthen their obscurant tyranny by human decrees!<sup>102</sup>

The worship of God had been corrupted by the decrees and pageantry of men.

## Excommunication Became a Political Weapon

Excommunication was intended to be a formal disciplinary process conducted by the appropriate priesthood leaders whereby a grievous offender of Church rules lost his membership in the Church. This process affected only his ecclesiastical rights. However, as the church became a secular as well as religious body, excommunication became, in addition, a political weapon. B. H. Roberts addressed this gradual corruption of religious power:

At first excommunication meant the loss of the fellowship of the Saints, and such other punishments as God himself might see fit to inflict. . . . But gradually it came to mean in some instances banishment from home and country, the confiscation of property, the loss not only of religious fellowship with the Saints, but the loss of civil rights, and the rights of Christian burial.<sup>103</sup>

Such transformation from an ecclesiastical discipline to a political punishment was manifested at the Council of Nicea. Constantine, the Roman emperor, proclaimed himself the self-appointed chairman of this ecumenical council. The seeds of merger between the church and state had been planted. It was remarkable that few, if any, of the attending bishops objected to the proceedings of a church council conducted by a Roman emperor. This council, under Constantine's persuasive powers, issued the Nicene Creed. It was this creed that declared the church's doctrinal stance on the nature of the Godhead. It was bad enough that a political leader should influence religious theology, but there existed additional damning evidence that the church had been secularized. Constantine had ordered the books of Arius (the bishop who taught opposing doctrine to that of the Nicene Creed) to be burned. In addition, Constantine ordered death for any who taught the doctrine of Arius. The penalty for heresy had now been converted from excommunication to capital punishment, from an ecclesiastical penalty to a political one. One might well ask, "Where was the objection of the three hundred bishops in attendance at the Nicene Council—the men who were supposedly God's vicars on earth?" The separation between church and state had been obliterated.

Unfortunately, the true purpose of excommunication, which was to preserve the integrity of the Church, protect the innocent, and transform the transgressor, had become lost. By the time of the Inquisition there was little, if any, difference between civil and ecclesiastical discipline. The church had in essence become the state. The metamorphosis from a religious to a political body had in large part been consummated.

## Conclusion

Machiavelli (1469–1527), an Italian statesman and one of the most powerful political thinkers of his day, made the following stark assessment of the existing church and its ordinances:

*Had the religion of Christianity been preserved according to the ordinances of the Founder, the state and commonwealth of Christendom would have been far more united and happy than they are. Nor can there be a greater proof of its decadence than the fact that the nearer people are to the Roman Church, the head of their religion, the less religious are they. And whoever examines the principles on which that religion is founded, and sees how widely different from those principles its present practice and application are, will judge that her ruin or chastisement is near at hand.* 104

There is an old saying that where there is smoke, there is fire. The drastic change in ordinances from the days of the primitive Church sent up an ominous cloud of billowing smoke, obvious to any observant onlooker that a fire was burning out of control. That fire, the apostasy, which flared up with the death of the apostles, was fully ablaze by the time of Constantine—and there was no containment in sight.

## Notes to Chapter 15: Seventh Evidence

1. See also D&C 1:15–16.
2. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 14.
3. Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 14:134; as quoted in Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 381; emphasis added.
4. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) refers to this scripture but neglects to quote the part in which the Savior "laid his hands on them," and in so doing incorrectly concludes that infants should be baptized: "Do you also baptize your infants, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of God" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:457).
5. See Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*, 19–20. See also Foschini, "Those Who Are Baptized for the Dead," 57. In addressing those who believe that the Greek word for household, *oikos*, includes everyone in the household, Professor Kurt Aland responded, "One thing is at any rate indisputable: nowhere in connection with the *oikos* passages in the New Testament is a child or an infant expressly named, let alone its baptism; and nowhere is any allusion made to any such baptism—a plain datum that we are in danger of forgetting when observing the confident assurance with which the existence of these children or infants is presupposed in the discussion about the "oikos-formula" (Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 94).
6. Foschini, "Those Who Are Baptized for the Dead," 57.
7. When Peter preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, the scriptures record that "they that gladly



received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). No doubt infants were present, but obviously they were not baptized because they could not *gladly* receive the gospel message.

8. Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 89. As discussed hereafter, Professor Aland showed by historical evidence that no infant baptism occurred in the original church. Nonetheless, he believes God commanded everyone to be baptized and, therefore, there is no harm in baptizing infant children today. Such a belief makes him a particularly credible witness, since his historical "proof" is contrary to his current doctrinal belief.

9. See section titled "Baptism" in chapter 15 for a list of these scriptures.

10. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 112.

11. The five arguments Jeremias proposed were as follows: (1) If children were unbaptized, there would have been two kinds of Christians in the early church—baptized and unbaptized, but the early Christian history does not make reference to two kinds of Christians. (2) Had the custom of baptizing infants not been introduced until the end of the second century, surely there would have been more historical evidence pointing to the shift that introduced infant baptism. (3) If the custom of baptizing children had not begun at an early age in the apostolic church, then when baptism "reached a . . . fuller state of development, the church would surely not have been content simply to apply the ritual of adult baptism to children." (4) Infant baptism seems not to have been a special doctrine of a unique group but rather had advocates in multiple communities, which suggests it must have sprung from common roots in the early church. (5) Both the East and West had a traditional belief that infant baptism originated with the Apostles, and therefore such dual traditions from different geographic locales tend to fortify each other (Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 37).

12. Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 9.

13. For a summary of the five arguments, see Kurt Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 36–37.

14. Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 101–2; emphasis added. Aland further explained, "We know that c. A.D. 200 there were circles in Carthage desiring infant baptism, and about 250 it was the rule demanded by the bishops in North Africa. About 230–250 Origen in Palestine characterized it as the 'custom of the church' and about 220 the *Church Order* of Hippolytus in Rome included little children in the baptismal order. . . . Yet even in the third century infant baptism is plainly not the rule everywhere, for in those very areas where it had secured a firm place in the church, the custom of baptizing children after attaining a maturer age remained in force alongside it, as the inscriptions testify" (*Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 100).

15. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 319.

16. Winebrenner, *The Ordinances: Baptism, Feet Washing, and the Lord's Supper*, 267.

17. Winebrenner, *The Ordinances: Baptism, Feet Washing, and the Lord's Supper*, 281.

18. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 738.

19. Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 103. Origen (A.D. 185–255) also taught: "But the

prophets . . . tell us that a sacrifice for sin was offered even for new-born infants, as not being free from sin. They say [quoting Psalms 51:5], 'I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me'" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:631). Later, Augustine (A.D. 354–430) taught that original sin occurred when Adam yielded to Eve's temptation, and thereafter that all his descendants shared in his guilt (Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 9). About A.D. 250, Cyprian learned that certain church leaders would not baptize newborns within the second or third day of their birth, suggesting that no infant be baptized before the eighth day because of the ancient law of circumcision. Cyprian responded, "In this course, which you thought was to be taken, no one agreed; but we all rather judge that the mercy and grace of God is not to be refused to any one born of man." In other words, he was saying, but incorrectly so, you should baptize infants immediately after birth ( *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:354). Lactantius (A.D. 250–325) fell prey to his earlier mentors on this subject: "For the reproach is the original sin which is taken away in baptism" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:346).

20. Evidently the Jews also had a tradition that children were born in sin, for Joseph Smith explained Paul's motives in writing 1 Corinthians 7:14 as follows: ". . . that the tradition might be done away, which saith that little children are unholy; for it was had among the Jews; but little children are holy, being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ" (D&C 74:6–7).

21. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 142.

22. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:678.

23. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 126.

24. Kurt Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 53. *The Epistle of Barnabas* speaks of new converts as those who "set their hope on the cross, and go down into the water . . . and rise up from it . . . resting our fear and hope on Jesus" (*The Apostolic Fathers*, 148). The reference to "fear and hope on Jesus" excludes infants.

25. See *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:376.

26. Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 54–55; emphasis added.

27. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 126.

28. See Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 43–44.

29. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:677–78.

30. See also Mosiah 3:16.

31. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 734.

32. Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* 14.

33. See D&C 18:42; 20:71.

34. See also Colossians 2:12.

35. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:495.
36. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 148; emphasis added.
37. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 185; emphasis added.
38. LDS Bible Dictionary, 618.
39. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:94. Tertullian also wrote, "With great simplicity, without pomp, without any considerable novelty of preparation, finally, without expense, a man is dipped in water" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:669). And yet on another occasion, Tertullian said, "We are plunged in water" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:672). *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* confirmed that a bishop or presbyter "shall dip them [the baptismal candidates] in the water" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:431).
40. Winebrenner, *The Ordinances: Baptism, Feet Washing, and the Lord's Supper*, 296.
41. King, *Baptism: Sprinkling and Pouring versus Immersion*, 67.
42. Winebrenner, *The Ordinances: Baptism, Feet Washing, and the Lord's Supper*, 296.
43. Winebrenner, *The Ordinances: Baptism, Feet Washing, and the Lord's Supper*, 296.
44. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 126.
45. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:400.
46. A. Cleveland Coxe noted, "St. Cyprian seems to be the earliest apologist for sprinkling" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:419).
47. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:400–401.
48. Ezekiel 36:25, 26; Numbers 8:5–7; 19:8, 9, 12, 13.
49. See "Preaching the Gospel to the Dead" in chapter 15 and "Baptism for the Dead," the next subsection in this chapter.
50. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:402.
51. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 738.
52. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:266.
53. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 140.
54. Mosheim, *An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern, from the Birth of Christ to the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century*, 1:293.
55. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:94.
56. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:623.

57. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 300.
58. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, 241.
59. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:158.
60. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 232.
61. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:491. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230), however, seemed to struggle with the purpose and validity of baptism for the dead. Referring to Paul's epistle he wrote, "What . . . shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not? Now, never mind that practice, (whatever it may have been)." He then referred to those who are "vainly baptized for the dead" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:449; see also 581, in which Tertullian acknowledged that baptism for the dead was a vicarious baptism performed by the Christian Saints on behalf of the dead. It seems that by the time of Tertullian, the practice of baptism for the dead had already been lost in the church, and all he could do was acknowledge that it had been practiced by the Corinthians but query about its underlying reason and necessity).
62. Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 101.
63. See also Romans 2:11.
64. Foschini, "Those Who Are Baptized for the Dead," 56.
65. See chapter 15, subsection titled "Preaching the Gospel to the Dead."
66. Foschini, "Those Who Are Baptized for the Dead," 56.
67. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:492.
68. Foschini, "Those Who Are Baptized for the Dead," 98.
69. Dane, "A Survey and Analysis of the Interpretations of I Corinthians 15:29," 75.
70. Richards, *Just to Illustrate*, 107.
71. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, "The Inferno," canto 4, lines 33–42, 7.
72. See Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 144–45, for a further discussion of these points. A. Cleveland Coxe observed that "the heresy of Transubstantiation was not dogmatic even among Latins, until the Thirteenth Century" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:595). Coxe condemned the man-made additions to the sacrament, such as "the withdrawal of the non-communicants . . . a ceremony in an unknown tongue . . . the priest alone [who] partakes, in which the cup is denied to the laity and which is exhibited with great pomp before all comers with no general participation" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:343).
73. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 741. It is of some interest that Lanfranc refers to a body "inviolable, entire, without contamination or injury" when at the same time his church taught that Christ had no body in heaven but was a spirit.
74. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 84.

75. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:77; emphasis added.

76. Justin Martyr also seemed to have spoken both literally and figuratively of the sacrament and its tokens of bread and wine. On one occasion, he wrote, "We have been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:185). On another occasion he wrote, "Christ gave us to eat [the bread], in remembrance of His being made flesh . . . [and] the cup which He gave us to drink, in remembrance of His own blood" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:234).

77. For information on other tokens such as the rainbow and circumcision, see Genesis 9:8–13 and Genesis 17:11.

78. See also D&C 138:13.

79. The bread and wine (later, water) were the heaven-appointed tokens to remind us of Christ and his mission. While the cross played an integral part in the Savior's mission, it was not the chosen token for this purpose.

80. See also John 6:53–54; 1 Corinthians 11:26–29; 3 Nephi 18:7.

81. As a result of this revelation, the Latter-day Saints now use water rather than wine as the emblem of Christ's blood. See also D&C 20:77–79; Moroni 4; 5.

82. Dew, *Ezra Taft Benson, A Biography*, 216.

83. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:672.

84. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:252.

85. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:387. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) taught the same doctrine: "We laid our hands upon all that were baptized, and we conferred upon them the participation of the Spirit" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:452).

86. Durant and Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 600.

87. See also Deuteronomy 34:9.

88. See also 2 Timothy 1:6.

89. Joseph Smith specifically referred to 1 Timothy 5:22 and warned the elders not to ordain a man to the priesthood with haste: "On the subject of ordination, a few words are necessary. In many instances there has been too much haste in this thing, and the admonition of Paul has been too slightly passed over, which says, 'Lay hands suddenly upon no man.' Some have been ordained to the ministry, and have never acted in that capacity, or magnified their calling at all. Such may expect to lose their appointment, except they awake and magnify their office. Let the Elders abroad be exceedingly careful upon this subject, and when they ordain a man to the holy ministry, let him be a faithful man, who is able to teach others also; that the cause of Christ suffer not. It is not the multitude of preachers that is to bring about the glorious millennium! but it is those who are 'called, and chosen, and faithful'" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 42).

90. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2:48. On another occasion Eusebius noted that Origen (A.D. 185–255) had been requested to teach the scriptures in the church, but Eusebius expressed his surprise that "he [Origen] had not yet obtained the priesthood by the imposition of hands" (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:240).

91. See also Mark 6:13 and D&C 42:44.

92. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:409.

93. See Moses 5:59; D&C 132:37. Speaking of the Sadducees' misunderstanding of the principle of eternal marriage, President Joseph F. Smith observed, "They had wandered from that principle. It had fallen into disuse among them," implying, of course, that such a principle had previously been taught and practiced (*Gospel Doctrine*, 280). Baptisms for the dead, however, did not commence until after the resurrection of the Savior. Joseph Fielding Smith said, "There is abundant evidence in the scriptures to show that there was no work performed for the dead . . . until after Christ opened the door, after his crucifixion; but that all ordinances, including the binding or sealing performed by Elijah, were confined to the living" (*Doctrines of Salvation* 2:164).

94. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 3:57–58.

95. See 1 Corinthians 15:29. Brigham Young wrote, "There are places on the earth where the Lord can come and dwell, if he pleases. They may be found on the tops of high mountains, or in some cavern or places where sinful man has never marked the soil with his polluted feet" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 394). Elder Jeffrey R. Holland offered some insights on the amount of work done for the dead in the meridian of time: "There surely wasn't much work done for the dead before the Great Apostasy set in. How much could be done in a few decades (a little over three at best) when the membership was so small, the Apostles were persecuted, and the Church almost in hiding" (Seminar for New Mission Presidents, June 27, 2002).

96. See also 1 Corinthians 2:6–7; Matthew 13:9–13. Some have referred to John 18:20 as evidence that there were no mysteries or secrets: "I [Jesus] spake openly to the world . . . and in secret have I said nothing." There were no secrets in the sense that Christ's doctrine was for everyone, but there were certain secrets or mysteries that required someone to be pure before he was eligible to receive them. After all, the Savior had cautioned that his pearls should not be cast before swine (Matthew 7:6), and even to his apostles he declared, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). There seems to be no question that some of the parables were taught so as to veil certain truths from the spiritually unprepared (Matthew 13:9–13).

97. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:399.

98. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:488; emphasis added.

99. Nibley, *The Temple in Antiquity*, 51.

100. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 173–74.

101. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1:1025–26.

102. As quoted by Will and Ariel Durant in *The Reformation*, 285.

103. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 176–77.

104. Quoted by Will and Ariel Durant in *The Reformation*, 16–17; emphasis added.

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### **Eighth Evidence: The Mode of Prayer Was Changed**

If someone were trying to sever the lifeline between God and mortals, what better way than to dilute the power of prayer? The strategies of modern warfare bear remarkable similarities to Satan's approach. One of the primary targets of current warfare is to destroy the communications system of the enemy so that the commander cannot communicate with his troops—thus leaving his forces in disarray. And so Satan made a frontal assault on prayer.

The framework for meaningful prayer was clearly defined in the New Testament. It was simple and straightforward and powerful:

*First*, we pray to God the Father. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior told his disciples, "Pray to the Father which is in secret" (Matthew 6:6). He then gave them the example to follow: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9).<sup>1</sup> Tertullian noted: "Prayer begins with a testimony to God, and with the reward of faith, when we say 'Our Father who art in the heavens.'"<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, our prayers begin with a petition to our Father in heaven because it is he that listens to and answers our prayers.

*Second*, we pray in the name of and through the mediation of Jesus Christ, because he is our Savior and our "mediator between God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus counseled, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23).<sup>3</sup> On another occasion he said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).<sup>4</sup> Origen (A.D. 185–255) noted that "Christians . . . pray to God alone through Jesus."<sup>5</sup> Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) recognized that the members of the primitive Church prayed to God the Father through the Son, exactly as the Lord taught. In other words, there was no need for the intervention of patron saints. He noted: "But thanks be to God, the omnipotent and universal sovereign, thanks also to the Saviour and Redeemer of our souls, Jesus Christ, through whom we pray."<sup>6</sup>

*Third*, we say our individual prayers with sincerity of heart—not as a memorized recitation. The words from one of the sacred hymns teach us the correct principle: "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire."<sup>7</sup> In this regard the Savior instructed: "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions" (Matthew 6:7).<sup>8</sup> Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) taught that we should pray "in a pure, sincere, and straightforward spirit."<sup>9</sup> Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200) added: "But he [the true Christian] does not use wordy prayer by his mouth; having learned to ask of the Lord what is requisite."<sup>10</sup> Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) spoke of those whose "speech was availing and effectual, because a peaceful, and sincere, and spiritual prayer deserved well of the Lord."<sup>11</sup> Our heartfelt feelings are our passport to heavenly ascent. Fortunately, we are always eligible to pray—sin does not close the doors of heaven, appointments are not required, there are no busy signals, no long-distance charges, no

recommends required. There is but one essential ingredient: sincerity of heart and mind.

Prayer was meant to be simple and straightforward. There was nothing tricky or fancy or circuitous about it. But man is always tampering, complicating, obfuscating the ways of God. It was no exception in the post-primitive church. At first there were prayers to certain angels. Origen warned the Saints against any such action: "This knowledge, making known to us their nature [the angels'], and the offices to which they are severally appointed, will not permit us to pray with confidence to any other than the Supreme God, who is sufficient for all things, and that through our Saviour the Son of God."<sup>12</sup>

In time the ongoing church advocated prayers *to* patron saints rather than to the Father of us all, prayers *through* patron saints rather than through the Son, and memorized prayers *in lieu* of prayers from the heart. It is astonishing that the simple manner of prayer, laid out so carefully by the Lord, could be so twisted and perverted by man. Erasmus (A.D. 1466–1536) observed: "Isn't it . . . nonsense when particular regions lay claim to a certain saint, when they parcel out particular functions to particular saints, and assign to particular saints certain modes of worship: one offers relief from a toothache, another helps women in labor, another restores stolen goods, . . . and so on with the others, for it would take far too long to list all of them."<sup>13</sup> There was no shortage of saints to whom one might pray, since there were, as Durant observed, "25,000 saints that had been canonized by the tenth century."<sup>14</sup> Durant further noted: "The official prayers of the church were often addressed to God the Father; a few appealed to the Holy Ghost; but the prayers of the people were addressed mostly to Jesus, Mary and the saints."<sup>15</sup>

William Manchester gave some historical insight as to how the heresy of prayers to saints crept into the church:

Neither Jesus nor his disciples had mentioned sainthood. The designation of saints emerged during the second and third centuries after Christ, with the Roman persecution of Christians. The survivors of the catacombs believed those who had been martyred had been received directly into heaven. . . . They revered them as saints, but they never venerated idols of them. All the early Christians had despised idolatry, reserving special scorn for sculptures representing pagan gods. . . . However, as the number of saints grew, so did the medieval yearning to give them identity; worshipers wanted pictures of them, images of the Madonna, and replicas of Christ on the cross. Statues of Horus, the Egyptian sky god, and Isis, the goddess of royalty were rechristened Jesus and Mary. Craftsmen turned out other images and pictures to meet the demands of Christians who kissed them, prostrated themselves before them, and adorned them with flowers.<sup>16</sup>

C. S. Lewis understood the devastating effect such idolatry would have in undermining prayer. In Lewis's book *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape (the master devil) gave this counsel to Wormwood (a junior apprentice): "I have known cases where what the patient called his 'God' was actually *located*—up and to the left corner of the bedroom ceiling . . . or in a crucifix on the wall. But whatever the nature of the composite object, you must keep him praying to *it*—to the thing that he has made, *not to the Person who has made him*."<sup>17</sup> Erasmus wrote bluntly on the subject: "For sometimes these are a drawback to the worship of . . . gods—that is, when stupid numbskulls adore the figures instead of the divinities." He was also critical "that a charcoal sketch drawn on a wall should be worshiped with the same worship as Christ himself."<sup>18</sup> Roger Williams (1603–1683) also spoke of errors that crept into the church, including "the doctrine of praying to saints and worshiping of images." As to these heresies he wrote:

This doctrine [praying to saints and worshiping idols] strikes at the root of the great commandment (which



the papists call part of the first), "Thou shalt not bow down to them nor worship them"—that is, not any image whatsoever. It is gross, open, palpable idolatry, such as can neither be denied nor excused; and tends directly to destroy the love of God which is, indeed, the first and great commandment.<sup>19</sup>

The early Christians condemned the worship of idols and prayers to angels or saints. Origen wrote, "The Gospel requires *them* [the members] not to busy themselves about statutes and images."<sup>20</sup> He then gave this caution: "It is not possible at the same time to know God and to address prayers to images."<sup>21</sup> While referring to heretics, Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) likewise condemned the worship of idols: "We know that the names of the dead are nothing, as are their images."<sup>22</sup> Lactantius (A.D. 250–325) warned that those who "make prayers to the dead [patron saints] . . . have undertaken inexpiable rites, and violated every sacred law." Then he added, "Wherefore it is undoubted that there is no religion wherever there is an image."<sup>23</sup> No wonder Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) warned: "To pray otherwise than He [Christ] taught is not ignorance alone, but also sin. . . . Let us therefore, brethren beloved, pray as God our Teacher has taught us."<sup>24</sup>

It was clearly understood in the early Christian church that the worshiping of idols and burning of incense were pagan, not Christian rituals. Nonetheless, these rituals were creeping into the church. Accordingly, the Emperor Theodosius found it necessary to issue the following decree in A.D. 391: "If any person should venerate, by placing incense before them, images made by the work of mortals . . . or should attempt to honor vain images with the offering of a gift, such a person, as one guilty of the violation of religion, shall be punished by the forfeiture of that house in which it is proved that he served a pagan superstition."<sup>25</sup> As history proves, this edict had little effect upon the worship of the common people, who quickly gravitated to idols, who prayed to them, and who burned incense as a regular part of their worship services.

No doubt the apostles of Christ's Church would have been shocked to hear the prayers of the post-primitive church. Sincere, humble prayers to the Father had been replaced in many, if not most, instances, by rote prayers to patron saints.<sup>26</sup> It was the triumph of form over substance—another evidence of the decline of Christ's Church.

#### Notes to Chapter 16: Eighth Evidence

1. See also Luke 11:2; Matthew 26:39.
2. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:682.
3. See also Colossians 3:17.
4. See also 1 Timothy 2:5.
5. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:653.
6. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book X, Chapter I, 403.
7. "Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire," in *Hymns*, no. 145.
8. Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) wrote that we should not "cast to God with tumultuous wordiness a petition that ought to be commended to God by modesty" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:448).

9. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:409.
10. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:537.
11. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:449.
12. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:544.
13. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 65.
14. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 743.
15. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 742.
16. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 13–14. Manchester also noted that "Augustine deplored the adoration of Saints, but priests and parishioners alike believed that the devil could be driven away by invoking their powers, or by making the sign of the cross" (*A World Lit Only by Fire*, 14).
17. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 30; emphasis added.
18. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 75, 92.
19. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 531.
20. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:559.
21. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:637.
22. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:84.
23. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:67–68.
24. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:448.
25. Hollister, *Medieval Europe: A Short Sourcebook*, 10.
26. The apostate Zoramites were caught in the spiritual trap of offering only memorized prayers: "Now, from this stand they did offer up, every man, the selfsame prayer unto God" (Alma 31:22).

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## Ninth Evidence: The Scriptures Were Removed from the Lay Members

We have previously discussed Satan's attack on prayer. With equal cunning and sophistry he quietly and discreetly removed the scriptures from the lay members of the church. This time he invoked the stealth approach: don't arouse the ire, don't alert the defenses, don't trigger the emergency alarms of the enemy—just lead them "carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:21). Not only is it a remarkable feat he accomplished, but perhaps even more remarkable, no one seemed to notice. It is as though the town's crown jewels were stolen one at a time until they had all disappeared and no one was the wiser.

In the early Church the scriptures were accessible and regularly read by the Saints (as discussed below), yet it was not too many years thereafter that the scriptures were found only in the hands of the clergy. To make matters worse, the scriptures were often unavailable in the language of the layman. Mosheim, a noted historian, referred to these tragic conditions:

A severe and intolerable law was enacted, with respect to all interpreters and expositors of the scriptures, by which they were forbidden to explain the sense of these divine books, in matters of faith and practice, in such a manner as to make them speak a different language from that of the church and the ancient doctors. The same law further declared that the church alone (meaning its ruler, the Roman pontiff) had the right of determining the true meaning and signification of scripture. To fill up the measure of these tyrannical and iniquitous proceedings, the church of Rome persisted obstinately in affirming, though not always with the same imprudence and plainness of speech, *that the holy scriptures were not composed for the use of the multitude, but only for that of their spiritual teachers*; and, of consequence, *ordered these divine records to be taken from the people in all places where it was allowed to execute its imperious demands.*<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Arundel, the archbishop of Canterbury wrote, "*We therefore legislate and ordain that nobody shall from this day forth translate any text of the Holy Scriptures on his own authority into the English.*"<sup>2</sup>

As a consequence of these actions by the ongoing church, the scriptures became all but lost to the lay members. William Manchester so noted:

Although they called themselves Christians, medieval Europeans were ignorant of the Gospels. The Bible existed only in a language they could not read. The mumbled incantations at Mass were meaningless to them. They believed in sorcery, witchcraft, hobgoblins, werewolves, amulets, and black magic, and were thus indistinguishable from pagans.<sup>3</sup>

Commenting further on the conditions in the medieval ages, Manchester wrote: "Everyone, that is, except the higher clergy, the learned, and affluent nobleman—could not decipher a word of official pronouncements, laws, manifestos issued by their rulers; of the liturgies, hymns, and sacred rites of the Church; or, of course, of either Testament of the Bible."<sup>4</sup>

Not only had the scriptures been removed from the hands of the people, but laws were adopted that severely punished those who attempted to read the scriptures in English. How plausible is it that the Church of God would restrict access to the word of God and even punish those who read that word in their native tongue? It was a dark day on April 4, 1519, in Coventry, England, when a widow, four shoemakers, a glover, and a hosier were burned at the stake. The reason for this was clearly defined in the official records: "The principal cause of the apprehension of these persons, was for teaching their children and family the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments in English."<sup>5</sup> Some who were caught with the prohibited translation

in English were burned while the outlawed parchments hung about their necks. S. Michael Wilcox, a religious instructor and scholar, noted: "We ponder in shock that a standard question of the Inquisition was, 'Have you read or do you own the scriptures in the common tongue?'"<sup>6</sup> Then he added this tragic, but truthful insight: "The apostles' moving words (James 1:5–6) were locked in the coffin of a dead language. . . . Removing plain and precious truth was not the unique problem of darker ages; the very book itself had been removed. It would take the blood of martyrs before the subtle tones and warm music of holy writ could sound joyfully in the ear without the fearful knocking at the door by the fisted hand of arresting authority."<sup>7</sup>

As paradoxical as it may seem, many clergymen were adamantly opposed to the Bible circulating among the lay members. One such clergyman contended, "We must root out printing, or printing will root out us."<sup>8</sup> John Wycliffe gave one telling reason why the clergy were so opposed to distribution of the scriptures: "For they [the clergy] will neither learn themselves, nor teach holy writ, nor suffer other men to do it, lest their own sin and hypocrisy be known and their pleasurable life be withdrawn."<sup>9</sup> Others resisted translation into English because they felt the English language at the time was not refined and cultured enough to properly transmit the word of God.

When William Tyndale's English translation of the Bible was smuggled into England, the bishop of London purchased all the copies he could and then publicly burned them at St. Paul's Cross in the fall of 1526. We can imagine how far afield the supposed shepherds of Christ's Church had gone when we learn that Cardinal Campeggio reported the burning to Rome in these words: "No holocaust could be more pleasing to Almighty God."<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the Archbishop of Canterbury organized a clandestine force of informers to search out homes that might be hiding copies of Tyndale's translation. It was the supreme irony—the alleged church of God destroying the word of God.<sup>11</sup> Manchester wrote: "The Church didn't want—didn't permit—wide readership of the New Testament. Studying it was a privilege they had reserved for the hierarchy, which could then interpret passages to support the sophistry, and often the secular policies, of the Holy See."<sup>12</sup>

It was Satan's belt-and-suspenders' approach—not only had he removed the scriptures from the hands of the lay members, but even when the scriptures were available, they were often in a language unknown to the common people. Suppose the mayor of a town enacted a law that required all of its citizens to deliver their scriptures to the mayor's home. No one could retain in his possession any portion of the word of God. If one wanted to read the scriptures he would have to go to the mayor's home. Suppose further that the mayor made only one copy available for all the townspeople, and it was in Latin. How would such limitations affect their spirituality, and ultimately the spirituality of the Church at large? Is it any wonder Elder Bruce R. McConkie observed, "If ever there was a sealed book it was the Bible all during the Dark Ages."<sup>13</sup>

Scholar Kent P. Jackson noted: "Before the Reformation, few Bibles existed in western Europe in languages other than Latin, which had long ago ceased to be a common spoken tongue. Because knowledge of Latin was a monopoly held by the church and some few others educated by the church, the clergy controlled access to the word of God."<sup>14</sup>

It was such a condition that triggered the outrage of some of the Reformers. Wycliffe wrote, "As lords in England have the Bible in French, so it were not against reason, that they hadden [sic] the same sentence in English."<sup>15</sup>

In the fourteenth century Wycliffe, as noted by Elder James E. Talmage, "was particularly emphatic in his opposition to the papal restrictions as to the popular study of the scriptures, and gave to the world an English

version of the Holy Bible translated from Vulgate."<sup>16</sup> One would have thought that the church would have been thrilled with such a contribution, but in 1408 Archbishop Arundel referred to Wycliffe's actions as "wickedness" because "he prepared a new translation of the Scripture into his mother tongue."<sup>17</sup> George Wishart, a mentor to John Knox, taught his students from the Greek New Testament, and as a result was forced to flee from Scotland and was later burned at the stake.<sup>18</sup>

It has been said that the Reformers, through their sacrifice and efforts, "dethroned the Pope and enthroned the Bible."<sup>19</sup> Bishop Jewel made a famous appeal known as "the Challenge at Paul's Cross" on Passion Sunday, 1560. He articulated many of the false practices of the ongoing church, including the prohibition against lay members reading the scriptures in their own tongue. In so doing, he challenged anyone to show

out of the Holy Scriptures of God; or any *one example* of the primitive Church, whereby it may be clearly and plainly proved, that . . . the bishop of Rome was then called an universal bishop, or the head of the universal Church; or that . . . the people was then taught to believe that Christ's body is really, substantially, corporally, carnally or naturally in the Sacrament; or that . . . images were then set up in churches to the intent the people might worship them; or that . . . the *lay people was then forbidden to read the word of God, in their own tongue.*

He then concluded with this powerful challenge: "If any man alive be able to prove any of these articles, by any one clear or plain clause or sentence, either of the Scriptures, or of the old doctors . . . or by any Example of the Primitive Church; I promise, then, that I will give over and subscribe unto him."<sup>20</sup>

Erasmus (A.D. 1466–1536) yearned for the day when the Bible would be available to all men in their native tongue:

I would have those words translated into all languages, so that not only Scots and Irishmen, but Turks and Saracens might read them. I long for the plowboy to sing them to himself as he follows the plow, . . . the traveler to beguile with them the dullness of his journey. . . . These sacred words give you the very image of Christ speaking, healing, dying, rising again, and make him so present, that were he before your very eyes you would not more truly see him.<sup>21</sup>

The Savior had given the clear command: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). It was the same injunction issued by Paul, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15). Such a command was but a continuation of the injunction in Old Testament times: "Meditate therein day and night" (Joshua 1:8) and "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord" (Isaiah 34:16). Luke noted that when Paul and Silas left Thessalonica for Berea, the Saints in Berea "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the scriptures daily*" (Acts 17:11).<sup>22</sup>

Paul admonished Timothy to "study . . . the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) and then observed "that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures" (2 Timothy 3:15). He then spoke of the need for every Saint to study the scriptures in order to aid him in his pursuit of perfection: "Holy scriptures . . . are able to make thee wise unto salvation. . . . All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:15–17). Certainly Paul would not instruct the Saints to study the scriptures unless they had ready access to the word of God.

The need to study the scriptures was likewise enjoined by the early Christian writers of post-New Testament times and thereafter by the Reformers. Origen (A.D. 185–255) gave this fatherly advice to Gregory: "Do you then, my son, diligently apply yourself to the reading of the sacred Scriptures. . . . And applying yourself thus to the study of the things of God, . . . seek aright, and with unwavering trust in God, the meaning of the holy Scriptures, which so many have missed."<sup>23</sup> Cyprian admonished those who desired to be spiritually minded to "be constant as well in prayer as in reading [the scriptures]."<sup>24</sup> William Tyndale made this simple but truthful observation: "The nature of God's word is, that whosoever read it, or hear it reasoned and disputed before him, it will begin immediately to make him every day better and better, till he be grown into a perfect man."<sup>25</sup>

It is from the holy writ that we learn and master the doctrines of the kingdom; it is from these sacred writings that we rub shoulders with the prophets of old and thus acquire a faith and wisdom akin to theirs; it is from this whetstone of God's word that we can sharpen our minds to acquire a divine acumen; it is from these heaven-sent messages that we feel the impress to correct our life and put it in order with the divine standard; it is "through patience and comfort of the scriptures [that we] might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Take the scriptures away and what do you have? Exactly what Satan wanted—a spiritual famine. Amos saw it coming with prophetic perfection: "They shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11–12).

President Harold B. Lee spoke of the consequences of failing to study the scriptures: "If we are not reading the scriptures daily, our testimonies are growing thinner, our spirituality isn't increasing in depth."<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, if we become an earnest friend and student of the scriptures, the contrasting consequences come to pass, as related by Spencer W. Kimball: "I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures the distance narrows and the spirituality returns."<sup>27</sup>

The scriptures are reservoirs of sacred truths, from which we are invited, even commanded, to drink. They are a spiritual oasis in a vast desert of secular learning. They are the spring from which we quench our spiritual thirst.

Some may erroneously contend that the early Saints never had ready access to the scriptures in their homes—that their only access was the synagogues, and therefore it was no spiritual crisis to have the scriptures solely in the hands of the clergy. Paul, however, observed that the Saints of Berea "searched the scriptures *daily*" (Acts 17:11). Clement of Rome (A.D. 30–100) wrote similarly of the Corinthians: "Ye have searched the scriptures, which are true."<sup>28</sup>

While synagogues may have been one source, certainly many Saints had portions of the sacred word in their homes. The Bible records that the people of the New Testament times had "books" available in their homes, for many of the converts in Ephesus, upon hearing the gospel, put aside their "curious arts" (sorcery) and "brought their *books* together, and burned them before all men"; and then to emphasize that these were not just a few isolated books, the scripture adds "and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19:19). The eunuch of Ethiopia was "sitting in his chariot" while he "read Esaias the prophet" (Acts 8:28). Obviously he had access to the scriptures outside the synagogue, as likely did most others. Paul requested Timothy to bring Paul's "books, but especially the parchments" (2 Timothy 4:13), which no doubt constituted portions of the Holy Writ. After the famous council on circumcision, Paul went from city to city and "delivered them the decrees [decisions of the apostles] for to keep" (Acts 16:4).

Farrar noted: "Among the small Christian communities the letters of the Apostles were eagerly distributed."<sup>29</sup> Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) wrote of "the three gospels [Matthew, Mark and Luke] . . . having been distributed among all."<sup>30</sup> Eusebius observed that Origen "had been conversant with the holy Scriptures even when a child. He had been considerably trained in them by his father."<sup>31</sup> Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200) further noted that the Christians participated in "readings in the Scriptures before meals."<sup>32</sup> *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) added: "If thou stayest at home, read the books of the Law, of the Kings, with the Prophets . . . and peruse diligently the Gospel."<sup>33</sup> In other words, the members of the early Church had ready access to the current revelations of the Church. It was an essential source of their spirituality, just as it is today.

The Savior and apostles would not have commanded the Saints to study the scriptures regularly unless it was possible to do so; but it was not possible in the aftermath of the apostasy. The scriptures had been sequestered by the clergy. Ironically, they were under lock and key by the very men who should have made them freely accessible to all. There can be no doubt: if Christ's Church had continued as originally established, the scriptures would have been readily available to its members. There would have been a tremendous effort to have them in every home and translated in every language spoken by the Saints. The scriptures would have been a prime source of the members' spiritual nourishment—but such was not the case. Instead of spiritual feasting, there was a time of prolonged spiritual famine. It was another powerful witness of the apostasy.

#### Notes to Chapter 17:Ninth Evidence

1. As quoted in Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, 139; emphasis added.
2. Cited in McGrath, *In the Beginning*, 33.
3. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 60.
4. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 165.
5. Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones*, 1.
6. Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones*, 4.
7. Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones*, 10–11.
8. Smith, *The Progress of Man*, 214.
9. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 15–16.
10. Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones*, 90.
11. One wonders how these clergy would respond to Nephi, the Book of Mormon prophet, who wrote, "The Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; *for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding*" (2 Nephi 31:3; emphasis added).
12. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 204.

13. McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration*, 282.
14. Jackson, *From Apostasy to Restoration*, 60.
15. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 7.
16. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, 151.
17. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 41.
18. Wishart advocated for "the Holy Scriptures, rather than fallible ecclesiastical councils or the pope." In addition, he was against "priestly celibacy . . . the worship of Saints and the power of exorcism and holy water" (Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 242).
19. Nicolson, *God's Secretaries*, xiii.
20. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:267; emphasis added.
21. As quoted by Will and Ariel Durant in *The Reformation*, 285.
22. See also Revelation 1:3.
23. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:394.
24. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:279–80.
25. Wilcox, *Fire in the Bones*, xv.
26. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 152.
27. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 135.
28. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 32.
29. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:131.
30. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:108.
31. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:218; Theophilus (A.D. second century) warned Autolycus to "give reverential attention to the prophetic Scriptures, and they will make your way plainer for escaping the eternal punishments and obtaining the eternal prizes of God" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:93).
32. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:537.
33. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:393.



## Tenth Evidence: Wickedness within the Church Hierarchy

The purpose of this chapter is not to disparage the Catholic Church or its members. Many of them are exemplary Christians who render great service. Nonetheless, there is an undeniable history of clerical misconduct, so visible, so documented, and so prolonged that no one can honestly ignore this as an evidence of the apostasy. This does not mean that some good did not remain in the ongoing church (for it did); rather, it means that the Church of Jesus Christ did not continue in its fullness.

Widespread wickedness among the clergy was admitted by many of the loyal church leaders. It was recorded and disclosed by impartial historians; it was exposed by the Reformers; it was recognized by large segments of the church that eventually followed in the footsteps of Luther, Calvin, and others; and finally, it was even acknowledged by the ongoing church, which initiated the Counter Reformation to correct the evils at hand.<sup>1</sup>

Some have discounted the testimony of the Reformers as biased, but one must remember that in large part the Reformers were faithful Catholic members who had no preconceived prejudice against the clergy. In fact, in many cases, they *were* clergy. They did observe, however, the obvious—rampant iniquity among the church leaders, which they could not reconcile with what they believed should have been the conduct of true spiritual shepherds. Finally the inward spiritual rage became so compelling that, at great risk to their lives and futures, they publicly reprimanded the clergy, hoping for change. Simultaneously they spoke out against certain of the doctrines that were not in harmony with Christ's ancient church.

There is no question that in some cases the Reformers became as intolerant as those whom they accused. Sometimes they missed the mark—merely replacing one false doctrine with another. Perhaps with the passage of time some of the Reformers even exaggerated the misconduct of the clergy in order to advance their own causes. But the self-condemnation by reputable clergy who remained loyal to the ongoing church, combined with the repeated castigations of historians, plus the existence of documented events that triggered the outcry of the Reformers, as well as the groundswell of members who became so dissatisfied with the clergy that they left the church, followed by the confession of wrongdoing by the church itself, is staggering evidence that there were deep and sweeping problems in the clerical ranks of the ongoing church.

There is voluminous historical evidence of deeds, conducted under the name of "the church," so egregious that it would be hard to believe that Christ's Church would sanction them. It did not matter what the vice—covetousness, greed, ambition, gluttony, moral decadence, or the like—large segments of the clergy embraced it and often flaunted it. It was not an isolated case or two, localized in a region here or there. It was everywhere. Erasmus, a Catholic monk who believed that reformation was necessary but who wanted to make such changes from within rather than without, was an especially valuable witness because he remained loyal to the Catholic Church. He wrote: "There are priests now in vast numbers, enormous herds of them, seculars, and regulars, and it is notorious that very few of them are chaste. The great proportion fall into lust and incest and open profligacy."<sup>2</sup> Erasmus was not alone in his indictment. John Colet, dean of St. Paul's Cathedral added: "O priests! O priesthood. . . . Oh, the abominable impiety of those miserable priests,

of whom this age of ours contains a great multitude, who fear not to rush from the bosom of some foul harlot into the temple of the Church, to the altar of Christ."<sup>3</sup> Clergy misconduct was common knowledge among the laity; it was visible and sweeping in its scope and thus it seriously affected the spirituality of the church.

Wickedness quickly infiltrated the church hierarchy after the death of the apostles. Already by the middle of the third century Cyprian had written with disgust:

The pastors and the deacons each forgot their duty. Works of mercy were neglected, and discipline was at the lowest ebb. Luxury and effeminacy prevailed. . . . Even many bishops, who ought to be guides and patterns to the rest, neglecting the peculiar duties of their stations, gave themselves up to secular pursuits. They deserted their places of residence and their flocks: They traveled through distant provinces in quest of pleasure and gain; gave no assistance to the needy brethren; but were insatiable in their thirst of money: They possessed estates by fraud and multiplied usury.<sup>4</sup>

Eusebius (A.D. 270–340) likewise spoke of "the ambitious aspirings of many to office, and the injudicious and unlawful ordinations, that took place, the divisions among the confessors themselves, the great schisms and difficulties industriously fomented by the factions among the new members, . . . [each] devising one innovation after another."<sup>5</sup> In fact, so wicked was the hierarchy of the church that Milner, a respected historian of the early Christian church, alluded to the spirit of avarice and contention that existed and then concluded: "It was not Christianity, but the departure from it, which brought on these evils."<sup>6</sup> So degenerate were many of these ecclesiastical leaders that another historian, Mosheim, wrote, "The ungodly lives of most of those intrusted with the care and government of the church, are a subject of complaint with all the ingenuous and honest writers of this age."<sup>7</sup>

Dispute and contention in the ongoing church seemed to be the rule, rather than the exception. So serious was the contention for "supreme bishop" between the bishop of Rome and bishop of Constantinople that, after hundreds of years of discord, the church, in A.D. 885, was split into the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church.

As time progressed the wickedness seemed only to accelerate. The Inquisition and sale of indulgences are cases in point. Will Durant made the following somber observation: "More and more the hierarchy spent its energies in promoting orthodoxy rather than morality, and the Inquisition almost fatally disgraced the church."<sup>8</sup> For several centuries, primarily the thirteenth through the sixteenth, the ongoing church created special courts to investigate and punish those who opposed church doctrine. Unfortunately, many of the inquisitors abused their power and, accordingly, some suspects were tortured and others sentenced to death. Subsequently, the Catholic Church condemned the Inquisition.

The sale of indulgences was another low point in the history of the ongoing church. In the eleventh century the church imposed fines, imprisonment, and even death for the infractions of church rules. This led to the shocking practice of selling indulgences (paying of fines in lieu of physical punishment). At first the bishops were limited in exercising this power. For a price they could exempt a parishioner from temporal punishment. Later, the pope "remitted" the consequences of any penalty in the hereafter. Hence, the payment of money promised both temporal and spiritual relief. This was based on the doctrine of supererogation, which allowed the pope to draw upon the cache of "extra" good deeds rendered by the Savior, and by some alleged saints who did more than enough good deeds to be saved, and apply them to pay for the sins of others.<sup>9</sup> This meant that the pope and certain church leaders whom he appointed had the right to reassign this "surplus" of good deeds for a fee. This surplus could be assigned for the benefit of the living or the dead who dwelt in

purgatory. The selling of indulgences was then carried to the extreme of selling them *before* the commission of a specific offense, thus developing the diabolic practice of selling the "right" to commit sin without adverse consequence. Moroni, with prophetic eyes, saw the days of apostasy when churches would say: "Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven your sins" (Mormon 8:32).

John Tetzel, an infamous monk of the sixteenth century, sold indulgences for past and future crimes in order to raise money for the construction of St. Peter's Cathedral. His famous lines were: "As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."<sup>10</sup> Other of his sinister invitations included the following: "Come and I will give you letters, all properly sealed, by which even the sins that you intend to commit may be pardoned. . . . There is no sin so great, that an indulgence cannot remit."<sup>11</sup> Milner noted that "John Tetzel boasted, that he had saved more souls from hell by his indulgences, than St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching."<sup>12</sup>

So devastating was the effect of the sale of indulgences upon the spirituality of the people that Thomas Gascoigne, chancellor of Oxford, noted: "Sinners say nowadays: 'I care not how many evils I do in God's sight, for I can easily get plenary remission of all guilt and penalty by an absolution and indulgence granted me by the pope, whose written grant I have bought for four or six pence.'"<sup>13</sup> Erasmus (A.D. 1466–1536) confirmed the dire consequences of selling such indulgences and pardons: "Imagine here, if you please, some businessman or soldier or judge who thinks that if he throws into the collection basket one coin from all his plunder, the whole cesspool of his sinful life will be immediately wiped out . . . [and] he can start off once more on a whole new round of sinful pleasures."<sup>14</sup> No wonder Dean Colet of St. Paul's Cathedral observed that the church had been converted into a "money machine" and then, quoting Isaiah, he added, "The faithful city [referring to Rome] is become a harlot."<sup>15</sup>

Surprisingly, the concept underlying indulgences did not commence in the eleventh century. It began much sooner. The seeds were sown by the beginning of the third century. Hippolytus (A.D. 170–236) accused Callistus, the bishop of Rome who died about A.D. 222, of operating a deviant school of theology. Allegedly Callistus forgave all forms of sexual and other sins if the individual would attend his school. Hippolytus recorded:

And he first invented the device of conniving with men in regard of their indulgence in *sensual* pleasures, saying that all had their sins forgiven by himself. For he who is in the habit of attending the congregation of any one else, and is called a Christian, should he commit any transgression; the sin, they say, is not reckoned unto him, provided only he hurries off *and attaches himself* to the school of Callistus. And many persons were gratified with his regulation.<sup>16</sup>

Hippolytus further noted that even those who had been "forcibly ejected from the Church [excommunicated] . . . passed over to those *followers of Callistus*, and served to crowd his school."<sup>17</sup>

Paul understood there would be "spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Speaking of this wickedness, Dante wrote of that "miserable lot" who stole the things of God. On his journey through hell he saw such sinners stuck upside down in holes with their legs protruding—and "the soles of both feet blazed all in fire." He discovered that one sinner "who suffers so" was Nicholas III, pope from 1277 to 1280. Nicholas III confessed:

Once I was vested in the papal mantle,  
And truly I was a son of the she-bear,

So avid to advance my cubs that up there  
I pocketed the money and here, myself.  
Under my head have been dragged the others  
Who went, by way of simony, before me.

At first Nicholas III mistook the visit of Dante for Boniface VIII, the pope, who was expected in hell in the near future. The conversation is revealing:

Are you already standing there  
Are you already standing there, Boniface?  
By several years the record lied to me!  
Are you so quickly gluttoned with the wealth  
Which did not make you fear to take by guile  
The lovely lady [the church] and then lay her waste?

Nicholas further "prophesies" that the succeeding pope to Boniface, namely Clement V, was destined for a similar fate:

For after him [Boniface] will come one fouler in deeds,  
A lawless shepherd from the westward land,  
One fit to cover up both him and me.

Speaking of such popes, Dante wrote:

You are the shepherds the evangelist meant  
When he saw "she who sits upon the waters"  
Fornicating with the kings of the earth.<sup>18</sup>

William Manchester chronicled in careful detail the vices of the clergy in the ongoing church. One can only shake his head in dismay after reading the litany of decadent acts that saturated the clerical ranks:

At any given moment the most dangerous enemy in Europe was the reigning pope. It seems odd to think of Holy Fathers in that light, but the five Vicars of Christ who ruled the Holy See during Magellan's lifetime were the least Christian of men: the least devout, least scrupulous, least compassionate, and among the least chaste—lechers, almost without exception. Ruthless in their pursuit of political power and personal gain, they were medieval despots who used their holy office for blackmail and extortion. . . . Popes and cardinals hired assassins, sanctioned torture and frequently enjoyed the sight of blood. . . . Rome, the capital of Christendom, was the capital of sin, and the sinners included most of the Roman patriciate.<sup>19</sup>

Even taking into account the good and honorable clergy, one must wonder: "Would Christ allow his Church to be led by such men as described above?"<sup>20</sup>

Savonarola (A.D. 1452–1498) was a Dominican friar and passionate reformer who lived in the fifteenth century. Manchester wrote that Savonarola was "offended by Vatican orgies and Alexander's<sup>21</sup> celebrated collection of pornography.

The friar's protests took the form of annual "bonfires of the vanities" . . . where he tossed lewd pictures, pornography, personal ornaments, cards, and gaming tables on the flames. To his multitudes he would roar:

"Popes and prelates speak against pride and ambition and they are plunged into it up to their ears." The papal palace, he said, had literally become a house of prostitution where harlots "sit upon the throne of Solomon and signal to the passerby. Whoever can pay enters and does what he wishes."<sup>22</sup>

How haunting are the words of Nephi, who saw it all in vision: "I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and all manner of precious clothing; and I saw many harlots" (1 Nephi 13:7).

So widespread was the decadence that Savonarola noted: "Rome which should rule the world and impose silence on the evil, has herself slipped into the cesspool. . . . All goodness and virtue have disappeared. Nowhere is there a shining light."<sup>23</sup> It was indeed a day of darkness, a day of apostasy.

One monk, Abbot Johannes Trithemius of Sponheim, wrote of his own colleagues: "They neither fear nor love God; they have no thought of the life to come, preferring their fleshly lusts to the needs of the soul."<sup>24</sup> Another monk wrote, "Many convents . . . differ little from public brothels."<sup>25</sup> And the bishop of Torcello added: "The morals of the clergy are corrupt; they have become an offense to laity."<sup>26</sup> Speaking of the hypocrisy of his fellow monks and clergy, Savonarola added: "The clergy . . . take no interest in the salvation of souls. They speak against pride and worldly ambition, yet are plunged in both up to their eyes. They preach chastity and keep concubines. They prescribe fasting and gorge themselves on choice and expensive food."<sup>27</sup>

Erasmus wrote a satire, "The Praise of Folly," which rebuked his fellow priests for their un-Christlike behavior. Erasmus knew that if he told the truth outright, he would be declared a heretic and most likely would be burned at the stake, so he told his message through a fool. In his own words he expressed the underlying reason for doing so: "Quite right—kings do hate the truth. But my fools, on the other hand, have a marvelous faculty of giving pleasure not only when they speak the truth but even when they utter open reproaches, so that the very same statement which would have cost a wiseman his life causes unbelievable pleasure if spoken by a fool. . . . But the skill to manage this the gods have granted only to fools."<sup>28</sup>

Again and again, Erasmus cited the hypocritical conduct of his fellow priests: "These most agreeable fellows [monks], with their filth, ignorance, coarseness, impudence, re-create for us, as they say, an image of the apostles. . . . [Some] shrink from contact with money as if it were a deadly poison, but at the same time do not refrain from contact with wine and women. . . . As if the church had any more deadly enemies than impious popes, who allow Christ to fade away in silence, who bind him with mercenary laws, who defile him with forced interpretations, who murder him with the pestilent wickedness of their lives."<sup>29</sup> What a tragic commentary on one's colleagues. Yet Erasmus added:

It may happen, it often does happen, that an abbot is a fool or a drunkard. He issues an order to the brotherhood in the name of holy obedience. And what will such an order be? An order to observe chastity? An order to be sober? An order to tell no lies? Not one of these things. It will be that a brother is not to learn Greek; he is not to seek to instruct himself. He may be a sot. He may go with prostitutes. He may be full of hatred and malice. He may never look inside the scriptures. No matter. He has not broken any oath. He is an excellent member of the community.<sup>30</sup>

While Erasmus attacked the hypocrisy of the clergy at large, he also acknowledged that there were many good clerics: "I could give you a long list of theologians, men celebrated for their holy lives, men of extraordinary learning and of the very highest standing."<sup>31</sup> While Durant was likewise critical of the male clergy and acknowledged there were nuns who betrayed their oaths, he nonetheless paid tribute to the nuns

at large: "In one aspect the church was a continent-wide organization for charitable aid. . . . All nuns but a few human sinners devoted themselves to education, nursing and charity; their ever-widening ministrations are among the brightest and most heartening features of medieval and modern history."<sup>32</sup>

The Reformers, while recognizing there were some good clerics and nuns, were irate with the widespread wickedness they saw among much of the clergy, as evidenced by the following comment of Wycliffe:

They [the clergy] run fast, by land, and by water, in great peril of body and soul, to get rich benefices; but they will not knowingly go a mile to preach the gospel. . . . Since they so much love worldly riches, and labour for them night and day, in thought and deed, and labour so little for God's worship and the saving of Christian souls, who can excuse these covetous clerks from simony and heresy? Neither God's law, nor man's law, nor reason, nor good conscience. . . . They are angels of Satan to lead men to hell. . . . They hurt their parishioners in many ways—by example of pride, envy, covetousness and unreasonable vengeance—cruelly cursing for tithes and evil customs. . . . They are not angels of God but of the fiend.<sup>33</sup>

About five years after Wycliffe's death, John Huss, whose character was considered unimpeachable, condemned the existing clergy with this staggering rebuke:

Our bishops and priests of today and especially our cathedral canons, and lazy mass celebrators, hardly wait for the close of the service to hurry out the church, one part to the tavern and the other part hither and thither to engage in amusements unworthy of a priest. . . . Like Judas, who went away to the High Priest to sell Christ, many of our priests, profligate in their lives like beasts, run away from the table of God, the one to serve Mammon, the other wantonness, the one to the gaming table, the other to the dance or chase. . . . *And these very ones who ought to be leaders in imitating Christ are his chief enemies.*<sup>34</sup>

Luther was likewise harsh in his denunciation of the church's clergy:

What is the use in Christendom of the people called "cardinals"? I will tell you. In Italy and Germany there are many rich convents, endowments, fiefs, and benefices, and as the best way of getting these into the hands of Rome, they created cardinals, and gave them the sees, convents, and prelacies, and thus destroyed the service of God.<sup>35</sup>

Durant exposed the type of men who were selected as cardinals:

Cardinals were chosen rarely for their piety, usually for their wealth or political connections or administrative capacity; they looked upon themselves, not as monks burdened with vows, but as the senators and diplomats of a rich and powerful state . . . and they did not let their red hats impede their enjoyment of life. The Church forgot the poverty of the Apostles in the needs and expenses of power.<sup>36</sup>

It is a sad commentary on those who should have been the chosen vessels of the Lord. The secular had taken precedence over the spiritual, power had become more desired than divine submissiveness, and wealth more prized than salvation.<sup>37</sup> The lamentation of the Lord, as recorded by Malachi, seems to describe these dark days in the history of the ongoing church: "O priests, that despise my name" (Malachi 1:6). So depraved was Christianity as a whole that Luther made this startling admission:

I have sought nothing beyond reforming the Church in conformity with the Holy Scriptures. The spiritual powers have been not only corrupted by sin, but absolutely destroyed: so that there is now nothing in them

but a depraved reason and a will that is the enemy and opponent of God. *I simply say that Christianity has ceased to exist among those who should have preserved it.*<sup>38</sup>

Similar to the other Reformers, Calvin could not remain silent about what he saw. He wanted only to reform the church to its pristine condition: "All we have attempted has been to renew that ancient form of the church, which, at first sullied and distorted by illiterate men of indifferent character, was afterwards flagitiously mangled and almost destroyed by the Roman Pontiff and his faction."<sup>39</sup>

Then Calvin, in a letter of scathing denunciation to Cardinal James Sadolet, wrote the following:

I will not press you so closely as to call you back to that form which the Apostles instituted (*though in it we have the only model of a true church, and whosoever deviates from it in the smallest degree is in error*). . . . Men of all ranks know by experience that they [the clergy] are active only in robbing and devouring.

The letter continued:

It is scarcely possible that the minds of the common people should not be greatly alienated from you by the many examples of cruelty, avarice, intemperance, arrogance, insolence, lust, and all sorts of wickedness, which are openly manifested by men of your order, but none of those things would have driven us to the attempt which we made under a stronger necessity. *That necessity was, that the light of divine truth had been extinguished, the word of God buried, the virtue of Christ left in profound oblivion and the pastoral office subverted. Meanwhile impiety so stalked abroad, that almost no doctrine of religion was pure from admixture, no ceremony free from error, no part, however minute of divine worship untarnished by superstition.*<sup>40</sup>

Sickened by the depravity of the clergy at large, Savonarola, in a moment of righteous indignation, passionately condemned the clergy and simultaneously pled for Christ to "revive his church. The priests have withdrawn from God. . . . Their piety consists in spending their nights with harlots, and all their days chattering. . . . The Lord has given the Church beautiful vestments, but the clergy has made idols of them. . . . Once the Church was ashamed of her sins, but now she is shameless."<sup>41</sup> Shortly before his martyrdom, Savonarola added the following: "The Church is teeming with abominations from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet. Yet, not only do you apply no remedy, but you do homage to the cause of the woes by which she is defiled."<sup>42</sup> Such were the words of the man who sought only to return the church to the pure doctrine of the apostles and who prodded and pleaded with the church to care more charitably for the masses of its poverty-stricken laity. In return for his candid pleas and condemnations he was tortured, excommunicated, and finally burned at the stake.

Finally in A.D. 1522, a righteous pope, Adrian VI, had the courage to confess what was common knowledge among the laity:

We know well that for many years things deserving of abhorrence have gathered round the Holy See. *Sacred things have been misused, ordinances transgressed, so that in everything there has been a change for the worse.* Thus it is not surprising that the malady has crept down from the head to the members, from the popes to the hierarchy. *We all, prelates and clergy, have gone astray from the right way.* . . . Therefore . . . we shall use all diligence to reform before all else the Roman Curia, whence perhaps all these evils have had their origin. . . . The whole world is longing for such reform.<sup>43</sup>

The foregoing are tragic indictments of the church and its clergy. Does it seem plausible that God would allow men of this caliber, in these proportions, to be the chosen vessels of his Church? One cannot help but recall the words of Peter concerning Church leaders, namely, that they should be "ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3).<sup>44</sup>

One would expect in Christ's Church that errors and mistakes on the part of individual members and leaders would occasionally surface. What is alarming, however, is that the gross wickedness found in the ongoing church was not a series of a few isolated acts here and there. Rather it was manifested again and again and again; it was widespread and diffused throughout the clerical ranks with no less distinction than the lay membership, even attacking the papacy with horrendous impact. Under such circumstances one might appropriately ask, "How could these men teach the word of God in purity, or perform the sacred ordinances with divine approval, or walk as beacon lights to their sheep?" Speaking of individuals who engaged in conduct similar to that of the clergy just described, Theophilus of Antioch (A.D. second century) wrote, "To those who do these things God is not manifest."<sup>45</sup>

Of course there were good and honorable lay members and dedicated clergy who were true to their covenants and who rendered great charitable service, and popes who tried to live God-fearing lives,<sup>46</sup> just as there are today; but the wickedness, at least tolerated, oftentimes sponsored by the church, was so prodigious and prolonged for century after century that no honest person can sweep it under the rug and dismiss it with a shrug. These men, and in many cases women, were supposed to be God's chosen instruments on earth. One would not expect perfection of them, but one would expect them to be morally clean, to be humble, to be devoted to their flock. But the Mount Everest of evidence to the contrary is compelling.

Years before, the Lord had given the simple test for truth: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). Unfortunately, the fruits of the alleged priesthood were spoiled in large part. It was a far cry from what Peter had referred to as "an holy priesthood" and "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5, 9). It was another reminder that Christ's Church was not to be found on the earth.

#### Notes to Chapter 18: Tenth Evidence

1. Many Catholic historians prefer to call it the Catholic Reformation or Catholic Revival so as to avoid suggesting it was a counter-response to the Reformation. Instead, they see it as self-initiated before the Reformation began. In any event, this position does not dispute the need for reform but rather who instituted it, and when.
2. As quoted in Durant and Durant, *The Reformation*, 284.
3. As quoted in Durant and Durant, *The Reformation*, 530.
4. As quoted in Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, 85–86.
5. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, "Book of Martyrs," 375.
6. Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:29.
7. As quoted in Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 203–4. Milner gave this added description: "In the east, sinister designs, rancor, contentions and strife, were everywhere predominant. . . . In the west, the



bishops hung round the courts of princes and indulged themselves in every species of voluptuousness; while the inferior clergy and the monks were sensual, and by the grossest vices corrupted the people whom they were set to reform" (*Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 204).

8. Durant and Durant, *The Lessons of History*, 45.

9. B. H. Roberts noted, "It is maintained, however, in the decretal of Pope Clement VI, that, 'one drop of Christ's blood being sufficient to redeem the whole human race, the remaining quantity that was shed in the garden and upon the cross, was left as a legacy to the church to be a treasure from whence indulgences were to be drawn and administered by the Roman pontiffs'" (*Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 226, citing Maclain's note in Mosheim, volume 2, chapter 2).

10. Fosdick, *Martin Luther*, 63.

11. D'Aubigné, *The History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, 3:86.

12. Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ*, 4:315.

13. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 131.

14. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 64–65.

15. Olin, *The Catholic Reformation*, 31.

16. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:131.

17. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:131.

18. Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, "The Inferno," canto 19, lines 69–74, 52–57, 82–84, 106–8.

19. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 37, 74.

20. But William Manchester revealed yet more. He spoke of the lack of virtue among the clergy: "Celibacy yielded to widespread clerical concubinage and, in the convents, to promiscuity and homes for fatherless children born to women who had pledged their virtue as brides of Christ" (*A World Lit Only by Fire*, 41). Manchester then continued, "Virtually all German priests kept women. The Roman clergy had a reputation for promiscuity, 'but it is a mistake,' writes Pastor, 'to assume that the corruption of the clergy was worse in Rome than elsewhere; there is documentary evidence of the immorality of the priests in almost every town in the Italian peninsula.' . . . There was trouble in the convents, too. The problem seems to have been especially distressing in England. In 1520 eight nunneries there were closed, one because of 'the dissolute disposition and incontinence of the religious women of the house'" (*A World Lit Only by Fire*, 130). On another occasion William Manchester observed, "Archbishops, bishops—even lower orders of the clergy—grew fat and frequently supported concubines on their fees and tithes" (*A World Lit Only by Fire*, 133).

21. Alexander was the pope from A.D. 1492–1503.

22. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 43.

23. Van Paassen, *A Crown of Fire*, 34.

24. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 129.

25. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 129.

26. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 129.

27. Van Paassen, *A Crown of Fire*, 113.

28. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 56.

29. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 99, 113.

30. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly* (as cited in the afterword, 182). So rampant and well known was the hypocrisy of the clergy at large that Dante envisioned what he considered to be their fitting judgment:

They wore great mantles, with low-hanging hoods  
That hid their eyes, and fashioned with that cut  
Which Cluny's monks adopted for their habit.  
Their outer surface was of dazzling gold;  
Within, they were composed of lead so heavy  
That Frederick's might seem as straw besides them.  
O mantle, heavy through eternity!

(Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, "The Inferno," canto 23, lines 61–67.)

31. As recorded in a letter to Martin Dorp (1514), Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 153.

32. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 831.

33. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 13.

34. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 38; emphasis added.

35. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 110–11. Luther added, "Now there is such a swarm of vermin at Rome, all called papal, that Babylon itself never saw the like. There are more than three thousand papal secretaries alone; but who shall count the other office bearers, since there are so many offices that we can scarcely count them, and all waiting for German benefices, as wolves wait for a flock of sheep? . . . Who can suffer this and be silent about it?" (*Great Voices of the Reformation*, 112, 117).

36. Durant and Durant, *The Reformation*, 18.

37. So disgusted with the clergy was Luther that William Manchester wrote, "He [Luther] published a manifesto in Latin and German charging that the church founded by Jesus Christ had suffered a thousand years of imprisonment under the papacy, shackled and corrupted in morals and faith" (*A World Lit Only by Fire*, 167).

38. Schwiebert, *Luther and His Times*, 509. Luther advised his followers to renounce the pope or be denied salvation. Such action caused Will and Ariel Durant to write, "The monk . . . had excommunicated the pope" (as cited by Manchester in *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 159).

39. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 206.
40. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 206–8; emphasis added.
41. Savonarola continues his stinging rebuke and hell-fire condemnation as follows: "O you prostitute Church, you have displayed your vile nakedness to the whole world. You have multiplied your fornications in Italy, in France, in Spain and in all parts. . . . But the Lord will put forth his hand. Earth and heaven, the angels and the Saints accuse you and your house of shame. . . . O you priests and friars whose evil example has entombed the people in the sepulchre of ceremonial, I tell you the sepulchre shall burst asunder, for Christ will revive his church" (Van Paassen, *A Crown of Fire*, 238).
42. Van Paassen, *A Crown of Fire*, 267.
43. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 381; emphasis added.
44. See also Romans 11:16.
45. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:89.
46. Adrian VI, the only Dutch pope, tried to reform the clergy, but unfortunately he lived only one year after his election. William Manchester wrote, "He moved decisively to end the sale of indulgences, outlaw simony, cut the papal budget, and assure that only qualified candidates for the priesthood were ordained" (Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 195).

## 19

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## Eleventh Evidence: The Decline of Moral Standards and Loss of Church Discipline

Not only had wickedness infiltrated the clergy in significant proportions, but with the loss of Christ's Church there began a precipitous decline in moral standards among the lay membership. Simultaneously there was a decrease in ecclesiastical discipline, thus fostering additional laxity in morals. One can readily imagine what would happen to lawlessness if a country had laws but took no effort to enforce them. The church had laws against abortion, homosexuality, fornication, and the like, but with the passage of time there was little, if any, church discipline on these matters. As a consequence, immorality flourished, and the distinctive line that once separated the standards of the world from the standards of the church became blurred, until there was little, if any, distinction at all.

The early Christians lived in the world but were not part of it. James warned that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4).<sup>1</sup> Peter spoke of the Christian converts who had given up their past lives of "lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." He then noted the reaction of the world to such change in conduct: "They think it strange that ye run not with them to the same

excess of riot, speaking evil of you" (1 Peter 4:3–4).<sup>2</sup> And John commanded the Saints: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15).

*The Epistle to Diognetus* (second century) likewise observed the retreat of Christians from the world: "Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. . . . So Christians have their abode in the world, and yet they are not of the world."<sup>3</sup> The book of Hebrews speaks of those Saints who were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" and who desired "a better country, that is, an heavenly [country]" (Hebrews 11:13, 16). A. Cleveland Coxe also noted this distinctive Christian lifestyle: "The whole spirit of antiquity is opposed to *worldliness*. It reflects the precept, 'Be not conformed to this world.'"<sup>4</sup>

The early Christians had high moral standards that noticeably set them apart from the rest of the world. In speaking of non-Christians, Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) wrote:

You are accustomed in conversation yourselves to say, in disparagement of us, "Why is so-and-so deceitful, when the Christians are so self denying? Why merciless, when they are so merciful?" You thus bear your testimony to the fact that this is not the character of Christians, when you ask, in the way of retort, how men who are reputed to be Christians can be of such and such disposition.<sup>5</sup>

As further evidence of this distinction between the moral behavior of the world and that of Christians, Tertullian wrote, "The Christian is noted for his fidelity even among those who are not of his religion."<sup>6</sup>

Abortion and homosexuality were common practices in the Roman culture but were strictly abhorred by the early Church. Brothels and public baths for men and women were a common feature in the public sector, but fornication and adultery were condemned by the church in the strongest language. Paul taught: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind" (1 Corinthians 6:9).<sup>7</sup> In order to emphasize the denunciation of such behavior, Paul added, "Flee fornication. . . . He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).<sup>8</sup>

Not only had the Lord condemned fornication and adultery, but he further raised the bar for moral purity when he taught: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27–28). The moral standard was not to be measured by our deeds alone, but also by our thoughts. One of the crowning achievements of the early Church was its moral purity. In a treatise attributed to Cyprian, the following counsel was given: "I admonish you, that you should before all things maintain the barriers of chastity, as also you do: knowing that you are the temple of the Lord, the members of Christ, the habitation of the Holy Spirit."<sup>9</sup> Those standards set Christ's Church apart from the rest of the world. Cyprian noted: "The Church crowned with so many virgins, flourishes; and chastity and modesty preserve the tenor of their glory."<sup>10</sup> Moral purity was a viable hallmark of the primitive Church.

The Lord's standards for men's dress were previously discussed, namely, men were not to dress effeminately. The Lord also had a standard for women. Paul addressed the standard as follows: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel" (1 Timothy 2:9). Cyprian further discussed this issue of dress standards: "Continence and modesty consist not alone in purity of the flesh, but also in seemliness, as well as in modesty of dress and adornment; so that, according to the apostle, she who is unmarried may be holy both in body and in spirit."<sup>11</sup> It was a simple but understandable standard—not a Pharisaic list of dos and don'ts, but a guideline. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) gave the underlying reason for

such modesty: "Salvation—and not . . . of women only, but likewise of men—consists in the exhibition principally of modesty. . . . For . . . we are all 'the temple of God.'"<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, the time came when the standards of dress started to decline, and the fashion of the world infiltrated the church's ranks. Cyprian wrote: "Your shameful dress and immodest ornament accuse you; nor can you be counted now among Christ's maidens and virgins, since *you live in such a manner as to make yourselves objects of desire*. . . . For the fashion of this world passeth away."<sup>13</sup>

The world of entertainment for the early Christians presented challenges not dissimilar to today. Their "shows" of violence were chariot races and gladiatorial contests filled with combatants, wild animals, blood, and fights to the finish. Their "shows" of immorality were theatrical productions filled with profanity and lewdity. Church leaders warned against them time and time again. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200) wrote, "Let spectacles, therefore, and plays that are full of scurrility and of abundant gossip, be forbidden."<sup>14</sup> Tertullian was in accord:

Are we not, in like manner, enjoined to put away from us all immodesty? On this ground, again, we are excluded from the theatre, which is immodesty's own peculiar abode. . . . The very harlots, too, victims of the public lust, are brought upon the stage. . . . Is it right to look on what is disgraceful to do? How is it that the things which defile a man in going out of his mouth, are not regarded as doing so when they go in at his eyes and ears?<sup>15</sup>

Cyprian gave the reason such entertainment was so objectionable to the Christian: "Things which have now ceased to be actual deeds of vice become examples. . . . Adultery is learnt while it is seen. . . . The matron, who has perchance gone to the spectacle [theater] a modest woman, returns from it immodest. Still further, what a degradation of morals it is, what a stimulus to abominable deeds, what food for vice!"<sup>16</sup>

One of the signs of a true Christian was whether or not he participated in such entertainment. Tertullian noted, "Why, the rejection of these amusements is the chief sign to them that a man has adopted the Christian faith."<sup>17</sup>

The Church did not issue a detailed series of rules to compel moral behavior. It was obvious that the detailed and numerous rules of the Pharisees had been counterproductive to spiritual development. Instead, the Church gave general guidelines and principles that would help and encourage the Saints to live chaste lives, to dress modestly, to watch appropriate entertainment, to read uplifting literature, and to use godly language—in other words, to engage in those types of activities that would promote spirituality. Paul taught the doctrinal principle underlying the need for moral behavior: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; *for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).<sup>18</sup>

To assure adherence to the moral law, the Church disciplined offenders in order to protect the integrity of the Church and assist the transgressor in the repentance process (Matthew 18:15–18; 1 Corinthians 5:1–3). The early Church leaders knew that it was no act of charity to tolerate or endorse transgression under the guise of compassion.<sup>19</sup> That would be nothing more than a pseudo-compassion—a misguided compassion. It would be akin to the mother who claims she is compassionate because she never disciplines her children. In truth, she does them a terrible disservice. The Lord was clear on this point: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6).<sup>20</sup> The early Church leaders loved the transgressor, worked with him and encouraged him, but if he were unwilling to change, then these leaders took the appropriate disciplinary

action.<sup>21</sup> They knew that if they did not enforce the moral code, they would by default endorse an immoral one.

Cyprian spoke of the need for church disciplinary proceedings: "Neither can those remain in God's Church, who have not maintained its divine and ecclesiastical discipline, either in the conversation of their life or in the peace of their character."<sup>22</sup> Tertullian reaffirmed the need of the church to discipline transgressors: "And you have the most notable example of judgement to come when anyone has sinned so grievously as to require his severance from us in prayer, in the congregation, and in all sacred intercourse."<sup>23</sup> In *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century), this counsel was given to church leaders: "Eschew the atheistical heretics, who are past repentance, and separate them from the faithful, and excommunicate them from the church of God."<sup>24</sup> Excommunication could occur in the event of any serious transgression, such as immorality or heresy. Irenaeus (A.D. 115–202) wrote of one such case, "Having been denounced for corrupt teaching, he [Cerdon] was excommunicated from the assembly of the brethren."<sup>25</sup>

Speaking to the pagans, who had little, if any, disciplinary measures, Tertullian noted: "These evidences, then, of a stricter discipline existing among us, are an additional proof of truth from which no man can safely turn aside."<sup>26</sup> In other words, if the Christians did not discipline, they would be no better than the pagans. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened in the centuries following the death of the apostles. It also seems to have happened during the apostasy of Christ's Church in ancient America. Mormon wrote that there "were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more parts of his gospel, insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness" (4 Nephi 1:27), suggesting that they tolerated, even embraced, wickedness rather than discipline the offender.

While hopefully all Christian churches today would profess a belief against abortion, homosexuality, adultery, and fornication, which churches of today discipline those who violate such standards? If they do not, then their failure to act has condoned the very conduct they profess to disavow and thus compromised the integrity of the church. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*<sup>27</sup> recognized the consequences if the sinner was not disciplined: "Sin which passes without correction grows worse and worse, and spreads to others. . . . If, therefore, we neglect to separate the transgressor from the Church of God, we shall make the 'Lord's house a den of thieves.' For it is the bishop's duty not to be silent in the case of offenders."<sup>28</sup>

The Church was intended to be a spiritual hospital with spiritual physicians who could diagnose and heal the infirm. What kind of physician, after diagnosing severely constricted arteries in a man's heart, would then pat him on the back and say, "Have a good day. I'm sure everything will be all right." Now if that doctor were honoring his profession, he would tell his patient that there would be serious consequences, perhaps imminent death, if he did not make radical changes in his lifestyle. If he were smoking, he would need to cease immediately. If he were overweight, he would need to slim down. There may be a need to alter his diet and eat more sensibly. He may need to adopt an exercise program and stick with it. In addition, he may need bypass surgery. This would not be a time to be content with "Band-Aids and aspirin." Drastic action would be needed if the patient's life were to be saved.

Likewise, the spiritual cure for a serious spiritual ailment may require some drastic action—giving up some weaknesses, participating in a steady diet of scripture reading, adopting a program of charitable service, and, if needs be, submitting to spiritual surgery, perhaps in the form of disfellowshipment or excommunication.

Many of the churches of today would rather placate the patient than heal the patient, but it was not so in

Christ's original Church. The Church had spiritual physicians who were loving enough to prescribe the disciplinary remedy that was necessary to save the patient's spiritual life. Cyprian wrote candidly about the permissive physician: "For where can the medicine of indulgence profit, if even the physician himself, by intercepting repentance, makes easy way for new dangers, if he only hides the wound, and does not suffer the necessary remedy of time to close the scar? This is not to cure, but, if we wish to speak the truth, to slay."<sup>29</sup>

In time the moral conduct of the church had so declined that it was indistinguishable from the moral conduct of the world. The marriage of the church and the world had been consummated. They had become one and the same. It should be no surprise that church discipline as an ecclesiastical matter almost totally ceased; otherwise, the excommunication of a substantial portion of the church membership would have been required. When the moral behavior started to decline and no disciplinary procedures were enacted, there remained no ecclesiastical check and balance on man's natural passions and, accordingly, immorality swept the church. During the medieval era, Durant noted, "Premarital and extramarital relations were apparently as widespread as at any time between antiquity and the twentieth century; the promiscuous nature of man overflowed the dikes of secular ecclesiastical legislation."<sup>30</sup> Some have argued that the morals of the medieval age were no worse than any other period in society, but such a contention is to miss the mark. If the Church of Jesus Christ were the dominant force in society, then the morals should have been far superior to its worldly counterparts. But such was not the case.

Jacob Burckhardt, a noted historian of the Renaissance, explained the cause-and-effect relationship between the corruption of the ongoing church and the decline in spirituality and morality:

History does not record a heavier responsibility than that which rests upon the decaying church. She set up as absolute truth, and by the most violent means, a doctrine which she had distorted to serve her own aggrandizement. Safe in the sense of her own inviolability, she abandoned herself to the most scandalous profligacy, and, *in order to maintain herself in this state, she levelled mortal blows against the conscience* and the intellect of nations, and drove multitudes of the noblest spirits, whom she had inwardly estranged, into the arms of unbelief and despair.<sup>31</sup>

It was such a condition that triggered, in part, the Reformation.

Sadly, the church was no longer a moral beacon for the world, because it was no longer the Church of Jesus Christ. There was little, if any, difference between the morality of a Christian and pagan. The respected historian, Edwin Hatch, so noted: "The church was gradually transformed from being a community of saints—of men who were bound together by the bond of a holy life, separated from the mass of society, and in antagonism to it—to a community of men whose moral ideal and moral practice differed in but few respects from those of their Gentile neighbours."<sup>32</sup> If Christ's Church was the dominant force in society, then its moral standards, both in theory and in practice, should have been far superior to its worldly counterparts. But such was not the case.

If the Church of Jesus Christ had continued, the members' moral behavior would have been held up as "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). They would have been similar to the faithful Saints of Philippi, who, Paul observed, lived "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). In addition, if the Church had not been lost, loving discipline would have continued, reinforcing the standards of the Church, but it was not so. It was yet another clue that the church had gone awry.<sup>33</sup>

## Notes to Chapter 19:Eleventh Evidence

1. See also 2 Timothy 4:10.
2. See also 2 Peter 2:20.
3. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 254.
4. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:595.
5. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:113.
6. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:51. Adolf von Harnack observed that a distinctive trait of the early Christians that set them apart from the rest of society was their strict moral values: "The earliest Christians took up the struggle against the sins of impurity, which in the heathen world were not accounted sins at all. . . . Here . . . we get the measure of the renunciation of the world which this community imposed upon itself. 'To keep one-self unspotted from the world' was the asceticism which it [the Christian community] practised itself and required of its adherents" (*What Is Christianity?* 168).
7. See also Acts 15:20; Hebrews 13:4; Galatians 5:19, 21.
8. See also 1 Corinthians 10:8; Ephesians 5:3–5; Colossians 3:5.
9. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:588.
10. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:332. Then the same author made this beautiful observation: "Chastity is the dignity of the body, the ornament of modesty, the sacredness of the sexes, the bond of modesty, the source of purity, the peacefulness of home, the crown of concord" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:588).
11. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:431. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 160–200) wrote that a woman should not "be immodest or entirely gone in luxury" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:285) .
12. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:18.
13. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:432–33; emphasis added.
14. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:289.
15. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:86–87.
16. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:277. Commenting on the immorality of the theater, Lactantius (A.D. 250–325) wrote, "And what other effect do the immodest gestures of the players produce, but both teach and excite lusts? . . . Why should I speak of the actors of *mimes*, who hold forth instruction in corrupting influences, who teach adulteries while they feign them, and by pretended actions train to those who are true? What can young men or virgins do, when they see that these things are practised without shame, and willingly beheld by all. . . . And they approve of these things, while they laugh at them, and with vices clinging to them, they return more corrupted to their apartments" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:187). Tatian (A.D. 110–172) reprimanded the Greeks for their indecent plays and likewise spoke of the adverse affect they had upon their hearers: "They [the actors] utter ribaldry in affected tones, and go through indecent movements; your



daughters and your sons behold them giving lessons in adultery on the stage" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 2:75).

17. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:89.

18. See also 1 Corinthians 6:19.

19. See D&C 64:12–13.

20. See also Revelation 3:19.

21. The *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* describes the discipline imposed by the church for such behavior: "Its practitioners were debarred from the catechumenate [formal gospel instruction] by the church orders and condemned by councils from the early fourth century" ("Homosexuality," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 543).

22. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:325. Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) also wrote, "Let him [Felicissimus] receive the sentence which he first of all declared, that he may know that he is excommunicated by us; inasmuch as he adds to his frauds and rapines" (*The Ante-Nicene Father* 5:316).

23. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:46.

24. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:457. In addition, this same *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* spoke of someone who was guilty of sodomy or a man who was acting effeminately, and observed, "This sort of wickedness is hard to be washed away; and if they leave off those practices, let them be received; but if they will not agree to that, let them be rejected" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:495).

25. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:417.

26. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:264.

27. In *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) the following counsel is given to church leaders: "If thou seest any one past repentance, and he is become insensible, then cut off the incurable from the church, with sorrow and lamentation" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:415).

28. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:403.

29. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:309.

30. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 822. The Durants also added, "In all classes men and women were hearty and sensual; their festivals were feasts of drinking, gambling, dancing, and sexual relaxation; their jokes were of a candor hardly rivaled today" (*The Age of Faith*, 830).

31. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 341; emphasis added.

32. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, 339.

33. The restored church of Jesus Christ enacted moral standards that prohibited abortion, homosexuality, fornication, adultery, immodesty, and vulgarity, all of which clearly separated it from the accepted standards

of the world. Simultaneously, it adopted disciplinary procedures that were enacted to lovingly help transgressors repent but at the same time not permit a dilution of God's standards. It was all part of the restoration of Christ's primitive Church. See D&C 18:11–12; 42:20–26.

## 20

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# Twelfth Evidence: The Ongoing Church No Longer Bore Christ's Name

It seems intriguing, almost ironic, that from the time of the apostasy until the beginning of the nineteenth century no church was named after Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> With all the Christian churches that were created as a "spin off" of the Reformation, why did none of them think of calling themselves the "Church of Jesus Christ"? It seems such an obvious conclusion—if it were Christ's Church, it would be named after him. After all, we pray in the name of Christ, we perform ordinances in his name, we take upon us his name in the waters of baptism, we partake of the sacrament in remembrance of him, we acknowledge him as the chief cornerstone of the Church, and, most importantly, we are saved in and through his name. Why would we belong to a church with another name? Paul rebuked those who took upon them a name other than Christ's: "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, . . . that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:11–13).

Luther was rightfully concerned when his followers started to call themselves Lutherans. In response he pled with them:

I pray you leave my name alone and call yourselves not "Lutherans" but "Christians." Who is Luther? My teaching is not mine. I have not been crucified for anyone. . . . How then does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with them all; let us call ourselves only "Christians" after Him from whom our teaching comes!<sup>2</sup>

What a remarkable admission that the Church of Christ should be named after Christ! The early Christians knew the importance of attaching Christ's name to his Church. Ignatius (A.D. 35–107) taught, "Let us learn to live as beseemeth Christianity. For whoso is called by another name besides this, is not of God."<sup>3</sup> Origen (A.D. 185–255) specifically referred to "the Churches of Christ."<sup>4</sup> On other occasions he referred to it as "the Church of God."<sup>5</sup> Cyprian referred to the church as "the Church of Christ."<sup>6</sup> He also referred to it as "the Catholic Church,"<sup>7</sup> not as its official name, but in reference to its universal nature as one church comprised of many local congregations.<sup>8</sup>

Elder James E. Talmage noted: "There are churches named after their place of origin—as the Church of England; other sects are designated in honor of their famous promoters—as Lutherans, Calvinists, Wesleyans; others are known from some peculiarity of creed or doctrine—as Methodists, Presbyterians,

and Baptists;<sup>9</sup> but down to the beginning of the nineteenth century there was no church even claiming name or title as the Church of Christ."<sup>10</sup> Elder Talmage was a careful and brilliant scholar, but he did not have access to the wealth of information now made available by the computer. Accordingly, I asked Richard Holzapfel, a noted professor of history at Brigham Young University, if he could confirm Elder Talmage's conclusion. After extensive research he wrote back: "In the USA, it seems there was no organization using any form of the Lord's name as a title for their church [before the Church was restored in 1830]."<sup>11</sup> The closest names he found were (1) United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing (Shakers), (2) Church of the United Brethren in Christ (German Pietistic Group), and (3) Christian Quakers and Friends. Today there are churches with Christ's or God's name, but evidently they did not appear until *after* the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830.

In Book of Mormon times there arose a dispute concerning what the name of the Church ought to be. The Savior responded with some simple questions: "Why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing? Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name?" Then followed his indisputable logic: "And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel" (3 Nephi 27:4, 5, 8).<sup>12</sup>

The original Church was not called the Church of Peter, or the Pauline Church, or the Church of the Apostles; it was called after its founder, Jesus Christ, "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). If the Church had continued, it would have borne the name of Jesus Christ. The eventual loss of Christ's name was another indication that Christ's Church was lost from the earth.<sup>13</sup>

#### Notes to Chapter 20: Twelfth Evidence

1. One exception was the church in Book of Mormon times, which was either referred to as the *Church of God* or the *Church of Christ*.
2. Fosdick, *Martin Luther*, 174–75.
3. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 71.
4. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:285; 386, 387.
5. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:476.
6. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:325, 326, 333, 423, 424, 572. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* also speaks of "the church of Christ" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:405).
7. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:324, 327.
8. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:657, 661. An anonymous bishop of the third century wrote a treatise in which he referred to the church of Christ on multiple occasions.
9. To this, of course, might be added Seventh Day Adventists or Pentacostals.

10. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy*, 158.

11. Recorded in an e-mail sent to the author on March 12, 2004.

12. When Alma instituted the church shortly after the death of Abinadi, it was appropriately "called the church of God, or the church of Christ" (Mosiah 18:17).

13. The restored Church is referred to as "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" to distinguish it from the Church of Jesus Christ that existed in the meridian of time.

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### Thirteenth Evidence: The Priesthood Was Lost

#### What Is the Priesthood and Its Purpose?

The priesthood is the power to act for God and perform his work as though he himself were present. When the Savior commissioned his apostles "he gave them power" (Matthew 10:1), and when he called the seventy he said, "I give unto you power" (Luke 10:19)—meaning, he gave to them the priesthood. So recognizable was this power that Simon the sorcerer, who had been baptized but lacked the power to lay on hands, inappropriately offered money to Peter, "saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:19). Peter then gave this stinging rebuke: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou has thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20).

On occasion I have had a client leave the country. Before doing so, he would give to me a power of attorney that authorized me to do the very things he would do if he were here. The priesthood is like a spiritual power of attorney given by God to mortals. With this power a man can teach with authority, heal the sick, perform miracles, administer the saving ordinances, and regulate the affairs of the Church, just as the Savior would do if he were present. Thus, the priesthood becomes a form of divine investiture of authority by which the acts and words of the priesthood bearer become the acts and words of the Savior.

In a sense, the priesthood is the power to think God's thoughts, to speak his words, and to be his hands. So literal is the power to think his thoughts that the Savior said, "Speak *the thoughts that I shall put into your hearts*, and you shall not be confounded before men" (D&C 100:5).<sup>1</sup>

So literal is the power to speak his words that the Lord said, "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, . . . whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, *it is the same*" (D&C 1:38). On another occasion, he said, "For his [Joseph Smith's] word ye shall receive, *as if from mine own mouth*" (D&C 21:5). And on yet another occasion the Savior prophesied that his disciples would bear testimony before governors and kings, and then informed them that "it is not ye that speak, but *the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you*" (Matthew 10:20). President Joseph F. Smith taught: "The Holy Priesthood is that authority which God has delegated to man by which he may speak the will of God as if the angels were here

to speak it themselves."2

So literal is the power to be God's hands that when Edward Partridge was called to be a missionary, the Lord said regarding his setting apart, "And I will lay *my* hand upon you by the hand of my servant Sidney Rigdon" (D&C 36:2).

Each time a worthy priesthood bearer gives a blessing or performs an ordinance, he is entitled to think God's thoughts, to speak his words, and to be his hands. In this regard, President Joseph F. Smith elaborated: "When a man who holds the Priesthood does that which is righteous, God is bound to acknowledge it as though he had done it Himself."3

Worthy priesthood bearers speak with the power of God. This distinguishes them from their counterfeiters. When the Savior concluded the Sermon on the Mount, the people were astonished because "he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29). It was not just what he said, but how he said it that was important. Luke noted of the apostles that they had been given "great power . . . of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ: and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33). So bold and powerful was the speech of Peter and John that the chief rulers of the Jews "marvelled" because they "perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13).

The sacred power of the priesthood, however, was not reserved for the original Twelve Apostles alone. The scriptures record that there were "certain of the synagogue" who disputed with Stephen but "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:10). After Paul's conversion, the scriptures record that he "increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews" (Acts 9:22). Paul was so powerful in his delivery before King Agrippa that the king responded, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). On one occasion, Nephi spoke with such commanding force that the disbelievers "were angry with him, even because he had greater power than they, *for it were not possible that they could disbelieve his words*" (3 Nephi 7:18).

Men who held the priesthood taught the gospel truths with a persuasive and piercing power that "carrieth it unto the hearts of the children of men" (2 Nephi 33:1). It was as though their words were spiritual missiles launched with laser precision to the center of the soul. There were simply no counter defenses, no mortal shield, no strategic stronghold that could deter their advance. Their impact left no doubt—these men of God spoke the truth. The power of their message was their spiritual calling card attesting that they were chosen emissaries of Christ's Church.

Armed with the power of God these priesthood men accomplished at least four purposes: first, they taught the word of God with power; second, they performed the sacred ordinances with divine validity; third, they governed the affairs of the Church in an orderly way; and fourth, they administered blessings to the human family. This priesthood power is the heart of the Church—it pumps life into every organ of the body. Take it away, and the teachings lack power; the ordinances lack validity; the administration lacks direction; and the Church lacks its full ability to bless. Without the priesthood, the Church is no more than another man-made institution—a worthy service club of sorts, but it has no power to save.

Who Held the Priesthood?

There are many sincere people who are non-Christians, but sincerity alone does not make them eligible for the saving powers of Christ's atonement. They must also have faith in Jesus Christ and be obedient to his

commandments. Likewise, there are many sincere Christians, but sincerity alone does not mean they hold the priesthood. They must also be called of God and be ordained by the laying on of hands. Sincerity in and of itself does not give a private citizen the power to arrest another. The world understands that there must be an order to things; otherwise, chaos reigns—and so it is with the priesthood of God.

The Lord declared how priesthood power is dispensed: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16). Accordingly, two elements must be present: first, God must choose, and second, the chosen man must be ordained by someone else who holds the priesthood.<sup>4</sup> Self-appointment is not a hallmark of Christ's Church. The book of Hebrews declared: "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4). In making reference to this scripture, *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) stated: "For we have affirmed only that no one snatches the sacerdotal dignity to himself, but either receives it from God, as Melchisedec and Job, or from the high priest, as Aaron from Moses."<sup>5</sup> This ancient book then describes the punishment of those who disregard the holy order of things: "But a person to whom such an office is not committed, but he seizes it for himself, he shall undergo the punishment of [Uzzah]."<sup>6</sup>

*The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* addressed this point further: "If, therefore, Christ did not glorify Himself without the Father, how dare any man thrust himself into the priesthood who has not received that dignity from his superior, and do such things which it is lawful only for the priests to do."<sup>7</sup> This book elaborated even further on the inappropriateness of someone claiming the priesthood on his own: "To be a Christian is in our own power; but to be an apostle, or a bishop, or in any other such office, is not in our own power, but at the disposal of God, who bestows the gifts."<sup>8</sup>

When Paul passed through the upper coasts of Ephesus, he asked certain disciples who had been baptized if they had received the Holy Ghost. They responded, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." No doubt surprised by their response, he further inquired, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" They replied, "Unto John's baptism." But Paul knew this could not be correct, for John and his disciples always taught that their baptisms would be followed by the Holy Ghost. Recognizing they had been baptized by someone without the proper authority, Paul rebaptized these disciples "in the name of the Lord Jesus" and then "laid his hands upon them" so they might receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 19:2–6). As sincere as those former disciples may have been who baptized in John's name, Paul knew that sincerity was not enough—it was no substitute for being called and ordained to the work.<sup>9</sup> Elder Jeffrey R. Holland observed: "When that priesthood was gone, not one single, solitary ordinance of the gospel could efficaciously or redemptively be administered, no matter how honest and earnestly seeking those men . . . were."<sup>10</sup>

Cyprian spoke of heretics, no doubt some of whom were sincere, who believed in Jesus and even baptized in his name, but whose baptisms were invalid. Why? Because such heretics lacked the divinely given power to baptize. Cyprian so wrote: "And therefore heretics, *who neither have power without*, nor have the Church of Christ, are able to baptize no one with His baptism."<sup>11</sup> That is why Cyprian was so insistent that "heretics who come to the Church [even if they had previously been baptized in the name of Jesus] must be baptized and sanctified by the baptism of the Church."<sup>12</sup> Sincerity is not enough, good intentions are not enough, self-appointment is not enough to govern and regulate Christ's Church. One must be called of God and be properly ordained to hold Christ's priesthood and exercise his power.

The leaders of the early Church were good, humble men chosen from all walks of life, whom God could mold and train. They were not professional clergy or schooled theologians. To the contrary, they were lay

ministers chosen from among the common people. Peter was a fisherman, Matthew a tax collector, and Paul a tentmaker.<sup>13</sup>

Origen (A.D. 185–255) noted that the explosive growth of the Church was attributable to this lay ministry: "This result [rapid growth] is the more surprising, that even the teachers of it themselves neither were men of skill [men of letters], nor very numerous."<sup>14</sup> Slowly, this unpaid ministry disappeared, and eventually a paid ministry of professional clergy filled the void.<sup>15</sup>

Not only did a professional clergy infiltrate the ranks of the church, but over time certain churches allowed women to hold the priesthood. There is not a single reference in the scriptures to a woman holding the priesthood. In fact, the qualifications of a bishop and deacon refer to such a chosen leader being "the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2). Note, it does not say the "wife of one husband" or use the neutral language "the spouse of one spouse." Priesthood leaders were men. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* addressed the concern that women were being permitted to perform priesthood functions such as baptism: "Now, as to women's baptizing, . . . we do not advise you to it; for it is dangerous, or rather wicked and impious."<sup>16</sup>

On one occasion Paul taught, "It is a shame for women to speak in the church." Fortunately, the Prophet Joseph Smith corrected this to read, "It is a shame for women to *rule* in the church" (JST 1 Corinthians 14:35). Women may and do speak in the Church, but they do not rule or preside by exercising priesthood authority. Men and women are of equal import in God's eyes, but each is given a different role in building the kingdom. Men are given the role to exercise the priesthood and to preside; women are given other key responsibilities in the Church, as well as the divine role to bear and nurture children. Unfortunately, with the apostasy, men changed this order of things. Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) observed: "How many men, therefore, and how many women, in Ecclesiastical Orders, owe their position to continence, who have preferred to be wedded to God."<sup>17</sup> The eventual consequence of this change was no less than a double heresy—women ruling in the church, and women purposefully abstaining from marriage.

In the early days of the Church, the members loved their priesthood leaders. They were good and noble men. The Saints revered them and rejoiced in seeing them. They welcomed them into their homes. They eagerly sought their counsel and benefited from their blessings. But with the passage of time it was less and less so. The layman who was initially called of God was replaced in many cases by the professional hireling. The respect and love of the people changed to disdain for the clergy at large. In this regard, one Catholic historian, Ludwig Pastor, wrote, "No wonder, as contemporary writers sadly testify, the influence of the clergy has declined, and in many places hardly any respect was shown for the priesthood." Then he added, "The contempt and hatred of the laity for the degenerate clergy . . . was no mean factor in the great apostasy."<sup>18</sup> Savonarola (A.D. 1452–1498) noted of the clerics in his day: "[It] is not surprising, to despise a clergy which itself disregarded the commandments of Christ."<sup>19</sup> Erasmus (A.D. 1466–1536) felt similarly: "For even though everyone despises this breed of men [monks] so thoroughly that even a chance meeting with one of them is considered unlucky, still they maintain a splendid opinion of themselves."<sup>20</sup> If the priesthood had continued, the clergy would have been worthy vessels, and the common people would have had great respect for them. But such, as a general rule, was not the case because the priesthood was absent from the earth.

What Are the Keys of the Priesthood?

The keys of the priesthood are the rights of presidency. They are the right to direct how and when certain

powers of the priesthood should be used. Each righteous priesthood bearer has certain inherent powers of the priesthood that are not subject to keys. In other words, when a man receives the priesthood he receives the right to use certain powers according to his own righteous discretion. This includes the power to give priesthood blessings to his family or those in need. It includes the power to administer to the sick, and the power to dedicate his home. There are other priesthood powers, however, that may not be utilized without the approval of those who hold priesthood keys. For example, one cannot baptize, one cannot confirm, one cannot ordain without authorization from the one who holds the keys to direct such work. It is like having a car with a powerful engine but being unable to activate it without the keys.

Today these priesthood keys are held by prophets and apostles, stake presidents, bishops, quorum presidents, mission presidents, and temple presidents. The Savior personally gave these keys to Peter: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:19). He then explained the power and purpose behind these keys: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18).

Why, then, may some powers of the priesthood be exercised without keys and certain others only after the appropriate key or approval is given? It is a matter of order in God's Church. Those ordinances that require supervision of multiple priesthood bearers (such as the sacrament), or those that must be recorded on the records of the Church (such as blessing babies, baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, and temple work), need to be regulated by someone who holds the keys to insure that they are orderly and properly performed, and where appropriate, witnessed and recorded on the records of the Church. In addition, the saving and exalting ordinances must be supervised by someone who holds the keys to insure that they are performed in the Lord's designated way.

No doubt Ignatius (A.D. 35–107) recognized this when he wrote to the Smyrnaeans: "It is not lawful apart from the bishop . . . to baptize, . . . but whatsoever he shall approve, this is well pleasing also to God; that everything which ye do may be sure and valid." Then he warned against performing ordinances without the approval of those who hold the keys: "He that doeth aught without the knowledge of the bishop rendereth service to the devil."<sup>21</sup> Likewise Hippolytus (A.D. 170–236) understood the necessity of keys, for he taught that deacons could distribute the sacrament only with the approval of the appropriate priesthood leaders: "A deacon may dispense the Eucharist to the people with permission of a bishop or presbyter."<sup>22</sup> The keys are the right to govern; they are an indispensable element of order; they are essential to administering the Lord's Church.

### What Happened to the Priesthood and Its Keys?

With the death of the apostles there were still men holding the priesthood upon the earth, but they did not hold the necessary keys to perpetuate the priesthood. Without the apostles and the keys they held, the course of priesthood extinction was unalterably fixed.<sup>23</sup> That is why we no longer hear references to the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods within a short time following the Savior's ascension. After the death of the apostles the priesthood soon vanished. Roger Williams (A.D. 1603–1683), the founder of Rhode Island and a strong proponent of religious freedom, sensed something was missing in his day and age: "The Apostasy . . . hath so far corrupted all [Christian churches], that there can be no recovery out of that apostasy until Christ shall send forth new apostles to plant churches anew."<sup>24</sup> At one point, he declined to continue as pastor of the Baptist Church because there was "no regularly constituted church on earth, *nor any person qualified to administer any church ordinance; nor can there be until new apostles are sent*



*by the Great Head of the Church for whose coming I am seeking.*"<sup>25</sup> In this priesthood vacuum Charles Wesley, the brother of John Wesley (A.D. 1703–1791), who founded Methodism, recognized that men were taking divine authority upon themselves. They were in effect nullifying God's mandate: "Ye have *not* chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16). After John Wesley ordained Thomas Coke a "superintendent" to administer the sacraments to the Methodists, his brother Charles wrote:

So easily are Bishops made  
By man's or woman's whim?  
W[esley], his hands on C[oke] hath laid,  
But who laid hands on Him?<sup>26</sup>

Such a state of affairs, as referred to by Charles Wesley, is not unlike the ancient Hindu legend that tells of a man discoursing on the earth's suspension in the universe. At one point a curious listener asked, "What holds up the earth?" The speaker replied, "An elephant." The thoughtful listener reflected for moment and then inquired, "But who holds up the elephant?" The speaker responded, "A giant tortoise." Somewhat mystified, the listener retorted, "Well, who holds up the tortoise?" The speaker, obviously annoyed, replied, "Let's change the subject." Charles Wesley recognized that those who were ordained in his day could not trace their priesthood lineage back to the Savior. If asked to do so, they would be forced at some point to say, "Let's change the subject." Without direct priesthood lineage to the Savior, there can be no authority of the Savior.

About 537 B.C. Cyrus, the Persian king, liberated the Jews from captivity and sent them back to Jerusalem to build a temple. Ezra identified the families that returned to help in the building process. He also noted that there existed certain descendants of priests who could no longer trace their genealogy (their priesthood lineage); they therefore were denied the priesthood: "These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood [removed from the priesthood]" (Ezra 2:62). In other words, if they could not trace their priesthood lineage, they were deemed not to hold it. One power line may look like all others, but if it does not extend back to the power plant, it has no power. It matters not if a man claims to hold the priesthood of God; if his priesthood lineage does not trace back to the Savior, he has no priesthood power.

Frances A. Sullivan, a Catholic professor of theology, extensively researched this issue of apostolic succession and made this honest admission: "One conclusion seems obvious: Neither the New Testament nor early Christian history offers support for a notion of apostolic succession as an 'unbroken line of episcopal ordination from Christ through the apostles down through the centuries to the bishops of today.'"<sup>27</sup> Simply stated, there was no ongoing succession of priesthood from the days of the primitive Church. At some point the priesthood line was severed, and the priesthood was lost.<sup>28</sup>

It is not enough to hear a voice or have a vision or feel an urging or be a political appointee. God's Church is a church of order. One must be called of God and ordained by the laying on of hands. There are no exceptions. The author of Hebrews wrote, "No man taketh this honour [the priesthood] unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron" (Hebrews 5:4). Aaron was called by the man holding the keys (Moses) and ordained to the priesthood by the laying on of hands (Exodus 28:1; 29:7). Likewise, the apostles were ordained to their callings (Acts 1:22); Titus was ordained a bishop;<sup>29</sup> high priests were ordained to their office (Hebrews 5:1; 8:3);<sup>30</sup> and so it must be with every man who receives the priesthood of God. Any man who currently holds the priesthood in the restored Church of God—if asked to trace his line of

priesthood authority—will never have to say, "Let's change the subject," because each man's priesthood lineage will take him back directly to the Savior himself.

The loss of the priesthood did not mean the ongoing church did not have some truth—it did, but understandably it was only the equivalent of a dim candle light. Certainly that was better than having no light at all, but it was far shy of what was available in Christ's primitive Church. Honest searchers after truth were groping in darkness, unable to find the truths that had been lost or corrupted in the great apostasy. Fortunately, with the advent of the Reformers and finally the Restorers, the bright light of the gospel was restored.

With the Loss of the Church, Was the Priesthood Lost in Its Entirety?

Some years ago in a general conference session, President J. Reuben Clark made a statement that startled a number of people. He said, "It is my faith that the gospel plan has always been here, *that his priesthood has always been here on the earth*, and that it will continue to be so until the end comes."<sup>31</sup> When the conference session was over, Elder Harold B. Lee observed that there were some who said, "My goodness, doesn't President Clark realize that there have been periods of apostasy following each dispensation of the gospel?" Elder Lee said he then walked over to the Church Office Building with Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, who commented, "I believe there has never been a moment of time since the creation that God has abandoned the earth to Satan. There has always been someone holding the priesthood on the earth to hold Satan in check." Then Elder Lee noted that translated beings, such as John the Revelator and the three Nephite disciples, were capable of performing this function:

Why were they translated and permitted to tarry? For what purpose? An answer was suggested when I heard President Smith . . . make the above statement. Now, that doesn't mean that the kingdom of God has always been present, *because these men did not have the authority to administer the saving ordinances of the gospel to the world*. But these individuals were translated for a purpose known to the Lord. There is no question but what they were here.<sup>32</sup>

Evidently the priesthood has always been on the earth. At certain times of apostasy, translated beings who held the priesthood were commissioned to prevent Satan from completely overrunning the earth. While these translated beings<sup>33</sup> were not authorized to perform the saving ordinances at large (since Christ's Church was not on the earth), they nonetheless had the power to keep Satan "at bay." Absent all priesthood presence, the world would seemingly have been subject to Satan's unrestrained evil. There would have been no mercy, no survivors, no beauty—only a trail of carnage and destruction at every turn. Satan's strangling, suffocating spell would have cast a gloom over the entire earth like an ominous cloud, until it eventually enveloped and consumed every breath of fresh air, stamped out every ray of hope, silenced every melodious sound, and shattered every shred of love. The Dark Ages would have been much worse—even a period of black ages.

Notes to Chapter 21: Thirteenth Evidence

1. See also Matthew 10:19.
2. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 140.
3. *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, 139.

4. Lactantius (A.D. 250–325) spoke of the need for a man to be ordained in order to be an authorized representative of Christ. Speaking of the forty-day period immediately following Christ's resurrection, he said, "He [Christ] opened their [the apostles'] hearts, interpreted to them the Scripture, which hitherto had been wrapped up in obscurity, ordained and fitted them for the preaching of His word" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:301). Speaking of bishops, *The Constitutions of Holy Apostles* noted, "Let examination be made when he is to receive ordination" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:396). See also D&C 42:11.
5. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:500.
6. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:429. Uzzah (also spelled Uzza) was struck dead for attempting to steady the ark of God, which was to be transported and touched only by those holding the priesthood.
7. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:410.
8. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:480.
9. See also Acts 8:15, 17.
10. Seminar for New Mission Presidents, June 27, 2002.
11. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:572; emphasis added.
12. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:565.
13. See Acts 20:33–34; 1 Corinthians 4:12; 2 Corinthians 11:9.
14. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:350.
15. As to the professional clergy, Paul warned, "Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, *for filthy lucre's sake*" (Titus 1:11). *The Didache* (A.D. 80–140), in referring to the apostles, speaks of the need for the members to house and feed them but then adds, "but if he ask money, he is a false prophet" (*The Apostolic Fathers*, 127).
16. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:429.
17. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 4:58.
18. As quoted by Will and Ariel Durant in *The Age of Faith*, 21, 24.
19. Van Paassen, *A Crown of Fire*, 104.
20. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, 98.
21. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 84. *The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* (c. third or fourth century) noted, "Do nothing without the bishop; for if any one does anything without the bishop, he does it to no purpose" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:410).
22. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:257. A presbyter in the early church was generally considered to be an elder, or perhaps in later years a priest.

23. President Joseph F. Smith, in explaining the offices of the priesthood, wrote, "There is no office growing out of this Priesthood that is or can be greater than the Priesthood itself. . . . If it were necessary, though I do not expect the necessity will ever arise, and there was no man left on earth holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, except an elder—that elder, by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, and by the direction of the Almighty, could proceed and should proceed, to organize the Church of Jesus Christ in all its perfection, because he holds the Melchizedek Priesthood" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 148). The Lord, however, did not see fit to direct the reorganization of his church at this time—no doubt because of widespread wickedness and heresies.

24. Cited in Anderson, *Apostasy or Succession, Which?* 9.

25. Petersen, *The Great Prologue: A Prophetic History of America*, 4; emphasis added. Harry Emerson Fosdick wrote that Roger Williams was "now satisfied that there was none upon earth that could administer baptism, and so that their *last*, as well as their *first*, was a *nullity*, for the want of a *called administration*, he advised them therefore to . . . wait for the coming of *new apostles*" (*Great Voices of the Reformation*, 391).

26. Wesley, *Representative Verse of Charles Wesley*, 368.

27. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops*, 15–16.

28. The Church of England is a classic case in point. Pursuant to the dictates of King Henry VIII, the English parliament passed the Act of Supremacy in 1534. This terminated ties to the pope and declared the king as the supreme ruler of the church in England. It was astonishing—no hands were laid on his head, no priesthood lineage, no divine call, no spiritual origin. It was, in truth, a political coup to allow King Henry to divorce Queen Catherine and marry Anne Boleyn, and from this was allegedly fashioned the new Church of Christ.

29. The footnote to Titus chapter 3 of the King James Version of the Bible reads, "It was written to Titus, ordained the first bishop of the church of the Cretians."

30. These scriptures refer to high priests of the Aaronic Priesthood, not Melchizedek Priesthood, but the point remains the same—they had to be ordained to hold their priesthood office.

31. Conference Report, October 1953, 39; emphasis added.

32. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 485–86; emphasis added.

33. See also John 21:22; 3 Nephi 28; JST Genesis 14:25–36.

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The evidence has been submitted. The issue is before us: Was Christ's Church taken from the earth, or did it continue in its pristine state? The Savior himself gave the test for truth: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).<sup>1</sup> In summation, one might ask, "What were the fruits of the ongoing church? Did they parallel the fruits of the original Church?" Perhaps the following questions will reveal the answer.

If Christ's Church continued, where were the apostles who were the stabilizing and unifying power of the Church? Why all the scriptures and prophecies about an apostasy if there were no such event? Why did the Bible end if revelation from heaven continued? What happened to the miracles, prophecies, and revelations that were so abundant in Christ's Church? Why a period of dark ages if Christ and his gospel were the light of the world? What happened to the doctrines of premortal existence, postmortal evangelism, proxy baptism, and eternal marriage? Why did they vanish from the canon of the ongoing church when they appeared in the canon of the New Testament? Why were the pure and simple ordinances of the gospel, such as baptism by immersion and the sacrament, tampered with and altered from their original forms? Where in the scriptures did the Lord announce the doctrine of infant baptism or sprinkling or transubstantiation? Why was the divine manner of prayer altered from pouring out one's heart in petitions to God to reciting memorized prayers in petition to Saints? Why were the scriptures—the spiritual lifeline of man—removed from the layman's access and sequestered in the hands of the clergy? In referring to the clergy, why would John Huss, expressing the sentiments of his fellow reformers, say, "And these very ones who ought to be leaders in imitating Christ are his chief enemies?"<sup>2</sup> Why did the moral standards of the church decline and eventually become no better than the standards of the world? Where is the evidence that the priesthood continued in the ongoing church, blessing the lives of the people and being administered by men of God?

How many question marks can the honest searcher endure before recognizing that the Church of Jesus Christ was taken from the earth? Some people need only a toothpick on the shoulder to get their attention; others need a two by four. At some point, if we fail to accept the truth before us, we become subject to the criticism leveled by Winston Churchill about an earlier prime minister: "Occasionally he stumbled over the truth, but hastily picked himself up and hurried on as if nothing had happened."<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the answers to the foregoing questions, many people in the ongoing church maintained a belief in Jesus Christ as the Savior and Redeemer of the world and even gave their lives for their testimonies. There were also honorable priests and nuns who sacrificed their lives to bless their fellowmen. While the ongoing church did not disseminate the scriptures among its lay membership, it at least preserved them. We are thankful for these positive contributions, but these acts alone do not make it the Church of Jesus Christ.

Jordan Vajda, a Catholic priest who joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, shared this wonderful perspective:

I can now say that I have experienced the Holy Spirit's confirming witness in my life that the LDS Church is true, and I cannot deny my conscience. I have no doubts or hesitations about my new-found faith in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Having said that, though, I in no way deny the beauty or truthfulness that can be found in the Catholic Church; I remain grateful for my Catholic heritage and upbringing. *What I have found in the LDS Church is a fulness, not a monopoly.*<sup>4</sup>

Suppose you were given a blueprint of the White House. How many other buildings in the world would it fit? Even though there are millions of buildings in the world, and some may have a similarity here or there, there is only one building that will match it—the White House. The blueprint for the original Church of Jesus Christ is found in the Bible and confirmed by many of the early Christian writers. The ongoing church that supplanted

Christ's Church had a few similarities, but there was no mistaking it with the original blueprint. The Church of Jesus Christ in its fulness had been lost from the earth.

The respected theologian and historian, Adolf von Harnack, wrote candidly of the changes made by the ongoing church: "What modifications has the Gospel here undergone and how much of it is left? Well—this is not a matter that needs many words. . . . *It is a case, not of distortion, but of total perversion.*"<sup>5</sup>

The apostasy had taken its terrible toll, and only a restoration could remedy it. Following is a chart summarizing some of the original doctrines and ordinances that were perverted as a result of the apostasy, and thus needed to be restored in their pristine condition:

<u>The Original Doctrine As Taught By Christ</u>	<u>Perversions of the Doctrine As a Result of the Apostasy</u>	<u>Scriptures Supporting Original Doctrines</u>
<b>Nature of God:</b> The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three distinct personages, but one in goal and unity; the Father and Son have glorified bodies of flesh and bones, the Holy Ghost is a spirit - personage.	<b>Nature of God:</b> The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate entities, yet mysteriously they are also one substance; each of the members of the Godhead is a spirit without a physical body.	Genesis 1:26; 5:3; 32:30; Matthew 3:16–17; 12:32; 27:46; Luke 24:39; John 5:30; 14:28; 17:21; Acts 7:55–56; Romans 6:9; 1 Corinthians 3:8–9; 15:24–25; Hebrews 1:3; James 2:26; D&C 130:22–23; JS–History 1:16–17
<b>Premortal Existence:</b> Men and women lived in God’s presence as his spirit children before they were born in mortality.	<b>Premortal Existence:</b> This doctrine was lost.	Job 38:4, 7; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Jeremiah 1:5; John 3:13; 9:1–2; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 3:15; 2 Timothy 1:9; Jude 1:6; Revelation 12:4–7; Alma 13:1–9
<b>The Fall of Adam:</b> Adam and Eve lived in a state of innocence in the Garden of Eden and would have had no children there. The Fall was necessary for them to have children and to gain knowledge so they could become more like God.	<b>The Fall of Adam:</b> If Adam and Eve had not transgressed they would have had children in the Garden of Eden and lived happily ever after.	2 Nephi 2:23; Moses 5:11
<b>Grace and Works:</b> We are saved by grace after all we can do.	<b>Grace and Works:</b> While Catholics believe in some form of works, most Protestants believe we are saved by grace alone (works are an evidence of our salvation, not a condition to it).	Matthew 7:21–27; 10:22; 24:13; John 5:29; Romans 2:6; 2:13; Philippians 2:12; Titus 2:14; James 2:17, 19–20; 1 Peter 2:15; 1 John 2:4–5; Revelation 3:2, 4; 14:14; 20:13; 2 Nephi 25:23
		Genesis 17:1; Psalm 82:1, 6; Matthew 5:48; John 10:32–34;

**Deification:** Man is a spirit child of God and therefore through the grace of Jesus Christ has the capability of becoming a god.

**Baptism:** Baptism is essential for - salvation.

### Preaching the Gospel to the

**Dead:** If a person did not receive a fair opportunity to hear the gospel in mortality, he will hear it in the spirit world before he receives his final judgment.

### A Physical Resurrection of the

**Dead:** The dead will be resurrected with a glorified body of flesh and bones, just as was the - Savior.

**Multiple Heavens:** The dead will be judged according to their works and ultimately be assigned to one of three heavens—the celestial, the terrestrial, or the telestial.

**Marriage:** Marriage is ordained of God and meant to be for - eternity.

**Abortion:** Except in rare cases, abortion is a heinous sin.

**Homosexuality:** Those who practice homosexuality are sons and daughters of God, but the practice itself is a heinous sin.

**Deification:** This doctrine was lost; in fact, many teach the reverse. They declare it is blasphemous to teach that a mortal might become a god.

**Baptism:** Many teach that baptism is a symbolic confirmation of our saved condition, but not a requirement for salvation.

### Preaching the Gospel to the Dead:

This doctrine was lost.

### A Physical Resurrection of the

**Dead:** Many believe a physical body is limiting and therefore the dead will be “resurrected” merely as spirits

**Multiple Heavens:** There is one heaven and one hell.

**Marriage:** Some believe that celibacy is spiritually preferred to marriage; others endorse marriage but believe it will be for this earth-life only.

**Abortion:** There are mixed feelings on this. Some fundamentalists are opposed to abortion; other churches oppose it but do not discipline their members for violations, and yet other churches advocate pro-choice.

**Homosexuality:** Some oppose homosexuality as a heinous sin; others accept it as approved by God, even ordaining to the ministry those who

17:22–23; Acts 17:28; Romans 8:16–17; Ephesians 4:12–13; Philippians 3:14–15; 2 Timothy 2:12; 2 Peter 1:3–4; Revelation 3:21; 21:7; 3 Nephi 27:27; Moroni 10:32–33

Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Luke 7:30; John 3:5; Acts 2:37–38; 8:12, 37–38; 10:47–48; 16:14; 18:8; 22:14–16; Galatians 3:27; Titus 3:4; 2 Nephi 9:23; 31:4–12

Isaiah 24:22; 42:7; 61:1; Matthew 12:40; Luke 16:22–23; 23:43; John 5:25, 28; 20:17; Ephesians 4:9; 1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6; Alma 40:12–14; D&C 138

Job 19:25–26; Matthew 27:52; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22; Alma 40:23

Matthew 10:41; John 14:2; 1 Corinthians 15:40–42; 2 Corinthians 12:3; Revelation 20:13; D&C 76

Genesis 2:18–24; Matthew 8:14; 18:18; Mark 10:9; 1 Corinthians 11:11; 1 Timothy 4:1–3; 1 Peter 3:7; D&C 131

Leviticus 17:11; Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3; D&C 59:6

Genesis 1:28; 19:5–9; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 3:3

practice it.

**Blessing Babies:** Babies should have hands placed on them and be given a blessing.

**Blessing Babies:** Instead of blessing babies, a new doctrine was invented (accepted by many), which allowed or required the baptism of infants. This resulted from the invention of a new doctrine known as original sin.

JST Genesis 17:6; Matthew 10:16; 18:3; 19:13–15; Moroni 8:5–20; D&C 20:70

**The Mode of Baptism:** One must be baptized by immersion by someone who holds the authority.

**The Mode of Baptism:** Some believe that baptism by immersion is essential, but most churches believe that baptism by pouring or sprinkling is equally satisfactory.

Matthew 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:38; Romans 6:3–5; 3 Nephi 11:23–26

**Baptism for the Dead:** Those who did not receive the opportunity to be baptized in mortality will receive the opportunity in the spirit world by a mortal being baptized on their - behalf.

**Baptism for the Dead:** This doctrine was lost.

Zechariah 9:11; 1 Corinthians 15:29; Hebrews 11:40; 1 Peter 4:6; D&C 127:5–12; 128:1–21

**The Sacrament:** Bread and wine (or water) are administered in a simple ceremony to believers in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ.

**The Sacrament:** In some cases bread and wine are administered in a simple ceremony to believers in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ; in other cases, the ceremony has become mystical and ornate, and a new doctrine of transubstantiation has been introduced.

JST Matthew 26:22; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 3 Nephi 18:7; D&C 27:2

**Laying On of Hands:** Priesthood men lay on hands to (1) confer the Holy Ghost, (2) ordain others to the priesthood and Church callings, and (3) give blessings of health and comfort.

**Laying On of Hands:** While some churches lay on hands for some purposes, it has generally fallen into disuse for most purposes for which it was designed in the early church.

Numbers 27:23; Mark 8:23; 16:18; Luke 13:13; Acts 5:12; 6:3, 6; 8:17; 9:17–18; 13:3; 19:6; 28:8; 1 Timothy 4:6, 14; - 5:22; Moroni 3:1–4

**Temple Ordinances and Covenants:** Worthy Saints may receive divine ordinances in the temple and make covenants that will lift them spiritually.

**Temple Ordinances and Covenants:** These were lost.

1 Corinthians 4:1; D&C 132; Moses 5:58–59

**Disciplinary Actions (i.e., excommunication):** Transgressors received ecclesiastical discipline designed to help them repent, to

**Disciplinary Actions (i.e., excommunication):** At one point the ongoing church's ecclesiastical discipline merged with secular discipline. Most churches have some

Matthew 18:16–18; Hebrews - 12:6; D&C 64:12–14; 102



protect the integrity of the Church, form of disciplinary action but seldom  
and to protect the innocent. use it.

## Notes to Chapter 22: The Summation

1. See also Alma 5:40–41.
2. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 38.
3. Hayward, *Churchill on Leadership*, 4.
4. Jordan Vajda, discussing his conversion in an undated letter sent to friends in June 2003; emphasis added.
5. *What Is Christianity?* 262; emphasis added.

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## Why Christ's Church Was Lost from the Earth

### Why Christ Allowed His Church to Be Lost

It is a serious thing to suggest that God would allow his own Church to be removed from the earth, but certain divine principles inevitably lead to that conclusion:

*First*, God does not destroy the agency of man. He did not desire the removal of his Church, but, rather, he allowed it in order to preserve man's agency. God's ultimate purpose is to help man become like him, but without agency that goal is impossible. Even God does not force a man to heaven; he does not compel him to have faith or character. Those attainments must have an element of self-inducement, self-motivation; they must be internally driven. That is the delicate balance—to give all the external help possible without thwarting man's agency. At some point the parent must let go of the child's hand; at some point the child must take some steps on his own, even if it requires his fall; otherwise, there is no progress. Ultimately, one must ask the difficult question: Which was more important in the divine scheme of things—the forced continuation of Christ's Church or the preservation of man's agency? The Lord taught the correct underlying principle: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Likewise, the Church was for the benefit of man, not man for the Church.

In his mercy, God seems willing to give men as much truth as they are willing to accept.<sup>1</sup> Such was the case when Moses descended from the mountain with the tablets. The first set of tablets was destroyed by Moses when he found the Israelites worshiping the golden calf. Many suppose that Moses ascended the mountain again and received exactly the same tablets as he had on the first occasion, but it was not so. The Israelites, through their agency, had rejected the higher law found on the first tablets and thus were consigned to a lower law. After the first set of tablets, the Lord took "away the [Melchizedek] priesthood out of their midst;

therefore my holy order, and the ordinances thereof, shall not go before them" (JST Exodus 34:1). Because of their wickedness, the Israelites were relegated to a lesser law known as the law of Moses. They simply were not prepared to receive the fulness of the gospel.

God did not force the Israelites to be righteous so his full gospel could remain among them. Likewise, God did not force men to be righteous for the sake of continuity of his Church. He invites, commands, prophesies, and warns, but he does not suppress man's agency. Such conduct would be contrary and counterproductive to the divine plan that places moral agency as its key foundation stone. The "heavens weep" (Moses 7:28) over the disobedience of man, but God grants man the right to be disobedient. Elder B. H. Roberts spoke eloquently on that issue:

It should be remembered always that God has given to man his agency; and that fact implies that one man is as free to act wickedly as another is to act righteously . . . and so the pagans and Jews were as free to persecute and murder the Christians as the Christians were to live virtuously and worship Christ as God. The agency of man would not be worth the name if it did not grant liberty to the wicked to fill the cup of their iniquity, as well as liberty to the virtuous to round out the measure of their righteousness.<sup>2</sup>

When the Israelites wanted "a king to judge us like all the nations," the prophet Samuel was displeased, but the Lord, consenting to their agency, responded, "Hearken unto the voice of the people, . . . for they have not rejected thee, *but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them*" (1 Samuel 8:5, 7). When the people rejected Christ's Church in the meridian of time through disobedience and heresy, he honored their agency, but the consequences of that agency resulted in the loss of Christ's Church. As a result, the people were required to settle for an institution that mingled the scriptures with the philosophies of men.

*Second*, there is another principle underlying the reason for the apostasy. When the wickedness of the church became so pronounced and the heresies so widespread, the Lord removed his sanction and power from the church. Otherwise, members of the ongoing church might justify their errant behavior based on false doctrines propagated by that church. For example, how many have justified their self-imposed celibacy because the church advocated it, or worse yet, they claimed to sin without consequence through the simple purchase of an indulgence, because the church sponsored its sale and the church was supposedly endorsed by the Savior. Does it seem reasonable that God would lend his name to a church that sanctioned and promoted false doctrines?

*Third*, evidently there must exist a certain critical mass of righteousness for the Church to remain as an organized institution. When the earth had only eight righteous souls, God resolved that it was not enough to save the earth, and so the flood came with its devastating destruction. It did not mean that there were no righteous people, for truly Noah and his family were obedient servants, but it did mean that there was not a critical mass of righteousness sufficient to prevent the earth from being submerged.

Abraham pleaded with the Lord to save Sodom. Finally God agreed, based on one condition: "I will not destroy it for ten's sake" (Genesis 18:32). In other words, he said, "Abraham, if you can find ten righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake." But even ten could not be found, so God rained stone and fire upon them. Similar conditions existed in Book of Mormon times. As to the great city of Zarahemla, the Lord declared:

It is because of those who are righteous that it is saved, . . . for I perceive . . . there are many, yea, even the

more part of this great city, that will harden their hearts against me. . . . But behold, if it were not for the righteous who are in this great city, behold, I would cause that fire should come down out of heaven and destroy it. But behold, it is for the righteous' sake that it is spared. But behold, the time cometh, saith the Lord, that when ye shall cast out the righteous from among you, then shall ye be ripe for destruction (Helaman 13:12–14).

The handwriting was on the wall. Not many years later, the righteous were evidently cast out, and God destroyed Zarahemla with fire (3 Nephi 8:8). There simply were not enough righteous people left to save it.

The temple of Jerusalem and its fate may have been a prototype of the early Church and its demise. The angel Gabriel had come to the Holy of Holies and announced to Zacharias the birth of John. The Savior was blessed as a babe in this temple. At twelve years of age Jesus answered questions on the temple grounds and declared he had been about his "Father's business" (Luke 2:49). During his ministry, the Savior preached on the temple grounds (John 8:20; Mark 12:41–44; John 10:23–30). Early in his ministry he reprimanded the money changers and drove them from the temple, but, nonetheless, referred to it as "my Father's house" (John 2:16).

Unfortunately, however, the tide turned. Later in his ministry the Savior again cleansed the temple, but this time he told the intruders they had converted "*my house*" into "a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13). As evidence that his stamp of approval was being removed from this once holy house, he declared at the conclusion of his ministry: "*Your house is left unto you desolate*" (Matthew 23:38).<sup>3</sup>

That pronouncement was the spiritual death knell. Not many years later (about A.D. 71), the Romans leveled the temple and fulfilled the prophecy of the Lord: "The days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Luke 21:6). The house of God, where the angel Gabriel had come to announce the birth of John, where Zacharias and other priests administered the ordinances in righteousness, where Simeon declared by the Spirit that he had seen the Christ (Luke 2:26–35), where Anna the prophetess "served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:36–37), and where the Savior and his apostles had preached the gospel, was no longer God's house and, therefore, no longer entitled to his divine protection. What brought about its downfall was not the Romans but the wickedness of the Judaic leaders who claimed to be its divinely appointed administrators. The temple had ceased to be God's house years before the Romans destroyed it. When the Romans came, only the physical shell remained; the spirit had long since departed. The destruction of the house of God was but a prototype of the future destruction of the Church of God. An organized institution continued, but the spirit in its fulness was gone. It was now *their* church, not *his* Church.

Christ's Church survived for a while because of the righteousness of a few. But when the mass of pure believers became so small and wickedness so prevalent, then, like the earth in the days of Noah, like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, like the temple of Jerusalem, God removed his Spirit, and the Church became extinct as a spiritual entity.

But the Church had not existed in vain, because "the works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught" (D&C 3:1). Even though the Church remained for a relatively short time, it accomplished three major goals: first, it was the means of saving many Saints in that day and age; second, it was a condemnation to those who rejected it; and third, the writings of the Bible and early Church leaders provided a spiritual "blueprint" from which to discover the true Church of Jesus Christ,

and thus enlightened many honest seekers after truth, including the Reformers and the Restorers.

## Why Some Christian Historians Believe Christ's Church Was Not Lost

Latter-day Saint scholar Hugh Nibley observed that Christian historians focus on three main arguments to support the proposition that Christ's Church continued uninterrupted for two thousand years. First, they claim the Savior taught that idea when he said to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Second, they point out that a church has historically continued since the days of Christ, and therefore, they claim, the current church must be the same as the original Church. And third, they argue that God would not allow a complete dissolution of his Church—after all, such would constitute failure, and God does not fail.<sup>4</sup>

The argument concerning Matthew 16:18 has been widely discussed in Christian circles. It is helpful in understanding this scripture if one is acquainted with the setting in which it may have taken place. It is believed that the Savior took his disciples to a secluded spot near Caesarea Philippi, not far from Mt. Hermon. The melting snows of Mount Hermon feed into two streams that form the headwaters of the Jordan River. The larger of the two streams gushes forth from a cave at the base of the mountain. This seems to have been the chosen spot from which the Savior elicited the response he desired and taught his inspired lesson. The Savior evidently used this natural setting as his object lesson.

In this setting he asked his disciples whom men thought that he was. They responded: "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets." No doubt he was disappointed. And so he asked them this soul-searching question, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Savior must have rejoiced at the unequivocal response. In reply, Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Then the Savior added what has become the controversial sentence in Christian circles: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:13–18). Was Peter the rock to which Jesus was alluding, or did the reference to "this rock" relate to something the Savior had previously discussed?

In verse seventeen, the Savior declared that Peter's testimony was not through the powers of reason (it did not come from flesh and blood), but by revelation (it came from his Father in Heaven). Now comes the symbolism of the setting that helps explain the meaning of the "rock." The rock upon which this group of holy men (the Savior and his apostles) alluded to, or perhaps even sat upon, represented Christ, who was known as "the chief corner stone" of the Church (Ephesians 2:20) and "the rock" (Helaman 5:12) upon which we should build our foundation. Victorinus (d.c. A.D. 304) confirmed that "Christ is the Rock by which, and on which, the Church is founded."<sup>5</sup> The mountain waters that gushed forth from the rock were symbolic of the living waters, or revelation, that came from God. Peter was not "the rock" upon which the Church would be built. God would never build his Church upon a mortal man.<sup>6</sup> Jesus Christ himself was the rock, and from him flowed the living waters or revelation necessary to direct the Church. Accordingly, revelation (and its author, Jesus Christ) was the rock upon which the Church was built.

While there are several early Christian writers who suggested that Peter was the rock,<sup>7</sup> one of them, Origen (A.D. 185–255), helps us understand that everyone can become a Peter or "a rock" if he receives the revelation Peter did. Origen wrote: "And if we too have said like Peter, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' not as if flesh and blood had revealed it unto us, but by light from the Father in heaven having

shone in our heart, we become a Peter. . . . For a rock is every disciple of Christ of whom those drank who drank of the spiritual rock which followed them, and upon every such rock is built every word of the church."<sup>8</sup> In other words, the significance of the rock was not to be found in a particular man, but in the revelation he received from God. It was *revelation* against which the gates of hell would not prevail.

The second argument contends that because a historical church continued since the days of Christ, that church must be the same as Christ's original Church. The fact that *a* church survived is not evidence that *the* Church of Jesus Christ survived. Dorian Gray, who traded his soul to the Devil in return for eternal youth, was in his latter years a wretched man as compared to the innocent Dorian Gray of younger years. Somewhere in the interim his soul had become lost, yet from all external appearances it was the same body, the same man.<sup>9</sup> Scrooge, in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, spoke the truth when he said, "I am not the man I was."<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately the church was not the same church it had once been. The issue is not simply a historical continuation of a temporal church but also the continuation of a spiritual one.

Suppose a man suffering from cancer is taken to the critical care unit of the hospital. His lungs cease contracting, so they put him on a ventilator; his heart stops beating, so they put him on a heart machine; he is unable to eat, so they feed him intravenously; finally, his spirit slips away, but the machines continue to pump. In an attempt to console the grieving widow the doctor puts his arm around her shoulders and whispers, "Don't worry, his body still exists—his heart beats—his lungs contract." In tearful disbelief she sobs: "No, he is gone; he is gone." Likewise, for years the "body" of the church continued to exist, but its soul had long since slipped away. Paul well described the replacement church and its members as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). It was such a set of circumstances that caused the historian Paul Johnson, in his meticulous review of Christianity, to refer to the ongoing church as "Mechanical Christianity."<sup>11</sup>

Satan is the great counterfeiter. He would have us believe the remnant is the original, the scaffolding the structure, the dead the living. The original Church had a Quorum of Twelve Apostles that was governed by revelation; the ongoing church had an ecumenical council that was ruled by reason. The original Church had ennobling gifts of the Spirit that produced a wonderful legacy of compassionate and undeniable miracles; the ongoing church had an almost surreal series of substitutes—a dubious array of relics, signs, and "miracles" that simply lacked the authenticity and dignity of miracles in former days. The original Church had the pure, undiluted teachings and ordinances of the Savior; the ongoing church had mingled them with the philosophies of men. The skeleton of the Church remained, but its soul was gone.

Adolf von Harnack shared the following applicable story: "When the Romanticists re-introduced Catholicism into Germany and France at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Chateaubriand, more especially, was never tired of singing its praises and fancied that he had all the feelings of a Catholic. But an acute critic remarked that Monsieur Chateaubriand was mistaken in his feelings; he thought that he was a true Catholic, while as a matter of fact he was only standing before the ancient ruin of the Church and exclaiming: 'How beautiful!'"<sup>12</sup>

The third argument proposes that God does not fail and therefore his Church could not have ceased. If it did, that would constitute failure, and God does not fail. One must realize, however, that failure is often a matter of vantage point. Were the early martyrs of the Church failures because their lives were seemingly "cut short"? Does God fail because he does not prevent war or cancer or child abuse? Did he fail because he did not prevent the crucifixion? When the Savior's impending death was announced to the apostles, Peter was

unable to accept it. The scriptures tell us he rebuked the Savior, saying: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." No doubt, with the best of intentions from his limited vantage point, Peter believed the Savior's death would constitute failure, and surely God would not fail. The Savior gave this stinging response to Peter's shortsighted reasoning: "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men" (Mark 8:33).<sup>13</sup> Peter's mortal reasoning fell far short of the divine mark. He was judging the three-act play after the second curtain dropped. God knew that the crucifixion, a seeming tragedy to mortal eyes, would be the springboard for a sublime spiritual victory—Christ's resurrection. And so it would be with the loss of Christ's Church and its subsequent restoration.

Nonetheless, some contend that the removal of Christ's Church was impossible, because such an action would be tantamount to admitting failure on God's part. The following seem to be the underlying rationale for such an erroneous belief:

*First*, some believe if God starts something it must be completed without any interruption or delay; otherwise, there exists an element of failure. However, God's history with man does not support this conclusion. The Lord desired to take the children of Israel to the promised land, but when they murmured against him continually he finally decreed that all adults twenty and over would "wander in the wilderness forty years" until their "carcasses be wasted in the wilderness" (Numbers 14:33). The delay was attributable to man's agency. No doubt the Lord, in his omniscience, took that delay into account in his divine timetable of things.

Amos prophesied, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Accordingly, the Old Testament is the history of a long line of prophets until approximately 400 B.C., when the notation following the Old Testament sadly records: "The End of the Prophets." Did God fail because his established line of prophets ceased for more than four hundred years until the greatest prophet of all—the Savior himself—came on the scene? Of course not. God recognizes and honors man's agency. If God were to rob man of his agency, *then* He would fail. If he were to force his Church upon an unbelieving people, he would fail.

The forty-year wandering in the wilderness and the broken chain of prophets were not failures in God's plan; instead, they were pieces in God's puzzle. They were planned for and accounted for by God in accommodating man's agency, just as was the apostasy. The curtain had fallen, but it was only the second act. In each case, the third act, the climax of the "divine play," would be a glorious triumph.

*Second*, some allege the Church could not have ceased for another reason. The contention goes something like this: If the Church ceased, then millions of people during the long years of spiritual blackout would never have had the chance to be saved. Surely God would not permit this. Of course this argument begs the real and deeper question—what about the billions of people who lived in areas where Christianity was never taught, even when the Church was supposed to be on the earth? Or what about the billions of people who lived *before* the Savior? Or the billions who live now in areas where Christianity has never been introduced? Are these people doomed to damnation? The perpetuation of Christ's Church alone, which many believe to be the only way man could be saved, fails to solve the real problem of universal gospel exposure and thus the opportunity for universal salvation.

Once someone realizes that God has prepared a way for all men to hear and accept his gospel, then the issue of whether Christ's Church existed for two hundred years or two thousand years is no longer the critical concern, because even with its continued existence, it would have reached only a small portion of the earth's

total population. God had a plan to cover everyone, whether his Church remained on earth for two hundred or two thousand years.<sup>14</sup>

God did not fail with the cessation of his Church. He never fails, but he does take into account the agency of man and interweaves it into his master plan. Knowing of the apostasy in advance, God made the Restoration a critical element in that master plan.

Why Not Immediately Restore the Church to the Earth?

Assuming there was an apostasy, why did the Lord wait hundreds of years to return his Church to the earth? Why not restore it in a hundred or two hundred years after its removal? Why delay for approximately 1600 to 1700 years? Suppose for a moment you are the captain of a plane. Numerous passengers are on board. Further suppose that an engine catches fire. Your immediate goal is to land the plane. The quickest way to accomplish this is to go into a nose dive, but the goal is not to just land the plane as soon as you can, but rather as soon as you *safely* can. In the same way, the Lord had a master plan to "land the plane" (restore the Church) as soon as he safely could, such that it would never again be taken from the earth. To accomplish this, he needed to prepare an environment that was politically, socially, intellectually, and religiously hospitable to his gospel. Thus, his master plan began to unfold.

Notes to Chapter 23: Why Christ's Church Was Lost from the Earth

1. See Alma 29:8; 3 Nephi 26:8–10.
2. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God*, 1:46.
3. See also D&C 97:17.
4. Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 264–66.
5. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 7:360.
6. As one evidence of that assertion, one need only read five verses after the Savior discussed his church and the rock upon which it would be built. Here he rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Matthew 16:23). Would it make sense to say the Church was built upon Peter and then immediately rebuke him by calling him Satan?
7. For example, Tertullian (A.D. 140–230) wrote, "Was anything withheld from the knowledge of Peter, who is called 'the rock on which the church should be built'" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:253). Origen (A.D. 185–255) commented, "Peter, on whom the church of Christ is built, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, left only one epistle of acknowledged genuineness" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:346). And Cyprian (A.D. 200–258), in speaking of Peter, noted, ". . . upon whom by the same Lord the church has been built" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:341). No one would deny that Peter had a unique position. He was the leader of the apostles, the mouthpiece through whom God spoke, but the Church was not built upon a solitary mortal man; it was built upon Christ as the chief cornerstone.
8. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:456. Origen (A.D. 185–255) also homed in on the controversy that exists over the language "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What did the Savior mean by the word "it"? Origen wrote, "But what is the 'it'? Is it the rock [i.e., revelation, or as some claim, Peter], upon which Christ

builds the church, or is it the church? For the phrase is ambiguous" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:456). Origen concluded that "it" referred to both the rock and the Church. He wrote, ". . . for neither against the rock on which Christ builds the church, nor against the church will the gates of Hades prevail" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:456). To contend, however, that the foregoing scripture argues for the uninterrupted continuation of Christ's Church is to place it at odds with the myriad of other scriptures and historical evidence that describe the demise of the primitive church, as noted in prior chapters. It seems that if one scripture has two possible interpretations, the more reasoned approach is to interpret it consistently with the other scriptures and historical evidence that have set a pattern on the subject (i.e., that Christ's Church did not continue).

9. For the fictional story of Dorian Gray, see *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde.

10. Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 138.

11. Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 228.

12. Von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* 198–99.

13. See also Matthew 16:22–23.

14. See section titled "Preaching the Gospel to the Dead," in chapter 14.

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## The Master Plan Unfolds— The Renaissance and the Reformation

The story of the Renaissance and the Reformation is an integral part of God's master plan.<sup>1</sup> B. H. Roberts referred to this period "as a revolution instead of a reformation since the so-called reformation by no means reestablished primitive Christianity. . . . But it did overthrow the power of the Catholic Church in the greater part of western Europe, gave larger liberty to the people, and thus prepared the way for the great work which followed it."<sup>2</sup> The Magna Carta in A.D. 1215, the Petition of Rights in A.D. 1620, and the Bill of Rights in A.D. 1689 provided great strides for freedom and social justice. Moveable type, developed by Gutenberg in the fifteenth century, accelerated the publishing of books, freed the minds of people, and made the Bible available to the common man. William Manchester wrote, "Before the dense, overarching, suffocating medieval night could be broken, the darkness had to be pierced by the bright shaft of learning— by literature, and people who could read and understand it."<sup>3</sup> Literature began to blossom, the arts exploded, and science became respectable. The mariner's compass opened new doors of exploration heretofore unknown. The discovery of America and the Cape of Good Hope (allowing a new passage to India) accelerated worldwide commercial ventures.



Superstition, illiteracy, serfdom, and poverty, the cornerstones of the Dark Ages, were giving way to a new and enlightened age. As observed by Elder McConkie: "Beginning in the 14th century, the Lord began to prepare those social, educational, religious, economic, and governmental conditions under which he could more easily restore the gospel for the last time among men."<sup>4</sup>

A host of courageous men then rose up, known as the Reformers, to fight against tyranny, immorality, and illiteracy. These men did not come on the scene by chance. Their births were not part of some random selection process. To the contrary, Paul, speaking of all men, observed that the Lord "hath determined the *times* before appointed, and the *bounds* of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). God knew both when and where the Reformers would be born. These divinely chosen men were vocal critics of the doctrines that had become corrupted. Likewise, they were vigorous opponents of the clergy, many of whom were the epitome of hypocrisy.

There was John Wycliffe of England (1320–1384), an educated priest who saw serious differences between the word of the Lord and the practices of the church. He criticized the practice of confession and the doctrine of transubstantiation and went so far as to condemn the Pope as anti-Christ. He translated the scriptures into English and made them available to the common man. He was tried for heresy in London, but influential friends stopped the trial. A year after his death, in 1384, he was declared a heretic and his remains were dug up, burned, and thrown in the River Avon.<sup>5</sup>

There was John Huss of Czechoslovakia (1373–1415). He advocated the reading of the scriptures and denounced indulgences. He was tried for heresy and burned at the stake; his ashes were thrown into the River Rhine so "that the least remnant of that man should not be left upon the earth."<sup>6</sup>

There was Zwingli in Switzerland (1484–1531), who opposed certain Catholic practices, including celibacy and the mass. There was Knox in Scotland (1514–1572) and Calvin in France (1509–1564). Perhaps most famous of all was Martin Luther of Germany (1483–1546). He reacted passionately to the sale of indulgences for sins not yet committed and, accordingly, penned his famous 95-point thesis and nailed it to the Wittenberg chapel doors in 1517. He desired only reform, but in the process he was excommunicated.<sup>7</sup> He ultimately founded a church that bears his name. Before the Diet of Worms (Germany) in 1521, Luther made his famous speech of defense, and concluded with these words:

I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the council, because it is as clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of scripture, or by the clearest reasoning—unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted,—and unless they thus render my conscience bound, by the word of God, I cannot and will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. *Here I stand, I can do no other, may God help me! Amen.*<sup>8</sup>

Harry Fosdick noted, "In 1572 a picture was published in a Bohemian psalter representing Wycliffe striking the spark, Huss kindling the coals, and Luther brandishing the flaming torch."<sup>9</sup> With the advent of Luther, the Reformation was now ablaze. The desire for reform was not limited to a few ardent critics of the church. As noted by Pierre Van Paassen, the biographer of Savonarola's life: "We always seem to overlook the fact that in the fifteenth century the issue was not for or against reform of the Church; everybody was for it. The question was how to bring it about, where to start, how far to go."<sup>10</sup> Even the Catholics recognized the need for reform. At the Council of Trent, which involved multiple sessions (1545–1563), the church implemented a system to help educate the clergy and rid it of its well-known abuses. This reform movement became

known as the Catholic Reformation (or the Counter Reformation). While it focused on correcting the clergy problems, it did little if anything to correct its doctrinal departures from the original Church.<sup>11</sup>

These Reformers opposed many of the existing church practices, such as celibacy, the doctrine of transubstantiation, indulgences, failure to pass the sacrament to the entire lay membership, worshiping of relics, and the unavailability of the scriptures. These men, however, wanted only to reform the existing church, not to start a new church or restore Christ's Church. But unfortunately they met bitter resistance—some even being required to give their lives. The time was not quite ripe for the Restoration—not quite right to land the plane. President Joseph Fielding Smith helped put the role of the Reformers in its proper perspective:

In preparation for this restoration the Lord raised up noble men, such as Luther, Calvin, Knox, and others. . . . Latter-day Saints pay all honor to these great and fearless reformers, who shattered the fetters which bound the religious world. The Lord was their Protector in this mission, which was fraught with many perils. In that day, however, the time had not come for the restoration of the fulness of the gospel. The work of the reformers was of great importance, but *it was a preparatory work*.<sup>12</sup>

A similar observation was made by President Joseph F. Smith: "Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, and all the reformers, were inspired in thoughts, words and actions, to accomplish what they did for the amelioration, liberty and advancement of the human race. They paved the way for the more perfect gospel of truth to come."<sup>13</sup>

Brigham Young had a great respect for the Reformers and other men of spiritual goodwill. Accordingly, he observed:

I never passed John Wesley's church in London without stopping to look at it. Was he a good man? Yes; I suppose him to have been, by all accounts, as good as ever walked on this earth, according to his knowledge. . . . Why could he not build up the kingdom of God on the earth? He had not the Priesthood; that was all the difficulty he laboured under. Had the Priesthood been conferred upon him, he would have built up the kingdom of God in his day as it is now being built up. He would have introduced the ordinances, powers, grades, and quorums of the Priesthood: but, not holding the Priesthood, he could not do it. Did the Spirit of God rest upon him? Yes, and does, more or less, at times, upon all people.<sup>14</sup>

The Reformers were great men, but they were not prophets of God. They still taught misconceptions such as faith without works, predestination, and certain misguided concepts concerning the sacrament and baptism. Nonetheless, their influence was profound and their contribution significant. It was a giant step forward. The Reformation, however, was not the final act; rather, it was a necessary precursor to the restoration of Christ's Church. John Robinson, a pastor of the Pilgrim Church, spoke to a group of Pilgrims about to leave for the New World in 1620, and while doing so he made this astute observation about the Reformers: "For though they [the Reformers] were precious shining lights in their times, yet God had not revealed his whole will to them: And were they now living . . . they would [be] as ready and willing to embrace further light, as that they had received."<sup>15</sup>

The Renaissance and the Reformation were not ends in and of themselves, but rather the means, the stepping stones, to yet a greater light—the Restoration.

Notes to Chapter 24: The Master Plan Unfolds

1. Joel had prophesied, "I [the Lord] will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28). With regards to this prophecy, President Joseph Fielding Smith observed, "I think, properly, we could go back into the days of the revival of learning—the renaissance, as it is called—and the reformation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to find the *beginning of the fulfillment of this promise*" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:176–77).

2. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 2.

3. Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, 95.

4. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 717.

5. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 7–8.

6. Fox, *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, 143.

7. Henry Emerson Fosdick noted of Luther, "He neither desired nor intended to disrupt the ancient church. His convinced hope was that the church in general and the pope in particular, when shown the crying evils of ecclesiastical corruption would correct them" (*Great Voices of the Reformation*, 69).

8. Roberts, *Outlines of Ecclesiastical History*, 233. Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated, "Luther's break with Catholicism was part of the divine program; it came as an Elias preparing the way for the Restoration" (*Doctrines of the Restoration*, 72).

9. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 3.

10. Van Paassen, *A Crown of Fire*, xviii.

11. There was another group of courageous men, often neglected in the list of reformers, who desired not just to reform the church but to restore the primitive Church. These men were referred to as the Radical Reformers. One of the most prominent movements resulting from the efforts of these reformers were the Anabaptists (meaning rebaptizers). In their day the church and state were almost synonymous. Accordingly, nearly all infants were baptized, an ordinance which the Anabaptists bitterly opposed. They believed there should be a separation of church and state and that adults who had been baptized as infants should be rebaptized after they demonstrated sufficient faith to believe.

12. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:174–75.

13. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 31.

14. *Journal of Discourses*, 7:5. Elder Boyd K. Packer likewise observed, "We owe an immense debt to the protestors and the reformers who preserved the scriptures and translated them. They knew something had been lost. They kept the flame alive as best they could. Many of them were martyrs. But protesting was not enough; nor could reformers restore that which was gone" ("The Cloven Tongues of Fire," *Ensign*, May 2000, 8).

15. Fosdick, *Great Voices of the Reformation*, 546. Adolf von Harnack made a similar observation: "In its

doctrine, and in the view which it took of history, the Reformation was far from being a finished product" (Von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* 290).

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### Final Preparations for the Restoration

The story of the Restoration is the final act of the Lord's master plan. The Lord not only needed to free the minds of the people, but he needed a place for the Restoration, apart from the customs, superstitions, and life patterns of western Europe. This precipitated the discovery and development of America.<sup>1</sup>

On one occasion I was invited to speak at a Veterans Day assembly for a public school. I was advised to be careful about my references to God. I thought, How can I do that? His fingerprints are everywhere—in the discovery of America, the prompting of the Pilgrims, the outcome of the Revolutionary War, the formation of the Constitution. He was not a peripheral force; he was the dominant driving cause in the establishment of this land. This was part of his master plan, governed by his timetable. Elder McConkie so noted:

The work to be done . . . by Columbus, by the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and by the framers of the Constitution of the United States [was] all known and arranged for in advance . . . and those who are called and chosen to do the work receive their commission and ordination from him, first in the pre-existence and then, if they remain true and faithful, again here in mortality.<sup>2</sup>

#### Discovery and Settlement of America

One noted historian observed: "The discovery of America was an accident."<sup>3</sup> The inspired prophets would disagree with him, at least in the sense that America's discovery was deemed not to be providential. Nephi knew this land had been kept in reserve by the Lord: "Behold, it is wisdom that this land should be kept as yet from the knowledge of other nations" (2 Nephi 1:8). Nephi likewise knew that the Lord had a timetable for its discovery and that God had designated the very man who would fearlessly find these shores. He wrote: "And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land" (1 Nephi 13:12). That man was Christopher Columbus.

For over ten years Columbus and his brother sought financing for their voyage. They were turned down by the rulers of England, Portugal, and Spain. After rejecting Columbus's request on three occasions, Queen Isabella finally relented when her court treasurer informed her the voyage would cost no more than two or three royal banquets. But Columbus was not spiritually naive, not some unwitting pawn in the divine design of things; he knew his mission was much more than an adventurous whim. Columbus knew he was a chosen instrument in God's hands. One biographer, Jacob Wasserman, quoted Columbus's recollections as follows: "I have studied all books—cosmographies, histories, chronicles, and philosophies, and other arts, for which

our Lord unlocked my mind, sent me upon the sea, and gave me fire for the deed. Those who heard of my emprise called it foolish, mocked me, and laughed. *But who can doubt but that the Holy Ghost inspired me?*"<sup>4</sup> On another occasion Columbus wrote: "With a hand that could be felt, the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail and he opened my will to desire to accomplish the project. . . . This was the fire that burned within me. . . . Who can doubt that this fire was not merely mine, but also of the Holy Spirit, . . . urging me to press forward?"<sup>5</sup> Brigham Young also knew that Columbus's impetus was heaven driven: "[God] moved upon Columbus to launch forth upon the trackless deep to discover the American Continent."<sup>6</sup>

After the sailors had traveled for many days on the open waters without sighting land, mutiny raised its ugly head. Columbus's men demanded he turn back. He promised them that if land were not sighted within forty-eight hours, they would turn back. He recorded in his journal: "Then I went in my cabin and prayed mightily to the Lord. On October 12, the very next day, we sighted land."<sup>7</sup> No wonder President George Q. Cannon observed: "Columbus was inspired to penetrate the ocean and discover this Western Continent, for the set time of its discovery had come. . . . This Church and Kingdom could not have been established on the earth if [Columbus's] work had not been performed."<sup>8</sup> President Joseph Fielding Smith made a similar observation: "The discovery [of America] was one of the most important factors in bringing to pass the purpose of the Almighty in the restoration of his Gospel in its fulness for the salvation of men in the latter days."<sup>9</sup> But God's hand would not cease with the discovery of America.

In Nephi's vision, he continued to unveil the divine master plan: "And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters" (1 Nephi 13:13).<sup>10</sup> The same spirit that had worked upon Columbus also worked upon others, inspiring them to come to America. These were the early colonists. Alexis de Tocqueville, the French sociologist who came to America in the early 1800s to discover the genius of her democracy, described these colonists as "the scattering of the seed of a great people which God with His own hands is planting on a predestined shore."<sup>11</sup> On another occasion de Tocqueville dispelled any false notions that economic factors were the primary driving force of the colonists or that material wealth was the basis of America's greatness:

I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers—and it was not there, . . . in her fertile fields and boundless forests—and it was not there, . . . in her rich mines and her vast world commerce—and it was not there. . . . Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.<sup>12</sup>

Such were the thoughts of a prophet of God: "This is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ" (Ether 2:12).

The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints spoke of the pivotal role of these early pilgrims: "It was not by chance that the Puritans left their native land and sailed away to the shores of New England, and that others followed later. They were the advance guard of the army of the Lord, to establish the God-given system of government under which we live . . . and prepare the way for the restoration of the Gospel of Christ."<sup>13</sup> The Lord now had a new land and a righteous people. Nephi observed "that the Gentiles [meaning the Pilgrims] who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them" (1 Nephi 13:16). Many colonists had left the

religious captivity of England, where a state religion had been thrust upon them, in order to worship according to the dictates of their own consciences. This was indeed a significant step in laying the groundwork for the return of Christ's Church.

Brigham Young recognized this guiding influence of the Lord: "The land of America was a promised land to the pilgrim fathers, and an asylum for the oppressed of all nations. To this land people from all nations flocked and the Lord inspired them to establish a free government preparatory to the establishment of his kingdom in the latter days."<sup>14</sup>

### An Independent Nation

After having taken the foregoing preparatory steps, the Lord needed to cut America's political umbilical cord with its mother country—England. England was so entangled in a state religion that its iron-fisted hand would not easily lend help to the birth of a new religion. The Revolutionary War proved to be the solution. Nephi saw it almost 2,400 years in advance of its happening:

I beheld that their mother Gentiles [England and its people] were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them [the colonists].

And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.

And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles [the colonists] that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations (1 Nephi 13:17–19).

Who can doubt the Lord's hand in the Revolutionary War? One can visualize Washington's rag-tag band of soldiers struggling for survival at Valley Forge. They were ill-trained, ill-equipped, and ill-fed. They were outnumbered, outgunned, and outdisciplined. They were victims of a severe winter—but there was a sense of divine purpose that transcended it all, that somehow gave them the stamina and will to carry on, to stick it out one more day, to find sustaining power in the vision of their inspired commander. It was as though Washington spoke Elisha's words: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16).

Such a scene may cause one to reflect upon Shakespeare's lines in *King Henry V*. The place was the fields of Agincourt in France. The hour of battle was at hand. The English were battle-weary and severely outnumbered, but what were odds to them who had a commander of invincible will and God to speed their charge? One then hears the prayer of their courageous commander, King Henry V, a prayer perhaps akin to Washington's petitions:

O God of battles, steel my soldiers' hearts!  
Possess them not with fear, take from them now  
The sense of reckoning if the opposed numbers  
Pluck their hearts from them.<sup>15</sup>

One then hears an interchange among King Henry's men:

Of fighting men they have full threescore thousand.  
There's five to one, Besides, they are all fresh.

Another chimes in:

God's arm strike with us! 16

And so it did that day, just as it would do at Lexington and Concord and Valley Forge. The words of David, spoken as he confronted Goliath, seem so apropos: "The battle is the Lord's" (1 Samuel 17:47). Nephi realized that there was no such thing as being outnumbered if God is on your side: "For behold he is mightier than all the earth, then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty, yea, or even than his tens of thousands?" (1 Nephi 4:1). Nephi prophesied of the American revolutionaries that "the power of God was with them" (1 Nephi 13:18). Brigham Young knew the Lord was the driving force in this historic moment: "[God] moved upon the signers of the Declaration of Independence; and he moved upon Washington to fight and conquer."<sup>17</sup> In reminiscence of those hallowed days, Washington spoke these farewell words to his army on November 2, 1783:

The disadvantageous circumstances on our part, under which the war was undertaken, can never be forgotten. The *singular interpositions of Providence* in our feeble condition were such, as could scarcely escape the attention of the most unobserving; while the unparalleled perseverance of the Armies of the U[nited] States through almost every possible suffering and discouragement for the space of eight long years was *little short of a standing miracle*.<sup>18</sup>

On another occasion Washington made this significant statement, which is so applicable to our times: "The man must be bad indeed who can look upon the events of the American Revolution without feeling the warmest gratitude towards the great Author of the Universe whose divine interposition was so frequently manifested in our behalf."<sup>19</sup>

Other miracles would yet be performed. With the commencement of the Constitutional Convention, George Washington firmly declared: "The event is in the hand of God."<sup>20</sup> But in spite of God's divine will, he does not remove all obstacles from man's way. He expects man to sweat and toil and counsel and work together to bring about his plans. At one point, the Constitutional Convention was in disarray, but fortunately Benjamin Franklin stepped to the forefront with this inspired counsel:

In the beginning of the Contest with G. Britain when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for divine protection—Our prayers, Sir, were heard and they were graciously answered. . . . And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—*that God governs in the affairs of men*. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? . . . I therefore beg leave to move—that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business.<sup>21</sup>

Understanding that inspired background, Joseph Smith observed: "The Constitution of the United States is a glorious standard; it is founded in the wisdom of God. It is a heavenly banner."<sup>22</sup>

Shortly after the Constitutional Convention, Washington became our first President. To his credit he never forgot the merciful hand of God in the discovery and establishment of America. In Washington's first inaugural address he noted:

It would be . . . improper to omit in this first official Act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the Universe, who presides in the Councils of Nations. . . . No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men, more than the People of the United States. *Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.*<sup>23</sup>

Once the place was secure and an independent nation was established, a government needed to be raised up that would foster freedom of religion. In order to form such a government, the Lord sent such men as George Washington,<sup>24</sup> Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and others, all of whom later appeared to Wilford Woodruff in the St. George Temple and declared that they had performed their foreordained task in laying the foundation of this government and now wanted the blessings of the gospel in their lives. Wilford Woodruff recorded their request: "You have had the use of the Endowment House for a number of years and yet nothing has ever been done for us. We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy, and we never apostatized from it, but we remained true to it and were faithful to God."

Then Elder Woodruff added: "These were the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and they waited on me for two days and two nights."<sup>25</sup>

So anxious were these good men for the temple blessings of the restored gospel that Benjamin Franklin appeared a second time to Wilford Woodruff—this time in a dream. President Woodruff recorded the unusual experience as follows:

I spent some time with him [Benjamin Franklin] and we talked over our Temple ordinances which had been administered for Franklin and others. He wanted more work done for him than had already been done. I promised him it should be done. I awoke and then made up my mind to receive further blessings for Benjamin Franklin and George Washington.<sup>26</sup>

Wilford Woodruff knew first-hand of the inspired calling of the Founding Fathers and so bore fervent witness of the same: "I am going to bear my testimony to this assembly, if I never do it again in my life, that those men who laid the foundation of this American government and signed the Declaration of Independence were the best spirits the God of heaven could find on the face of the earth. They were choice spirits. . . . General Washington and all the men that labored for the purpose were inspired of the Lord."<sup>27</sup>

Lorenzo Snow offered a similar testimony: "We see the providences of God in raising up a Luther, a John Wesley; we see the providences of God in all the Christian organizations and communities; we trace the hand of the Almighty in framing the constitution of our land, and believe that the Lord raised up men purposely for the accomplishment of this object—raised them up and inspired them to frame the Constitution of the United States."<sup>28</sup>

Recognizing their unique role in history, one historian referred to the Founding Fathers as "the most remarkable generation of public men in the history of the United States or perhaps of any other nation."<sup>29</sup> And another historian observed: "It would be invaluable if we could know what produced this burst of talent from a base of only two and half million inhabitants."<sup>30</sup> But we do know what produced this "burst of talent." The Lord gave the answer himself: "I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of *wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood*" (D&C 101:80).<sup>31</sup>



Lincoln was of the same spiritual mettle as the Founding Fathers. He was about to leave his hometown, Springfield, Illinois, to accept the presidential chair. With that wisdom that so often surpassed the ages, he offered a formula that would bring unequivocal success to our nation: "Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him [referring to George Washington], I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, . . . I hope in your prayers you will commend me."<sup>32</sup>

Lincoln, a man of God in his own right, acknowledged the divine hand in the shaping of America. Before issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, he declared: "It is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence. . . . *And if I can learn what it is I will do it!*"<sup>33</sup> As noted by one set of authors, "He saw himself more and more as an especially appointed agent of the Almighty."<sup>34</sup> On one occasion Major General Daniel E. Sickles, who had lost a leg at Gettysburg, asked Lincoln why he was so sure of success at Gettysburg. Lincoln paused, and then responded:

I felt that the great crisis had come. . . . I went to my room and got down on my knees in prayer. Never before had I prayed with so much earnestness. . . . I felt I must put all my trust in Almighty God. *He gave our people the best country ever given to man. He alone could save it from destruction.* I had tried my best to do my duty and found myself unequal to the task. The burden was more than I could bear. . . . I asked him to help us and give us victory now. I was sure my prayer was answered. I had no misgivings about the result at Gettysburg.<sup>35</sup>

To deny God's hand in the discovery and preservation of America is to discredit and disparage the Founding Fathers and national heroes who frequently and fervently acknowledged the hand of God. They knew that God's hand in America would have implications far beyond the boundaries of one single nation. There is no escaping that conclusion. Patrick Henry wrote that America's global outreach had "lighted the candle to all the world."<sup>36</sup> It should not be surprising that Marquis de La Fayette, a revered defender of the Revolution, should prophetically declare, "The happiness of America is intimately involved with the happiness of all humanity."<sup>37</sup> The torch of the restored gospel was lit in America, but soon thereafter it was to be taken one by one, and two by two, to all the world, by those whose testimonies raged with the fire of the restored gospel.

Why, then, was God so concerned about America? Why keep this country in isolation until he sent forth Columbus? Why send the Pilgrims here in pursuit of religious freedom? Why such a manifested interest in the Revolutionary War and its outcome? Why send Washington and Adams and others to establish a country and constitution founded on religious freedom, if the true Church of Jesus Christ were still in existence and still thriving in western Europe? Why did so many sense this country's divine destiny? Was it God's prime purpose to establish some political powerhouse that would dominate the world? Or, rather, was he desirous of establishing a spiritually receptive environment where the true Church of Jesus Christ could be restored to the earth?

God was not passionately interested in the development of America as a political entity alone—that was the means, not the end. The ultimate goal was to provide a forum where his Church could be restored in its fulness, never again to be taken from the earth. That was the crowning aim in God's blessing of America.

President Joseph F. Smith well knew the Lord was the directing force in these matters:

This great American nation the Almighty raised up by the power of his omnipotent hand, that it might be

possible in the latter days for the kingdom of God to be established in the earth. If the Lord had not prepared the way by laying the foundations of this glorious nation, it would have been impossible (under the stringent laws and bigotry of the monarchical governments of the world) to have laid the foundations for the coming of his great kingdom. The Lord has done this.<sup>38</sup>

Finally the conditions were ripe to "land the plane"—to restore the Church to the earth, but Satan saw it approaching on the horizon.

#### Notes to Chapter 25: Final Preparations for the Restoration

1. Speaking of America, Nephi prophesied, "The Lord God will raise up a mighty nation" (1 Nephi 22:7).
2. Conference Report, April 1974, 102–3.
3. As cited in Petersen, *The Great Prologue*, 25.
4. Petersen, *The Great Prologue*, 26; emphasis added.
5. Garr, "Preparing for the Restoration," *Ensign*, June 1999, 36.
6. Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 359.
7. *Church News*, November 1, 1975, 9.
8. Cannon, *Gospel Truth*, 1:307.
9. Smith, *The Progress of Man*, 258. Elder Mark E. Petersen added, "There was no religious freedom for many years, and God knew that. But he knew also that this restoration of the gospel was to come, and he prepared for it by reserving the Western Hemisphere as a place where he would work out the conditions under which the gospel could be restored. He did not allow any colonization of the Western Hemisphere until he was ready for it" (*The Great Prologue*, 5).
10. See also 2 Nephi 1:6–7.
11. *Our Sacred Honor*, 365–66. Nephi also declared, "He [the Lord] leadeth away the righteous into precious lands" (1 Nephi 17:38).
12. Attributed to Alexis de Tocqueville by Dwight D. Eisenhower in his final campaign address in Boston, Massachusetts, November 3, 1952. Unverified. The last two sentences are attributed to de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* by Sherwood Eddy in "The Kingdom of God and the American Dream," 6.
13. Quoted in *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 5:279–80.
14. *Journal of Discourses*, 7:126. While no doubt some colonists came for economic reasons, there is no question that many came for religious freedom.
15. Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, Act 4, Scene 2, lines 306–9.

16. Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, Act 4, Scene 3, lines 3–5. See also Judges 7:1–12.
17. Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 359.
18. "George Washington to Continental Army: Farewell Orders, November 2, 1783"; emphasis added.
19. Bennett, *Our Sacred Honor*, 400.
20. Peters, *A More Perfect Union*, 18.
21. Bennett, *Our Sacred Honor*, 384–85.
22. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 147. See also D&C 98:5–6.
23. Bennett, *Our Sacred Honor*, 381–82; emphasis added.
24. Washington knew that the Lord's hand was in his life. Speaking of one of the pre-Revolutionary War battles in which he participated, he said, "By the all-powerful dispensations of Providence, I have been protected . . . ; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, altho' death was leveling my companions on every side of me!" (Philip B. Kunhardt Jr., Philip B. Kunhardt III, and Peter W. Kunhardt, *The American President*, 6).
25. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:229.
26. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, 586.
27. Conference Report, April 1898, 89.
28. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, 332–33.
29. Schlesinger, *The Birth of a Nation*, 245.
30. Tuchman, *The March of Folly*, 18.
31. See also D&C 109:54. LDS scholar Andrew C. Skinner made this significant observation about the redemption of all God's children through the shedding of the blood of Christ: "When we examine the history of the Restoration, we realize that the restored gospel itself was redeemed or purchased, by the shedding of the blood of Joseph Smith and his associates. What this means for me is that *my life* was redeemed and purchased by the blood of Christ; *my country*, my land of promise, was redeemed and purchased by the blood of patriots; *my religion* was redeemed and purchased by the blood of the prophets. . . . Preparation and redemption have come at a dear price" (*Prelude to the Restoration*, 16).
32. Watson, *Light from Many Lamps*, 70.
33. Kunhardt, Kunhardt, and Kunhardt, *Lincoln*, 336.
34. Kunhardt, Kunhardt, and Kunhardt, *Lincoln*, 336.
35. Kunhardt, Kunhardt, and Kunhardt, *Lincoln*, 336; emphasis added. The authors added the following

interesting postlude to this exchange between Major General Sickles and President Lincoln: "Rising to go, Mr. Lincoln took my hand in his and said with tenderness: 'Sickles, I have been told, as you have been told perhaps, your condition is serious. I am in a prophetic mood today. You will get well.'" And so he did.

36. Commager, "The Revolution as World Ideal," *Saturday Review*, December 13, 1975, 13.

37. De la Fuye and Baubeau, *The Apostle of Liberty*, 30.

38. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 409.

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### Satan's Preemptive Strike

Under such conditions, Joseph Smith came on the scene. While Satan is certainly evil, he is not naive; he knew who this young boy was—he knew Joseph was a spiritual redwood; he knew Joseph was destined to be a "disturber . . . of his kingdom" (Joseph Smith—History 1:20). Satan could see the plane in its landing pattern, and he knew Joseph Smith was the anointed pilot. But before the advent of something good and great, Satan always works the hardest.<sup>1</sup> It happened at the birth of the Savior with the slaying of the innocents. It occurred again when the Savior commenced his mission and was confronted with the three temptations. It happened during the time of the Atonement—there was the betrayal, the denunciation, the mock trial, and finally the temptation while on the cross. At every critical juncture, Satan was there. And so it would be with the Prophet Joseph before the advent of his great and glorious contributions—Satan would be there in all his diabolic opposition. At all costs, Satan knew he must stop this young boy from proceeding to carry out his destined work. Satan was poised to make his preemptive strike. He was "as a roaring lion . . . seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He was ready to "rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good" (2 Nephi 28:20).

Fully cognizant of this polar force, Joseph Smith commented: "In relation to the kingdom of God, the devil always sets up his kingdom at the very same time in opposition to God."<sup>2</sup> So visible was this opposition that, in reflection upon Joseph's life, Brigham Young wrote, "If a thousand hounds were on this Temple Block, let loose on one rabbit, it would not be a bad illustration of the situation at times of the Prophet Joseph. He was hunted unremittingly."<sup>3</sup>

When Joseph Smith was fourteen years of age (just shortly before the First Vision), he was returning home, about to cross the threshold of his door, when a bullet flew before him. Quickly he jumped inside. The next morning when it was light, the family located where the assassin had been lying under a wagon. They found the bullet lodged in a cow that was directly in Joseph's path. Then his mother entered in her journal: "We have not as yet discovered the man who made this attempt at murder, neither can we discover the cause thereof."<sup>4</sup> But with hindsight we can guess the cause: Satan knew that the time was near at hand when his kingdom would be shaken to its roots.

A short time passed after that experience, and Joseph was reading James 1:5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally." One can almost envision Satan nervously pacing, "wringing his hands" as he watched this young boy return to this scripture again and again. Joseph said: "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12).

Shortly thereafter, on a beautiful spring day, Joseph went to a nearby grove of trees to inquire which church was right. But he would not go alone. As he knelt in prayer, he heard the sound of footsteps; there was a thickening of his tongue so he could not speak and an overpowering gloom of darkness to which he almost succumbed. He acknowledged that at this moment "I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to . . . some actual being from the unseen world." Then he wrote: "Just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me *calling me by name and said*, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17).

Dan Jones, one of the prophet's friends, elaborated as to what then occurred: "He [Joseph] was informed . . . that all the religious denominations in the country believed imperfect doctrines, to a greater or lesser degree, and that consequently God did not acknowledge any of them as his Church; even though many of them were zealous, conscientious, God-fearing men, fleeing evil, and worshiping him according to the light which they had. He was commanded not to join any of them. He received a promise that the true doctrine—the fulness of the gospel, should, at some future time, be restored to him."<sup>5</sup>

Upon sharing this sacred experience in the grove, Joseph immediately encountered bitter persecution. Satan was pressing ahead with a frontal assault. Upon reflection Joseph recounted: "Telling the story [of the First Vision] had excited a great deal of prejudice against me among professors of religion, and was the cause of great persecution, which continued to increase; and though I was an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, . . . yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects—all united to persecute me" (Joseph Smith—History 1:22).

No sooner did Joseph receive the gold plates from which he translated the Book of Mormon than there were multiple attempts to wrest them from him. Numerous lawsuits were filed against the Prophet Joseph—no doubt part of the Satanic plan to divert him, to discourage him, to deter him from carrying out his divinely anointed work. E. D. Howe, a rabid anti-Mormon who published the Painesville *Telegraph*, wrote during the Kirtland era, "The surrounding country was becoming somewhat sensitive, *and many of our citizens thought it advisable to take all the legal means within their reach to counteract the progress of so dangerous an enemy [the restored Church] in their midst, and many law suits ensued.*"<sup>6</sup>

Joseph was falsely imprisoned on multiple occasions. How well we know the names of Richmond, Liberty, and Carthage jails. He was tarred and feathered. He saw widespread apostasy and betrayal by friends. And finally, 38 1/2 years after his birth, he suffered martyrdom and sealed his testimony with his blood.

On occasions Joseph was required to stand as a lone witness of the truth.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it was part of his Abrahamic test, part of the purchase price required to restore the gospel to the earth. The first such test

came in the grove of trees. There was no one who stood by his side.<sup>8</sup> True, he had the wonderful support of his family, but absent that small group of noble souls, he was a fourteen-year-old boy pitted against the world. There was no other mortal to whom he could turn and say, "Ask him—he was with me—he saw what I saw and heard what I heard." No, Joseph alone carried that staggering burden. In this respect he alone stood against the ministers of his day, against "men of high standing,"<sup>9</sup> against the false traditions that for centuries had declared the heavens were sealed. But he would not recant.

A few years passed and Joseph received the gold plates, but for a time there were no witnesses to the angelic visits, no corroborating testimonies that the plates were real. How tempting it must have been to disclose the heavenly record to family and friends or to say to his detractors: "Here are the plates you have mocked and doubted; here are the sacred records with the ancient language; here is the physical evidence of my divine manifestation. Now, what do you have to say?" But God in his infinite wisdom desired it otherwise. He would require agonizing patience rather than quick and easy disclosure. Just as the Savior would not call down the legion of angels to prove his skeptics wrong, so Joseph would not reveal the gold plates until the Lord consented, and then only to those who were spiritually prepared. In the meantime, he would stand alone.

Finally the day of great relief came. The plates were shown to three other men, each of whom testified to the truth and reality of the ancient record and angelic visitor. Joseph was overjoyed. In exuberance he said to his parents, "Father, mother, you do not know how happy I am: the Lord has now caused the plates to be shown to three more besides myself. . . . They [the Three Witnesses] know for themselves, that I do not go about to deceive the people, and I feel as if I was relieved of a burden which was almost too heavy for me to bear, and *it rejoices my soul, that I am not any longer to be entirely alone in the world.*"<sup>10</sup> After Joseph had suffered many trials and much loneliness, God reminded him, "Fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever" (D&C 122:9).

Joseph Smith, who was true to his calling in every way, spoke eloquently and prophetically of the restored Church's destiny:

No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.<sup>11</sup>

For the moment, Satan had temporarily emptied his arsenal, spent his artillery, called in every chip, and deployed every henchman to stop the First Vision, the Book of Mormon, and the Restoration—but it was not enough, nor would it ever be, because "the works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught" (D&C 3:1).

Notes to Chapter 26: Satan's Preemptive Strike

1. Marion G. Romney noted, "At the opening of every dispensation he [Satan] has made a frontal attack against the advent of truth" ("Satan, the Great Deceiver," *Ensign*, February 2005, 55).
2. Smith, *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 411.

3. Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 464.
4. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 68.
5. Jones, *History of the Latter-Day Saints*, 16.
6. Anderson, *Joseph Smith's Kirtland*, 38.
7. While Joseph stood alone in many respects, he could take comfort in the words of the Lord: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up" (D&C 84:88).
8. Daniel, who saw a glorious vision in the presence of others, observed, "I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision. . . . Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision" (Daniel 10:7–8).
9. Joseph Smith–History 1:21–22.
10. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 152; emphasis added.
11. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:540.

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## The Restoration

Satan's bold perpetual assault against Joseph Smith was a mighty witness that Joseph was indeed a prophet of God, chosen to restore Christ's Church to the earth. The "plane" could have landed no sooner. Even in this nation of religious freedom, Joseph and Hyrum were martyrs for the cause. The Church was restored to the earth as soon as it could have been and still survive. The observation of F. M. Bareham, as quoted by President Spencer W. Kimball, seems appropriate: "When a wrong wants righting, or a truth wants preaching, or a continent wants discovering, God sends a baby into the world to do it." Then President Kimball added: "When theologians are reeling and stumbling, when lips are pretending and hearts are wandering, . . . when clouds of error need dissipating and spiritual darkness needs penetrating and heavens need opening, a little infant is born."<sup>1</sup> As God had done with Columbus, Luther, and Washington, so now he did with the birth of Joseph Smith. Elder Neal A. Maxwell put it in perfect perspective: "The Book of Mormon plates were not buried in Belgium, only to have Joseph Smith born centuries later in distant Bombay. . . . God is in the details."<sup>2</sup> And so he would be in the details of the Restoration. Joseph Smith would be born in the right place, at the right time, with the right mission.

The Prophet Joseph's contributions to the restored kingdom were monumental. With the First Vision, the heavens became unlocked after centuries of closure. Through Joseph Smith the pure doctrines and

ordinances of the original Church were returned.<sup>3</sup> The precious and long-lost keys of the priesthood were restored. John the Baptist<sup>4</sup> returned the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood,<sup>5</sup> and through Peter, James, and John the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood were restored. Moses brought back the keys of the gathering of Israel; Elias returned the keys of the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham; and Elijah restored the sealing powers of the temple. In this regard the Lord said to Joseph: "Thou art blessed from henceforth that bear the keys of the kingdom given unto you; which kingdom is coming forth for the last time." And then to assure Joseph that Satan's heated opposition would ultimately be in vain, the Lord gave these words of triumphant finality: "The keys of the kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come" (D&C 90:2–3).<sup>6</sup> As part of the Restoration there were now living apostles and prophets who held the same keys as their ancient counterparts. There was a modern-day Peter, James, and John who could speak with divine authority and declare, "Thus saith the Lord."

Elder Boyd K. Packer shared the following experience, which highlights the reality of living prophets and restored priesthood keys. At the conclusion of an area conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark, President Spencer W. Kimball expressed a desire to visit the Vor Frue Church in order to see the Thorvaldsen statues of the Christ and the Twelve Apostles. The church had been closed for renovation, but arrangements were quickly made for President Kimball's group to be admitted. Elder Packer said, "Most of the group were near the rear of the chapel, where the custodian . . . was giving some explanation." He said, "I stood with President Kimball, Elder Rex Pinegar, and President Bentine, the [local] stake president, before the statue of Peter. In his hand, depicted in marble, is a set of heavy keys. President Kimball pointed to them and explained what they symbolized." Elder Packer said that he would never forget what happened next—President Kimball "turned to President Bentine and with unaccustomed sternness pointed his finger at him and said with firm, impressive words, 'I want you to tell every Lutheran in Denmark that they do not hold the keys! I hold the keys! We hold the real keys and we use them every day.'" Elder Packer said that they then walked to the other end of the chapel where the rest of the group was standing and President Kimball pointed to the statues and said, "These are the dead Apostles. Here we have the living Apostles." President Kimball then pointed to Elder Packer, Elder Thomas S. Monson, and Elder L. Tom Perry and said, "We are the living Apostles. You read about seventies in the New Testament, and here are living seventies, Brother Pinegar and Brother Hales." President Kimball's testimony was so powerful that the custodian's eyes filled with tears. Elder Packer said as they left that chapel: "I felt I had taken part in an experience of a lifetime."<sup>7</sup>

With these keys and divine charge, the Prophet Joseph brought forth the Book of Mormon,<sup>8</sup> the Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. He was empirical evidence that the scriptures were not a static body of divine literature, but a progressive unveiling of God's mind and will. He organized the Church in the same manner as in primitive times. He restored the sacred doctrines of the kingdom. He was the instrument through whom the temple ordinances were revealed and the gospel taken to the dead as well as to the living. Is it any wonder the scriptures state of him that he "has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it" (D&C 135:3)?<sup>9</sup>

The spiritual famine of apostasy was over; the night of blackness had ended. The heavens would yield their treasures again and again. The sunrise could be seen on the horizon, and the earth was about to be illuminated with the glorious rays of Christ's Church.<sup>10</sup> The gospel principles would be taught in pristine purity, ordinances performed with priesthood power, and hearts burn with blazing testimonies of the restored truth. William Phelps, a hymnist, wrote of these glorious days:



The Spirit of God like a fire is burning!  
The latter-day glory begins to come forth;  
The visions and blessings of old are returning,  
And angels are coming to visit the earth.  
The Lord is extending the Saints' understanding,  
Restoring their judges and all as at first,  
The knowledge and power of God are expanding;  
The veil o'er the earth is beginning to burst. 11

God's prophecy was being fulfilled—Joseph was bringing the Church "out of obscurity and out of darkness" (D&C 1:30).

Daniel saw all this in vision when he prophesied: "The God of heaven [shall] set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). He likened this kingdom unto a stone "cut out of the mountain without hands" that would roll forward until it filled the earth.<sup>12</sup> The Lord confirmed to Joseph that the restored Church was this stone that Daniel saw: "The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth" (D&C 65:2).

While John the Revelator knew there would be a time when the gospel would not be found on the earth; he also knew the long awaited day of restoration would be heralded from heaven: "I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel *to preach unto them that dwell on the earth*, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people" (Revelation 14:6).

Peter prophesied that before Christ came a second time there would be a "restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:20–21).<sup>13</sup> While the gospel of Jesus Christ was lost with the apostasy, it was restored in fulfillment of Peter's prophecy. The restored Church is the "marvelous work and a wonder" spoken of by Isaiah (Isaiah 29:14). And it was restored in "the dispensation of the fulness of times" (Ephesians 1:10), as spoken of by Paul. Joseph was the prophet who ushered in that dispensation—he was God's chosen instrument in restoring all things. Amos knew the absolute need for a prophet in this restoration process: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Joseph understood his divine calling, for he said, "I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world."<sup>14</sup> This he did. President Spencer W. Kimball summarized it well:

Another day dawned, another soul with passionate yearning prayed for divine guidance. A spot of hidden solitude was found, knees were bended, hearts were humbled, pleadings were voiced, and a light brighter than the noonday sun illuminated the world—the curtain never to be closed again, the gate never again to be slammed, this light never again to be extinguished. A young lad of incomparable faith broke the spell, shattered the "heavens of iron" and reestablished communication. Heaven kissed the earth, light dissipated the darkness, and God again spake to man. . . . A new prophet was in the land, and through him God set up his kingdom—a kingdom never to be destroyed nor left to another people—a kingdom that will stand forever.<sup>15</sup>

The living prophets and apostles have joined in bearing witness of the divine restoration of Christ's Church: "We declare in words of solemnity that His priesthood and His Church have been restored upon the earth

—'built upon the foundation of . . . apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone' (Ephesians 2:20)."<sup>16</sup>

The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith and other divinely appointed servants that they would "have power to lay the foundation of this church, *and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth*" (D&C 1:30). This revelation does not mean there are not good people in other churches—for there are. It does not mean that other churches do not have some truths—for they do. What it does mean is that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the *only* church upon the face of the earth that has all the truth revealed in this dispensation that is necessary for our salvation, the only church that has all the ordinances necessary to save and exalt a man or woman, and the only church that has the God-given authority to preach the doctrines of the kingdom in purity and to perform the sacred ordinances with divine validity. The restored Church is the same church that existed at the time of the Savior.

The Bible and early Christian writers left a blueprint of Christ's divinely organized church. The church restored through Joseph Smith is consistent with that blueprint. If one, however, were to compare the restored Church with the New Testament Church, he would find it to be similar, but not exact. Why the difference? Because Christ's Church was not a status quo church. It was a dynamic, living church built upon continuing revelation. While the eternal doctrines and ordinances did not change, procedures did vary to meet changing circumstances. For example, Christ initially chose twelve apostles to govern the Church. Then as the Church expanded, seventies, bishops, elders, and other officers were added to accommodate the growth. Christ initially instructed his disciples to "carry neither purse, nor scrip" (Luke 10:4), but later he revoked that counsel and changed the method of their preaching: "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip" (Luke 22:36).<sup>17</sup> In the beginning of his ministry the Savior commanded his disciples not to go to the Gentiles, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5–6). Later, through revelation, he commanded them to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 15). At one time the Saints worshiped on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath; but following the resurrection of the Savior, the new Sabbath became Sunday, the Lord's day (Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10). In each of the foregoing instances the underlying teachings and ordinances remained the same—only the procedures or timing changed.

In addition to procedure and timing changes, new and expanded doctrines were revealed to the New Testament Saints as they matured in righteousness, fulfilling the divine decree that truth would be given "precept upon precept; line upon line" (Isaiah 28:10). Paul taught the same principle to the Corinthians: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Corinthians 3:2).<sup>18</sup> Obviously the "meat" to which he referred constituted the deeper doctrines of the kingdom, which could only be fed to seasoned Saints. Later some of these doctrines were disclosed and others expanded upon, such as the three degrees of glory (1 Corinthians 15:40–42), Christ's preaching of the gospel to the dead (1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6), the doctrine of making one's calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10–19); and John's revelation on the war in heaven, the last days, the Millennium, and the divine destiny of man, all as recorded in the book of Revelation.

While significant procedural changes occurred and doctrinal insights were added upon in Christ's original Church, there was a key to help discover if a change was the Lord's will. It could be determined by asking the question: "Was this change attributable to the reason of man or revelation from God?" In Christ's Church there was always a divine audit trail when a significant change occurred—it was manifested in the form of a revelation. One might appropriately ask, "Was the Nicene Creed or Athanasian Creed a revelation from

God or the compromise of men? Was infant baptism introduced by a revelation? Was sprinkling or pouring directed from the heavens? If so, where are the revelations to be found?" There is no revelatory audit trail that leads us to these doctrines, only a broken line of man-made hypotheses, suppositions, and compromises.

The restored Church was patterned after Christ's Church in the meridian of time. The eternal doctrines and ordinances did not change, but there were some changes in procedures to accommodate the difference in circumstances and some additional doctrinal insights revealed as the Saints grew in spiritual maturity. In each case, there was an audit trail of revelation.<sup>19</sup> For example, certain procedures changed with the explosive growth of the Church. New Church leaders, such as Area Seventies, were chosen (D&C 107:98). Home teachers were selected to visit the homes of each Church member (D&C 20:51); a hymn book was created (D&C 25:11–12); and more detailed advice was given concerning the holding of disciplinary councils (D&C 102). In addition, the doctrines were expanded as needs arose and Saints matured. A health law was given to forewarn the members against the evils of tobacco, alcohol, and other harmful substances (D&C 89). Other doctrinal insights were given concerning the three degrees of glory (D&C 76), the salvation of little children (D&C 137), and how the gospel was preached to the dead (D&C 138). But each time there was a significant change from or addition to the original blueprint, there was an unmistakable audit trail, manifested in the form of revelation. Accordingly, the blueprints of the restored Church and the primitive Church are exactly alike, except for any changes directed by divine revelation.

As to the process underlying the restoration of Christ's Church, Elder Bruce R. McConkie observed: "Now and then in a quiet garden, or amid the fires and thunders of Sinai, or inside a sepulchre that cannot be sealed, or in an upper room—almost always apart from the gaze of men and seldom known by more than a handful of people—the Lord intervenes in the affairs of men and manifests his will relative to their salvation."<sup>20</sup> So it was with the Restoration. In the serenity and seclusion of the grove came the First Vision; in a humble boy's bedroom appeared the angel Moroni; on the private and pristine banks of the Susquehanna came the priesthood; behind a drawn curtain proceeded the most marvelous translation of the most marvelous book ever revealed to man; and in the simple, almost spartan setting of a humble log cabin emerged the organized Church. The divine footprints were clearly visible, the handiwork of God distinctly discernible. Instead of the spotlight, there was the secluded appearance of the Father and the Son; instead of a blaring microphone, the whispering voice of the Spirit; and instead of the garrulous masses, the humble but certain testimony of the few.

Many years before, God had demonstrated the pattern of heavenly things to Elijah: "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; *but the Lord was not in the wind*: and after the wind an earthquake; *but the Lord was not in the earthquake*; and after the earthquake a fire; *but the Lord was not in the fire*: and after the fire *a still small voice*" (1 Kings 19:11–12). That is God's way: "By small and simple things are great things brought to pass, . . . and by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls" (Alma 37:6–7). Quietly, humbly, discreetly, but with unquestionable certainty and power, the Church of Jesus Christ was restored.

#### Notes to Chapter 27: The Restoration

1. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 323–24.
2. Maxwell, "Encircled in the Arms of His Love," *Ensign*, November 2002, 17–18.

3. See D&C 10:62–64.

4. At least one of the early church writers also understood that John the Baptist would visit the earth before the Second Coming, for Origen (A.D. 185–255) wrote, "John's testimony precedes also the second and diviner coming of Christ. . . . It is likely . . . that before the second and diviner advent of Christ, John or Elias will come to bear witness about life a little before Christ" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10:344–45).

5. It is remarkable that Joseph not only restored the priesthood offices that existed at the time of the Savior, but he also knew the very duties related to each (see D&C 20).

6. See also D&C 35:25; 42:69; 115:19; 128:20–21.

7. Packer, *The Holy Temple*, 83–84.

8. See D&C 20:9–11.

9. The Jews have a tradition, somewhat distorted with time but nonetheless noteworthy, that in the last days (i.e., in the days when Elijah reappears), a Messiah ben Joseph will prepare the way for their Messiah. Some of the traditions hold that he will be a descendant of Joseph who was sold into Egypt, that he will be of the seed of Ephraim, that he will meet a violent death, and that he will be slain by the "Antichrist" (i.e., those who oppose Christ's work). What would be the purpose of his mission? Joseph Klausner, who wrote *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, summarized it as follows: "This Messiah, who was referred to by the Samaritans as Taëb (meaning 'he who returns' or according to others 'he who causes to return,' that is, one who brings about repentance or brings back better days), is in the later Samaritan sources regarded *primarily as a prophet who will restore everywhere the true Law to its former validity and convert all peoples, especially the Jews, to the Samaritan [Ephraimite] religion*" (*The Messianic Idea in Israel*, 484; emphasis added; see also pages 483–501). It is of interest to note that footnote 4 on page 484 of Klausner's book states, "But now most scholars translate [Taëb] 'the restorer.'" Dr. Klausner wondered why this tradition of a Messiah ben Joseph was so prevalent among the Jews but not found in the scriptures of today. The answer: Because it was removed from the scriptures, but the tradition carried on. Fortunately, the prophecy is preserved in the Book of Mormon. Joseph of Egypt prophesied that in the latter days a seer should be raised up, named after him, "and it shall be after the name of his father" (2 Nephi 3:15). In other words, this prophet or seer would be named Joseph, and he would be named after his father, Joseph. This seer was prophesied to do a work of "great worth . . . even to the bringing of them [the descendants of Joseph of Egypt] to the knowledge of the covenants which I [God] have made with thy fathers" (2 Nephi 3:7).

10. See also Alma 5:7.

11. *Hymns*, no. 2.

12. In referring to this scripture, Elder Mark E. Petersen said, "The Church to which you and I belong [i.e., The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] is that stone. It has been cut out of the mountain without hands, and your destiny and mine is to help roll it forth" (Conference Report, October 1960, 82). See also D&C 65:2.

13. See also 1 Nephi 14:7; D&C 86:10.

14. Smith, *Scriptural Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 412. See also 2 Nephi 3:24.

15. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 424–25.
16. *The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles*.
17. See D&C 56:4–7.
18. See D&C 50:40; Alma 12:30; 29:8.
19. The ninth Article of Faith states, "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God."
20. *The Gift of the Atonement*, 63.

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### Who Was This Man Named Joseph?

#### The Whole Truth and Nothing But the Truth

Suppose a journalist were to tell you the following four things, and nothing more, about one of the principal characters of the New Testament:

First, the Savior said of him, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31); second, the Savior said to this same man, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things of God, but the things that be of men" (Mark 8:33);<sup>1</sup> third, this man cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant, for which the Savior rebuked him and said, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matthew 26:52);<sup>2</sup> and fourth, this man, in an effort to protect himself, thrice denied that he knew the Savior (Luke 22:55–61). If that is all you knew about the man—what would you think? No doubt, you would think him a disbeliever, a rogue, a scoundrel, perhaps even worse. And so the unprincipled journalist, who revealed only the foregoing, may attempt to stain the character of perhaps the mightiest disciple of New Testament times: Peter, the apostle. In trying to expose some minor weaknesses, the author has missed the man and his majesty. "Oh," claims the journalist in defense, "each of the statements I have made is true." But truth does not live in isolation. It is not a group of words to be read in a vacuum. One is sworn on the witness stand to tell "the truth, the *whole* truth, and nothing but the truth." What is the whole truth about Joseph Smith?

On occasions some have attempted to expose and/or invent character flaws of Joseph Smith, as though such flaws were "the man." He was a "gold digger," they say, or he engaged in follies as a youth, or he made financial mistakes with the Kirtland Anti-Banking Society, and so on. Even if these allegations were true, what difference does it make? These shortcomings, even if true, are insignificant compared to the man and his staggering accomplishments. They are minnows in an ocean of whales. One might as well argue he accurately portrayed Peter when he revealed only the four "negative" episodes mentioned above, or that he accurately characterized Babe Ruth even though he disclosed only his record number of strikeouts, or that he

correctly portrayed Lincoln when he dwelt only on his lost political races. Unfortunately, there are such authors who are "wart writers," who delight in finding a wart of diminutive proportions and then magnifying it into the man. And in the process, they have completely missed the mark, the man, and his mission.<sup>3</sup> This is particularly true of secular writers who attempt to characterize a spiritual man. They simply lack the tools to "capture" the whole man. They are trying to describe a three-dimensional man with two-dimensional tools. Paul wrote of this dilemma: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

## The Prophet of the Restoration

Historians have noted that there were three grand keys to the Reformation. First was the development of movable type, which unlocked the written word, particularly the word of God as recorded by the biblical prophets; second came the invention of the mariners' compass, which allowed the sailor to navigate in the night, even with a clouded sky, and thus sail with pinpoint precision to his ultimate destination; and third was the discovery of gunpowder, which gave to the earthly kingdoms of the day military power not heretofore known.

Likewise, there were three parallel keys, but of a higher order, that triggered the Restoration: first, the dispensation of revelation that unlocked the word of God through living prophets; second, a divine compass known as the gift of the Holy Ghost, which helped honest seekers see through the dark night of apostasy and travel with certainty the narrow way to their heavenly destination; and third, the power of the priesthood, which endowed the kingdom of God on earth with a heavenly power to bless and save all mankind. The word, the compass, the power—these were the keys that unlocked the Reformation as well as the Restoration.

In the Restoration, Joseph Smith was the chosen bearer of the keys in every aspect. With regard to the word, the Lord declared, "This generation shall have my word through you" (D&C 5:10). The divine compass or gift of the Holy Ghost was returned to the earth with the baptism and confirmation of Joseph Smith. The Lord declared: "Blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost" (1 Nephi 13:37). And finally, as to the powers of heaven, the Lord declared, "The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven" (D&C 121:36). Those priesthood powers were restored by angelic messengers to the Prophet Joseph. Accordingly, he was the instrument through whom the word, the compass, and the power were dispersed.

On occasion, some may ask, "Do members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints put Joseph Smith on the same level as Jesus Christ?" The answer, of course, is no. The Savior is the Only Begotten of the Father. He is the only perfect man and the only name under heaven whereby we can be saved. We respect and revere Joseph Smith as a prophet of God, but we worship Jesus Christ alone as the Savior and the Redeemer of the world.

Having made that distinction, we nonetheless recognize and honor Joseph Smith as the Prophet of the Restoration. When Joseph Smith was but seventeen years of age, the angel Moroni appeared to him in his bedroom and made this astounding prophecy: "My [Joseph's] name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds and tongues" (Joseph Smith 1:33).<sup>4</sup> That was a remarkable prophecy to make of a farm boy who was seventeen years of age, who had no more than the equivalent of a third-grade education,<sup>5</sup> and who lived in the backwoods of New York, yet every word of it would be fulfilled. It is of some interest that the *New York Daily Tribune* on July 20, 1844 (just one month after Joseph's death), made the following

similar prophecy about Joseph Smith: "He was a remarkable man, and has left the impress of his genius upon the age . . . and *his name will be remembered, for good or evil, when the names of half the ephemeral Statesmen of the age will be forgotten.*"<sup>6</sup>

In the year 1844, just prior to the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, the mayor of Boston, Josiah Quincy, an educated and respected statesman, visited Nauvoo. He toured the city, visited with the people, and then interviewed the Prophet Joseph. Later he wrote a book titled *Figures of the Past*. In it he included a chapter on the Prophet Joseph with this prophetic insight:

It is by no means improbable that some future text-book, for the use of generations yet unborn, will contain a question something like this: What historical American of the nineteenth century has exerted the most powerful influence upon the destinies of his countrymen? And it is by no means impossible that the answer to that interrogatory may be thus written: Joseph Smith, the Mormon Prophet. And the reply, absurd as it doubtless seems to most men now living, may be an obvious commonplace to their descendants.<sup>7</sup>

It is, indeed, remarkable what Joseph Smith accomplished in his life. If one were to travel to Sharon County, Vermont, the birthplace of the Prophet, he would see a granite shaft piercing the sky 38 1/2 feet high, one foot representing each year of Joseph's life. Within that short span of 38 1/2 years his accomplishments proved herculean in mortal measurements. The following are but a sampling.

He translated the Book of Mormon (531 pages in the current English version) in approximately sixty-five days. In this book of scripture are hundreds of new names and events, interwoven sometimes into the most complex of details. But most important, this book contains new and clarifying religious doctrine. Its exposition of the Atonement is unsurpassed in beauty, clarity, and depth. It has no equal on this subject.

Some years ago a friend of mine made a presentation on the Book of Mormon in one of our family nights. He commenced by reading these lines from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

There is no fear in him; Let him not die;  
For he will live, and laugh at this hereafter. [Clock strikes.]  
Peace! Count the clock.  
The clock has stricken three.<sup>8</sup>

At first, these lines seemed not only insignificant, but irrelevant to anything in the Book of Mormon. Then my friend made his point: Shakespeare, one of the keenest intellects the world had ever produced, had made a mistake. There were no striking or ticking clocks at the time of Julius Caesar. He had placed something out of date. Even this master mind had momentarily stumbled. For more than 170 years, critics have placed their scholarly stethoscopes firmly against the Book of Mormon, listening for "ticking clocks," but their stethoscopes have been embarrassingly mute. Why?—because this book is not the work of a man, but of God.

Emma Smith, who transcribed a portion of the Book of Mormon as Joseph Smith translated it, made this observation to her son:

My belief is that the Book of Mormon is of divine authenticity—I have not the slightest doubt of it. I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for, when acting as his scribe, your father would dictate to me hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after

interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him. This was a usual thing for him to do. It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so . . . unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.<sup>9</sup>

This may seem insignificant to some, but to me it is astounding. For more than thirty years as a lawyer, I regularly dictated to my secretary. Frequently, I was interrupted by a phone call or someone asking a question. The first thing I did after the interruption was to turn to my secretary and ask, "Where was I?" But Joseph was not dictating from his imagination; he was not authoring or writing a new work. He was translating from the plates in front of him, as directed by the Spirit of the Lord, and, therefore, did not need to ask (nor did he ask), "Where am I?"

It is of interest to note that Emma Smith referred to her husband in the above quote as "unlearned." Isaiah prophesied that a book would be delivered to one who is "not learned," and thereafter, Isaiah said, "shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness" (Isaiah 29:12, 18). Joseph was the unlearned one of whom Isaiah spoke. The book referred to by Isaiah was the Book of Mormon, which would help the spiritually blind see out of obscurity and discover the truth. Paul's comment seems so apropos of Joseph Smith: "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Among his other accomplishments, Joseph Smith served as the mayor of Nauvoo, which rivaled Chicago as the largest city in Illinois. He became a candidate for president of the United States in 1844 and presented a remarkable platform. He proposed viable solutions to the slave question that would have saved millions of dollars and, more importantly, preserved thousands of lives.<sup>10</sup> He championed the elimination of imprisonment for debt. He proposed a reduction in the size of Congress. He made recommendations for a national bank charter and the annexation of Texas to the United States. He was far-reaching and visionary in his solutions to the political issues of the day.

He authored the charter for the city of Nauvoo. He commanded the militia, the Nauvoo Legion, which at its peak was a force of about three thousand men.

But Joseph Smith's most significant accomplishment was the establishment of the restored Church of Jesus Christ, a work he was foreordained to do in the grand council in heaven before the world was (D&C 127:2). Under this divine appointment he went into a grove of trees in New York, where he saw God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. It was this glorious vision that signaled the truth that God still speaks to men today. While much of the Christian world believes that revelation ended with the Bible, Joseph's First Vision was living proof to the contrary. President Gordon B. Hinckley noted, "During the short time of his great vision he learned more concerning the nature of Deity than all of those who through centuries had argued the matter in learned councils and scholarly forums."<sup>11</sup>

Joseph Smith restored the doctrine of a premortal existence—that we lived as spirit children of God before we were born into mortality. He taught that the gospel would be preached in the spirit world to those who had died but had not yet had an opportunity to hear the full message. He brought back the correct understanding of the interrelationship between grace and works, and he greatly expanded upon the sublime doctrine of the Atonement.

There is one scripture in the New Testament that stands out like a colossal monument—most of the Christian world attempt to discreetly avoid it. It is 1 Corinthians 15:29: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for



the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" But Joseph Smith faced this scripture square on and explained that baptism for the dead is a gospel ordinance that is essential for people who have lived on the earth but never received this sacred rite.

Joseph Smith introduced an understanding of temples that was unknown to his contemporaries. Many in Jerusalem today look forward to the rebuilding of a temple in that holy city, but the question lingers: What ordinances will they perform there? Will they merely have a restoration of the sacrifices referred to in the Old Testament, or is there something more? Fortunately there is more, much more. The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith the temple ordinances that open the doors to exaltation and godhood.

Joseph Smith explained to us the relationship between the Melchizedek and Aaronic priesthoods. He explained to us the duties of a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, an elder, a high priest, a seventy, and an apostle, all of which offices are mentioned in the Bible. What church in all the world today can explain the duties of those officers, let alone has all of them in its church structure?

Joseph Smith revealed to us the true purpose of genealogy work. It is not to prove we are better than someone else—the reasoning of the Pharisees—but to discover our deceased ancestors so we might perform for them all the ordinances of the gospel, recognizing "that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:40).

The gospel is somewhat like a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle. When Joseph Smith came on the scene, perhaps a hundred pieces were in place. Then the Prophet Joseph Smith, under divine direction, put most of the other nine hundred pieces together. People could now look and say, "Oh, now I understand where I came from, why I am here, and where I am going. Now I know what it means to be a child of God and the depth of my divine potential."

Certainly there have been many brilliant men and women since the meridian of time. Why were they not able to put this puzzle together? Because God did not enlighten their minds to do so. This work had been reserved for the Prophet Joseph Smith. William Tyndale, who made a significant translation of the Bible into English during the early sixteenth century, made a prophetic statement that calls to mind the divine destiny of the Prophet Joseph: "If God spare me I will one day make the boy that drives the plough . . . to know more of Scripture than the Pope does."<sup>12</sup>

Joseph Smith once spoke of Christopher Columbus, who had been the guest of honor at a banquet. A courtier who was jealous of his discoveries asked him if there were not other capable men in Spain who could have successfully completed his voyage. Columbus responded by holding up an egg and inviting those present to make the egg stand on its end. No one could do it. Finally, he struck one end of the egg upon the table and left it standing. He then looked at the courtier and said, "When someone has led the way, it is easy for others to follow suit."<sup>13</sup> Likewise, it was the Prophet Joseph Smith who led the way in restoring the Church of Jesus Christ, with all its doctrines and ordinances. In hindsight, it all seems so logical and natural.

Some years ago my brother gave to me a ten-volume set, in excess of five thousand pages, with double columns and small print, entitled *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. It contained the writings of the early Christian writers. I thought, "Who in the world would ever read this? He would have to be a masochist." And so the books sat on the shelves untouched for about ten years. Every now and then my wife or I would dust them off. Then for some reason, the desire came to read them. At first I resisted it—the task seemed too daunting, too overwhelming—but the urge was unrelenting. Finally I succumbed and started on volume 1, page 1.

There was much to labor through, much sand to sift. But the precious golden nuggets started to surface; the doctrinal trends started to emerge. Even with the passing of several centuries and the escalation of the apostasy, certain doctrines were undeniably taught by these "fathers." These included the truths that baptism by immersion is an essential ordinance to enter the kingdom of God; that one receives the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands; that there are multiple heavens; that works and grace are mutually dependent; that the gospel is preached to the dead; that one does not pray to patron saints; that homosexuality is abhorred; and that abortion is akin to murder.

While some churches taught some of these doctrines, no church taught all of them until Joseph Smith came along. How did he know? Did he have access to the ten-volume set of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* at the "Palmyra Community Library"? Did he search them out, study all five thousand pages, and then cleverly devise his gospel plan based on his extensive research? If so, why had not others "figured it out" before him or, for that matter, even after him? Because an understanding of the gospel plan requires more than reason—it requires revelation and divine appointment. And so Joseph Smith was called of God to be the instrument through whom God would reveal his word in this dispensation. The Prophet Joseph's role in this divine endeavor was clearly defined by the Lord: "This generation shall have my word through you. . . . And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation, in this the beginning of the rising up and coming forth of my church out of the wilderness" (D&C 5:10, 14).<sup>14</sup>

#### A Prophet, Seer, and Revelator

Accordingly, we sustain Joseph Smith as a prophet, seer, and revelator. Some might inquire, "What prophecies did he make?" He prophesied that the Saints would go to the Rocky Mountains. They did. In 1832 he prophesied of the Civil War—even designating the state where the rebellion would begin—South Carolina (D&C 87:1; D&C 130:12). Twenty-eight years later that bloody war, as prophesied, began exactly where he said it would.

He prophesied the following about Willard Richards: "The time would come that the balls would fly around him like hail, and he should see his friends fall on the right and on the left, but that there should not be a hole in his garment." In June 1844, Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, John Taylor, and Willard Richards were confined in Carthage Jail. A mob surrounded the jailhouse. They let loose with their barrage of bullets. Some flew through the outside window; others were discharged up the stairway through the lone doorway. It was indeed a hail of bullets. Joseph was shot multiple times and killed, as was Hyrum. John Taylor was shot five times but survived. But what of Willard Richards, a man of significant corporeal stature? One bullet grazed his left lower ear, but no bullet pierced his garments. Every word of Joseph's prophecy was fulfilled.<sup>15</sup>

But perhaps the most remarkable prophecy of all took place on May 18, 1843. The Prophet Joseph had dinner with Stephen A. Douglas, who was then a justice of the Illinois Supreme Court. Joseph prophesied, "Judge, you will aspire to the presidency of the United States; and if you ever turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of the Almighty upon you; and you will live to see and know that I have testified the truth to you; for the conversation of this day will stick to you through life."<sup>16</sup> Thirteen years passed and the above prophecy was published in the *Deseret News* (September 24, 1856). On June 12, 1857, Douglas gave a speech in Springfield, Illinois, and turned his hand against the Latter-day Saints when he spoke the following: "The knife must be applied to this pestiferous, disgusting cancer [meaning Mormonism] which is gnawing into the very vitals of the body politic. It must be cut out by the roots and seared over by the red hot iron of stern and unflinching law."<sup>17</sup> Less than three months later

(September 2, 1857), the *Deseret News* republished Joseph's prophecy in an editorial column addressed specifically to Stephen A. Douglas. The warning was loud and clear. Douglas was nominated three years later and expected by most political pundits to be the winner, but it was not to be. Lincoln was the surprise victor. The electoral vote was as follows:

	<b>Electoral Vote</b>	<b>Number of States Carried (based on electoral vote)</b>
Lincoln	180	18
Breckenridge	72	11
Bell	39	3
Douglas	12	1 (Missouri)

Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God. Joseph was also a seer. A seer "is greater than a prophet" (Mosiah 8:15), as he is also able to look into seer stones, or the Urim and Thummim, and translate unknown languages. It was such a process Joseph Smith used, in part, as he translated the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham.

Joseph Smith was a revelator. He received revelation after revelation from God, many of which are recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants for any honest man to review. Accordingly, when we speak of Joseph Smith as a prophet, seer, and revelator, we are not just making reference to some hollow religious words, or lofty biblical phrases, we are describing what Joseph Smith was in fact and in deed.

Joseph Smith knew that the Lord was on his side; he knew he was the Lord's anointed. This fact was confirmed in an unusual but highly credible manner. Joseph Smith was falsely charged while in Colesville, New York. A messenger was sent to Esquire Reid (an attorney who was not a member of the restored Church) to seek his defense of the Prophet Joseph. Mr. Reid declined to represent Joseph. But then, Mr. Reid reported:

I thought I heard someone say to me, "You *must* go, and deliver the Lord's Anointed!" Supposing it was the man who came after me, I replied, "The Lord's Anointed? What do you mean by the Lord's Anointed?" He was surprised at being accosted in this manner, and replied, "What do you mean, sir? I said nothing about the Lord's Anointed." I was convinced that he told the truth, for these few words filled my mind with peculiar feelings, such as I had never before experienced; and I immediately hastened to the place of trial. Whilst I was engaged in the case, these emotions increased, and when I came to speak upon it, I was inspired with an eloquence which was altogether new to me, and which was overpowering and irresistible. I succeeded, as I expected, in obtaining the prisoner's discharge.<sup>18</sup>

Though Joseph Smith's life was riddled with lawsuits, persecutions, and trials, he possessed an unconquerable optimism through it all. On one occasion, he said: "Never be discouraged. If I were sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia, with the Rocky Mountains piled on me, I would hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage, and I would come out on top."<sup>19</sup> It is as though he wore a spiritual life-preserver. You could push him down underneath the water, with all the trials that life could thrust upon a mortal man, but he would always rise to the surface. He had an uncanny spiritual buoyancy, an unrelenting resiliency, an unconquerable spirit. He knew the Lord was both his mentor and his protector, for God had decreed: "Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God

shall be with you forever and ever" (D&C 122:9).

What did it cost to bring forth the Restoration? John Taylor eloquently responded that it "cost the best blood of the nineteenth century" (D&C 135:6).

In the year 1880, David O. McKay's father was called on a mission to return to his native country of Scotland. He noticed that people shunned him when he taught the gospel. They were particularly bitter when he mentioned the name of Joseph Smith. He resolved that the best way to capture the interest of the people was to teach them the simple truths of the gospel, without mentioning the name of Joseph Smith or the Restoration. After doing this for a time, he felt a terrible spirit of gloom. "Unless I can get this feeling removed," he thought, "I shall have to go home. I can't continue having my work thus hampered." Sometime thereafter he retired to a secluded cave. He prayed, "Oh, Father, what can I do to have this feeling removed? I must have it lifted or I cannot continue in this work." He said he then heard a voice as clear as any he had ever heard say, "Testify that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God." In response, he cried in his heart, "Lord, it is enough."<sup>20</sup>

And so we can testify without excuse, without apology, and without embarrassment that Joseph Smith was a prophet, seer, and revelator, that he knelt in a grove of trees and saw God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, that he translated the Book of Mormon, and that he was the anointed prophet of God to restore Christ's Church to the earth. The words of the beloved hymn are so appropriate, "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!"<sup>21</sup> While we do not worship him, we do honor him, we respect him, and we revere him as the Prophet of the Restoration.

Notes to Chapter 28: Who Was This Man Named Joseph?

1. See also Matthew 16:23.

2. See also John 18:10.

3. In this regard President Gordon B. Hinckley observed, "To highlight the mistakes of a person and gloss over the greater good is to draw a caricature. Caricatures are amusing, but they are often ugly and dishonest. A man may have a wart on his cheek and still have a face of beauty and strength, but if the wart is emphasized unduly in relation to his other features, the portrait is lacking in integrity" (*Standing for Something*, 105–6).

4. See also D&C 122:1–2. In his book *In the Eye of the Storm*, Elder John H. Groberg related some of his experiences while serving a mission in Tonga. On one occasion he and his companion visited the small island of Tafahi, where about eighty people lived. These people were extremely isolated and had little contact with civilization. He said that he and his companion visited all of the eighteen homes on the island and invited the people to attend a cottage meeting that night. While speaking to one family that evening, the thought came to him, "Why don't you test the prophecy that the name of Joseph Smith should be known for good and evil throughout the world?" He asked those in attendance, "Have you ever heard of President Eisenhower?"

The response was, "Who's he?"

Elder Groberg explained that he was the president of the United States. They did not know anything about the United States.

He then asked, "Have you ever heard of a man by the name of Krushchev?" Again, they had no idea who he was. Elder Groberg explained that he was the leader of Russia, but they had never heard of Russia.

He asked about Charles DeGaulle, movie stars, sports figures, the Depression, the Korean War, and so on. They knew nothing of these people or events. There was not one member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on the island; there were, however, two other churches there.

Elder Groberg took a deep breath and asked, "Have you ever heard of Joseph Smith?"

He said, "Immediately their faces lit up"—finally a name they recognized—and the father of the home said, "Don't talk to us about that false prophet! Not in our home! We know all about him. Our minister has told us!" Elder Groberg said that the scripture from the Pearl of Great Price (Joseph Smith—History 1:33) sounded in his mind, and to him, "this was a direct fulfillment of prophecy" (105–6).

5. Justin Martyr (A.D. 110–165) described in similar terms the educational background of the early apostles: "From Jerusalem there went out into the world, men, twelve in number, and these illiterate, of no ability in speaking: but by the power of God they proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the word of God" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:175–76). The Savior met opposition because he was not a "certified, degree-carrying theologian." Frederic W. Farrar commented on this seeming anomaly to the Jews, "How could one who 'had never learnt letters,' and knew nothing of what passed for 'theology'—gaze without quailing on those broad phylacteries, and listen without reverence to that micrology of erudition? Was it not amazing that He should dare to teach with personal authority, and without any reference to precedents and technicalities of men who had actually listened to Shammai and to Hille!" Accordingly, they retorted, "He is beside Himself" (*Early Christianity*, 1:525). In a similar manner the ministers of Joseph's day retorted, "It was all of the devil" (Joseph Smith—History 1:21).

6. *New York Daily Tribune*, July 20, 1844; emphasis added.

7. Quincy, *Figures from the Past*, 376–400, and Roberts, *Joseph Smith the Prophet-Teacher*, 8–9. In a similar vein President Joseph F. Smith wrote, "The day will come—and it is not far distant, either—when the name of the Prophet Joseph Smith will be coupled with the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Son of God, as his representative, as his agent whom he chose, ordained and set apart to lay anew the foundations of the Church of God in the world, which is indeed the Church of Jesus Christ, possessing all the powers of the gospel, all the rites and privileges, the authority of the Holy Priesthood, and every principle necessary to fit and qualify both the living and the dead to inherit eternal life, and to attain to exaltation in the kingdom of God" (*Gospel Doctrine*, 134).

8. Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 2, Scene 1, lines 190–93.

9. *The Saints' Herald*, October 1, 1879, 26:290.

10. In February of 1844 Joseph Smith advocated that Congress buy the slaves from (1) the sale of public lands and (2) a deduction from the pay given to congressmen. Elder B. H. Roberts described subsequent events that confirm the visionary genius of the Prophet Joseph: "The document from which this counsel is quoted was published in February, 1844. Eleven years later, namely, in 1855, Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson declared that the question of slavery should be met in accordance 'with the interests of the south, and with the settled conscience of the north. It is not really a great task,' said this eminent writer, 'a great feat for this

country to accomplish, to buy that property of the planter as the British nation bought the West Indian slaves.' He also predicted that 'the United States will be brought to give every inch of their public lands for a purpose like this.' This plan suggested by Mr. Emerson in 1855, brought to him no end of praise as a sage philosopher and wise humanitarian. But what of Joseph Smith, whose suggestion preceded that of Mr. Emerson by eleven years? Let another, Josiah Quincy, answer: 'We who can look back upon the terrible cost of the fratricidal war which put an end to slavery, now say that such a solution of the difficulty would have been worthy a Christian statesman. But if the retired scholar [referring to Emerson] was in advance of his time . . . what shall I say of the political and religious leader [referring to Joseph Smith] who had committed himself in print, as well as in conversation, to the same course in 1844? If the atmosphere of men's opinions was stirred by such a proposition when war clouds were discernible in the sky, was it not a statesman-like word eleven years earlier when the heavens looked tranquil and beneficent?'" (*Comprehensive History of the Church*, 2:192).

11. Hinckley, "A Season for Gratitude," *Ensign*, December 1997, 2.

12. Smyth, *How We Got Our Bible*, 85.

13. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 304.

14. President Brigham Young taught, "It was decreed in the counsels of eternity, long before the foundations of the earth were laid, that he, Joseph Smith, should be the man, in the last dispensation of this world, to bring forth the word of God to the people, and receive the fulness of the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God. The Lord had his eyes upon him. . . . He was fore-ordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 108).

15. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:619; see also D&C 135.

16. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:394.

17. Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:397.

18. Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 177.

19. Madsen, *Joseph Smith, the Prophet*, 27.

20. McKay, *Cherished Experiences from the Writings of President David O. McKay*, 11.

21. *Hymns*, no. 27.

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## The Price of Truth

Joseph Smith was not alone in his preparation for the Restoration. God had sent many others who became key figures in building the kingdom. Each of these men and women struggled to find the truth and in that search discovered that the religions of the day fell far short of Christ's original Church. Those honest searchers for truth were not without spirituality, but they were caught in the spiritual famine of the apostasy. They knew of the need for apostles and prophets, for priesthood authority, and for a return to the basic teachings and ordinances of the original gospel. When they searched hard enough and long enough and sincerely enough, they were finally permitted to feast upon the restored truths of the gospel.

One such man was Wilford Woodruff. At the age of twenty-three he seriously commenced his religious pursuit. He wrote: "I did not then join any church for the reason that I could not find a body of people, denomination, or church that had for its doctrine, faith, and practices those principles, ordinances, and gifts which constituted the gospel of Jesus Christ as taught by Him and His apostles. Neither did I find anywhere the manifestations of the Holy Ghost with its attendant gifts and graces." He said that when he questioned other ministers about these noticeable omissions, they would respond that they had been done away with—that they were "no longer needed in the Church and kingdom of God." To such responses Wilford Woodruff observed: "Such a declaration I never could and never would believe."<sup>1</sup>

Wilford Woodruff then told of a remarkable experience that prepared him for the restored Church. In his youth he had become acquainted with an older gentleman named Robert Mason, a man of supreme spirituality and integrity. Mason had the spirit of prophecy; through the power of faith he healed the sick; he even cast a devil from his son. He did not claim he had authority to officiate in gospel ordinances, but he did believe in a faith that could heal, and he did receive personal revelations. He told Wilford Woodruff that "the day was near when the Lord would establish His Church and Kingdom upon the earth with all its ancient gifts and blessings." In the year 1830, Wilford Woodruff saw Robert Mason for the last time. On that occasion, Robert Mason told him he felt impelled by the Spirit of the Lord to relate a dream that had been given him thirty years earlier, in the year 1800. Mason continued:

I was carried away in a vision and found myself in the midst of a vast orchard of fruit trees. I became hungry and wandered through this vast orchard searching for fruit to eat, but I found none. While I stood in amazement finding no fruit in the midst of so many trees, they began to fall to the ground as if torn up by a whirlwind. They continued to fall until there was not a tree standing in the whole orchard. I immediately saw thereafter shoots springing up from the roots and forming themselves into young and beautiful trees. These budded, blossomed, and brought forth fruit which ripened and was the most beautiful to look upon of anything my eyes had ever beheld. I stretched forth my hand and plucked some of the fruit. I gazed upon it with delight; but when I was about to eat of it, the vision closed and I did not taste the fruit.

At the close of the vision I bowed down in humble prayer and asked the Lord to show me the meaning of the vision. Then the voice of the Lord came to me saying: "Son of man, thou hast sought me diligently to know the truth concerning my Church and Kingdom among men. This is to show you that my Church is not organized among men in the generation to which you belong; but in the days of your children the Church and Kingdom of God shall be made manifest with all the gifts and the blessings enjoyed by the Saints in past ages. You shall live to be made acquainted with it, but shall not partake of its blessings before you depart this life. You will be blest of the Lord after death because you have followed the dictation of my Spirit in this life."<sup>2</sup>

Wilford Woodruff then recorded, "When Father Mason had finished relating the vision and its interpretation,

he said, calling me by my Christian name: 'Wilford, I shall never partake of this fruit in the flesh, but you will and you will become a conspicuous actor in the new kingdom.' He then turned and left me. These were the last words he ever spoke to me upon the earth."<sup>3</sup>

Three years after the foregoing experience, Wilford Woodruff was baptized into the restored Church of Jesus Christ. Immediately he thought of Robert Mason and wrote him a long letter explaining that he had found the restored Church, that the priesthood was again on the earth, and that he had been baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. Wilford Woodruff then shared the touching sequence to his letter: "He [Robert Mason] received my letter with great joy and had it read over to him many times. He handled it as he handled the fruit in the vision. He was very aged and soon died without having the privilege of receiving the ordinances of the gospel at the hands of an elder of the Church. The first opportunity I had after the truth of baptism for the dead was revealed, I went forth and was baptized for him in the temple font at Nauvoo."<sup>4</sup>

Such a sacred experience, however, did not come to Wilford Woodruff by chance. He had paid the price to receive the truth. Of his search for the restored gospel he wrote:

I had given myself up to the reading of the Scriptures and to earnest prayer before God day and night as far as I could years before I heard the fulness of the gospel preached by a Latter-day Saint. I had pleaded with the Lord many hours in the forest, among the rocks, and in the fields, and in the mill—often at midnight for light and truth and for His spirit to guide me in the way of salvation. My prayers were answered and many things were revealed to me. My mind was open to the truth so much so that I was fully satisfied that I should live to see the true Church of Christ established upon the earth.<sup>5</sup>

And so he found the truth, as might all men and women who pay the price of honest inquiry. Alma told of the price paid by him to gain a testimony: "Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true" (Alma 5:46). President Spencer W. Kimball spoke eloquently of the heavenly quest for spiritual truths:

From the beginning, people of the world have existed in alternating light and shadow, but most of the time in the greyness or darkness of the shadows, with relatively short periods of light. . . . But when men begin to hunger, when arms begin to reach, when knees begin to bend and voices become articulate, then and not until then does the Father push back the horizons, draw back the veil, and make it possible for men to emerge from dim, uncertain stumbling to sureness in the brilliance of the heavenly light.<sup>6</sup>

Some years ago a religious conference was held, at which eighteen leading Christian historians explored the quest of various denominations for the primitive Church. At the end of the conference, David Edwin Harrell Jr. was asked to give some concluding remarks. In doing so he made this revealing observation: "One indelible impression I take from this conference is that the restoration ideal has been a powerful motif. In fact, it may be the most vital single assumption underlying the development of American Protestantism. . . . All over the world millions of Christians still seek a restoration of the Church's lost purity."<sup>7</sup> And for a price it may be found.

Notes to Chapter 29: The Price of Truth

1. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, 14–15.



2. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, 16–17.
3. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, 17.
4. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, 17–18. Like Robert Mason, Roger Williams sought for the restored Church. C. Leonard Allen wrote, "Without exaggeration we can say that Williams' life was dominated by this search for 'lost Zion,' that his overriding passion was the quest for God's pure church." Then, referring to Williams's beliefs, he said, "Not only had there been a 'falling away . . . from the first primitive Christian state or worship'—a theme all Puritans accepted in some fashion—but the church in fact had been extinguished, totally desolated by antichristian pollution. The task now, Williams believed, was not to found churches but to denounce religious error and to wait for God's impending restoration of 'lost Zion'" (C. Leonard Allen, "Roger Williams and 'the Restauration of Zion'" in Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, 33–34).
5. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, 18.
6. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, 423.
7. Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, 239.

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## Why Is It Important to Understand the Doctrine of the Apostasy and Restoration?

Why is it important not just to believe in the apostasy and the Restoration, or have a casual acquaintance with these doctrines, but to master them? In this regard, Peter admonished the Saints to seek out the underlying rationale of the doctrines: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). In the final analysis, the doctrines of the kingdom are not just some intellectual weapon to convince our friends and foes we have a more rational philosophy than theirs. They are much more. They are the underpinnings of our testimony, the mainspring of our motivation, and the anchor of our hope. Elder Boyd K. Packer observed, "The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior."<sup>1</sup> That is why the missionary lessons of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have such a profound effect upon people's lives—they contain the simple but sublime doctrines of the gospel. Alma knew there is no worldly substitute for these doctrines: "The preaching of the word . . . had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else" (Alma 31:5).

The hard-core experiences of life will dramatically confirm this truth. If someone wants to quit smoking, he may seek relief in nicotine patches, chewing gum, counseling, and the rehabilitation centers of society, but none of these will have the impact of hearing and accepting the doctrine of the Word of Wisdom.

Years ago as a missionary I taught a man who for many years had smoked. Finally, after learning of the Word of Wisdom he was able to quit. Then came his startling revelation, "I knew smoking was bad for me physically. My doctors told me it would cause my early death, but I could not give it up. Only when I learned it was a spiritual command of God did I have the resolve to overcome the habit."

If someone is depressed with the loss of a loved one, he may turn to counseling and anti-depressant drugs, but no prescription for hope will be better than feasting upon the doctrines of the resurrection and the plan of salvation. When the transgressor discovers he cannot find peace in the remedies of the world, he may embrace the doctrines of repentance and the Atonement, and then he will experience the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).

It is the doctrinal certainties of the kingdom that are our rod of iron, to which we firmly cling when life's threatening clouds cast their shadow upon us. Again and again it is the doctrines that are our beacon light, our well of hope, our reservoir of resolve. Sometimes, in our trials and moments of aloneness, all we have to sustain us are our *covenants* and our *doctrine*.

Some have contended that it is our way of life that is important, not the doctrine. But they cannot be separated. Our conviction that Jesus is the Christ, that the dead will rise, that we will be rewarded according to our works, that families are eternal—these are the spiritual catalysts of our lives. Our works follow our doctrine.

There are some truths that inform us, others that motivate us, and yet others—the doctrines of the kingdom—that sustain us and inspire us. It was said of Cicero that when he spoke the people cheered, but when Demosthenes spoke, the people took up arms. When one hears the doctrines of the kingdom taught in purity and power, it is a call to arms, an irresistible invitation to live a Christlike life.

One cannot sip from these doctrines and be filled; neither can one tiptoe through the scriptures and expect a mastery of gospel truths. The sublime doctrines of the kingdom do not lend themselves to casual observation. They do not readily accommodate the toe-dipper. Rather, they require an immersion of heart and mind, involving intense study, profound thought, and earnest supplication. They are demanding masters. Then, in the course of our rigorous examination and acceptance, they yield their unparalleled fruit: hope, enlightenment, faith, and resolve. The doctrines of the apostasy and the Restoration are no exception.

Woven into the annals of history is the unmistakable hand of the Lord—the temporary removal of Christ's Church as spoken of by the prophets, the Reformation, the discovery of America, the Revolutionary War, the Constitution, and finally the glorious Restoration. These events were not a series of serendipitous acts. They were part of the master plan, pieces in the divine puzzle, carefully, meticulously, and lovingly laid out by the Master Designer. They were decreed in the premortal existence and foretold by the prophets. These inspired events have become doctrinal pillars that help define our faith, fire our resolve, and spur us on to more godlike works. Knowledge of these doctrines is power. It is the power to have peace in troubled times, power to forge ahead when all else has collapsed around us, power to confront falsehood and sin. In short, the doctrines of the kingdom are the greatest motivational power in all the world to be good and to do good. This is why it is important—nay, imperative—to grasp the key doctrines of the kingdom, of which the apostasy and the Restoration are critical components.

In our search for an understanding, even mastery of those doctrines, we can discover a trail of clues. Some are subtle and discreet, others bold and unmistakable, but ultimately each fits together to form a congruent

whole. When the scriptures are combined with history, and history with logic, and logic with common sense, and common sense with prayer, there emerges a pattern evidencing the apostasy and the Restoration that neither the historian nor scriptorian can rightfully ignore. All of these witnesses, abundantly manifested in so many ways, bear powerful testimony, intellectually and spiritually, that there was indeed an apostasy and a restoration of Christ's Church.

Note to Chapter 30: Why Is It Important to Understand the Apostasy and Restoration?

1. Packer, "Little Children," *Ensign*, November 1986, 17.

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## Appendix A

A Summary of the Lives and Works of Early Christian Writers

<u>Author</u> <b>(approximate date and pronunciation)</b> <sup>1</sup>	<u>Some Noted Writings</u>	<u>Background Information</u>
Aristides (air-iss-TIE-deez) c. A.D.125	<i>Apology</i>	A philosopher from Athens who converted to Christianity and who became an apologist. He wrote the first known Christian apology.
Arnobius (ar-NO-bee-us) c. A.D. 260-330	<i>The Case against the Pagens</i>	A pagan teacher in North Africa before his conversion to Christianity. He became a Christian apologist. Lactantius was one of his students.
Athenagoras (ATH-uh-NAG--ur-us) c. A.D. 150–190	<i>A Plea on Behalf of the Christians; On the Resurrection of the Dead</i>	An Athenian philosopher who converted to Christianity. He is considered one of the most eloquent and skillful of the -apologists.
Barnabas (BAR--nuh-bus) c. A.D. 70–132	<i>The Epistle of Barnabas</i>	Some believe the author was Barnabas the apostle, who was a missionary companion of Paul, but most scholars believe the author is unknown. His work is a general discussion concerning church teachings and ordinances that were designed to help the Saints resist Satan.
Clement of-Alexandria (KLEM-ent) c. A.D. 160–215	<i>The Instructor; The Stromata, or Miscellanies; Fragments; Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?; Exhortation to the Greeks</i>	A philosopher and theologian who taught the gospel in the context of Greek philosophy. He was put in charge of teaching the new converts at Alexandria. Origen is believed to have been one of his pupils.

Clement of Rome

(KLEM-ent), also referred to as 1 - Clement c. A.D. 30–100	<i>The Epistle of St. Clement to the Corinthians</i>	A bishop of Rome. He is believed to have been a fellow missionary with Paul (Philippians 4:3). He wrote an epistle to the Christian congregation at Corinth to rebuke the unlawful deposing of their appointed leaders.
Commodian, also known as - Commodianus (kum-OH-dee--AN-us) c. A.D. - 240	<i>Instructions of - Commodianus</i>	Seems to have been a North African bishop about whom little is known.
Cyprian (SIP--ree-un) c. A.D. 200–258	Numerous epistles	A pupil of Tertullian. He served as bishop in Carthage (North Africa) until he was martyred in A.D. 258. He wrote more than eighty epistles and numerous treatises on gospel - subjects.
Cyril of Jerusalem (SEER-ul) d. A.D. 386	<i>Catechetical Lectures</i>	A bishop of Jerusalem. He was banished from his post of bishop for twelve years. His catechetical letters explained the faith to new initiates of the gospel.
Dionysius of - Alexandria (DIE--uh-NIE-she-us) d.c. A.D. 264	Only fragmentary quotations of his extensive writings remain.	A pupil of Origen and later bishop of Alexandria.
Dionysius of - Corinth (DIE-uh--NIE-she-us) Second century	Various letters	A Christian bishop who wrote eight letters described by - Eusebius.
Dionysius of Rome (DIE-uh-NIE--she-us) d. A.D. - 268	<i>Refutation and Apology</i>	Bishop of Rome who reorganized the church after the persecution of Valerian.
Eusebius Pamphilus (yoo--SEE-bee-us) c. A.D. 270–340	<i>Ecclesiastical History</i>	A bishop of Caesarea in Palestine; known as the "Father of Church History." He recorded much of the persecution of the Christians and recorded the history of the church as witnessed by himself and other authors of the time.
Firmilian (FUR--MILL-yun) c. A.D. 200–268	Letter	Bishop of Caesarea. His only known writing is a letter to Cyprian supporting the necessity of rebaptizing those baptized by heretics.
Hegesippus (hej--uh-SIP-us) c. A.D. 110–180	<i>Memoirs</i>	Wrote in five books the tradition and doctrine of the - apostles.
		Perhaps the author is Hermas, who is greeted by Paul (Romans 16:14), or the brother of Pius I, or a freedman formerly owned by a woman named Rhoda; but generally

Hermas (HER--mus) prior to A.D. 160	<i>The Shepherd of Hermas</i> (aka <i>The Pastor of Hermas</i> )	the author is considered unknown. Hermas, the narrator, relates instructions (in the form of visions) given to him by the divine teacher (the Shepherd), usually in the form of allegory. It was widely read and valued by the early - Christians.
Hippolytus (hip--ALL-it-us) c. A.D. 170–236	<i>The Refutation of All - Heresies</i>	A disciple of Irenaeus, a bishop of Rome, and one of Rome’s leading theologians. He opposed the church leaders of his time and broke off into a schismatic group. He died as a martyr to the cause. He believed the origin of Christian heresies was in Greek philosophy.
Ignatius (ig--NAY-shus) c. A.D. 35–107	<i>The Epistle of S. - Ignatius</i>	The bishop of Antioch. He wrote seven epistles to six Christian congregations and one to Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, while he was traveling from Antioch to Rome to face his martyrdom. Tradition states that he was a disciple of the apostle John.
Irenaeus (EYE--rin-EE-us) c. A.D. 115–202	<i>Against Heresies; Proof of the Apostolic - Teaching</i>	<i>The bishop of Lyons in France. He was a pupil of Polycarp. His writings were designed to refute the multiple heresies attacking the church, particularly Gnosticism. He died a martyr to the cause.</i>
Justin Martyr c. A.D. 110–165	<i>Apologies and Dialogue with Trypho</i> (a Jew)	A Gentile and, before his conversion to Christianity, a philosopher. After his conversion he became an evangelist spreading the gospel message. He became a martyr about A.D. 165. His writings are among the earliest Christian apologies known; they are directed specifically to help the Romans understand Christianity.
Lactantius (lak--TAN-shus) c. A.D. 250–325	<i>The Workmanship of God; The Divine Institutes; The Wrath of God; The Deaths of the Persecutors; The - Phoenix</i>	A Christian apologist born in North Africa who became the tutor for the eldest son of Constantine. Because of his eloquent style, he is known as the Christian Cicero.
Minucius Felix (meh-NEW-shus - FEE-lix) c. A.D. 170–215	<i>Octavius</i>	A Roman lawyer who converted to Christianity. He wrote an apology that was a dialogue between the heathen Caecilius and the Christian Octavius.
Novatian (no--VAY-shun) d. A.D. 257	<i>On the Trinity; On Jewish Meats; On Public Shows; On the Advantages of Chastity</i>	Believed the theological doctrines of the church, but he broke away from the church because he believed it was lax on discipline.
Origen (OR-uh--jen) c. A.D. 185–	<i>Commentary on John; Hexapla; Against Celsus; On First</i>	A gifted student of Clement of Alexandria. He later became a famous teacher at the school of Alexandria. He had a keen mind and was the most prolific of the early Christian writers. It is estimated by some that he wrote approximately 2,000

255	<i>Principles; On Prayer; On Martyrdom</i>	works. He is known as the "father of Christian theology." He endured tortures and became a martyr for the Christian cause during the Decian persecution.
Papias (PAY-pe--us) Early second - century	<i>Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord</i>	Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia. He is known as one of the apostolic fathers. Only fragments of his writings remain.
Polycarp (POL--ih-karp) c. A.D. 69–156	<i>Epistle to the Philippians</i>	Bishop of the church at Smyrna. Tradition states that he was a disciple of the apostle John. He was burned at the stake at an old age. His letter contains many quotations purportedly from apostolic writings.
Tatian (TAY-shun) c. A.D. 110–172	<i>Oration to the Greeks; Diatessaron (a harmony of four or five gospels)</i>	An Assyrian who converted to Christianity in Rome. He was acquainted with Justin Martyr. After Justin Martyr's death, Tatian succumbed to the Gnostic heresies and founded a sect called the Encratites about A.D. 166.
Tertullian (ter--TULL-yun) c. A.D. 140–230	<i>To His Wife; Apology; On the Witness of the Soul; Against the Jews; Prescription against Heretics; On the Resurrection of the Flesh; Against Marcion; On Modesty</i>	Born a heathen and evidently educated in Rome; he then became a convert to Christianity. His writings were voluminous, covering a wide gamut of church doctrines and ordinances. In addition, he was an avid apologist who attacked the teachings of well-known heretics. Eventually he succumbed to the doctrines of Montanus, a heretic of the - church.
Theophilus (thee--OFF-ih-lus) second century	<i>To Autolyces</i>	Bishop of Alexandria, an apologist, and the first person to refer to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as the "Triad."
Unknown author; approximately third or fourth century; probably several authors over several decades of time	<i>Constitutions of the Holy Apostles</i>	A manual of instruction for clergy and laity designed to unify the church.
Unknown Early second century c. A.D. 80–140	<i>The Didache, or Teaching of the Apostles</i>	Believed to be a church manual of the early Christian church consisting of a moral treatise and directions concerning church ordinances.
Unknown; perhaps Pantaenus, the master of Clement of Alexandria. (pan-TEE-nus) About the middle or end of the	<i>The Epistle to Diognetus</i>	A tribute to the Christian way of life—that they live in the world, but are not part of it; also a discourse on the love and goodness of God.

second century

Unknown	<i>The Second Epistle of Clement</i>	Correspondence that seems to be a homily (moral sermon or lecture), rather than an epistle.
Victorinus (VIK--tur-EYE-nus) d.c. A.D. 304	<i>Commentary on the Book of Revelation</i>	A bishop in Syria who died as a martyr, probably under the reign of Diocletian. Only his commentary on the Book of Revelation and a fragment on the creation of the world - survived.

Note to Appendix A: A Summary of the Lives and Works of Early Christian Writers

1. The dates and pronunciations were taken principally from Bercot, *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*; Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*; and *The Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*. Other reputable books have dates that may slightly vary from those listed, but the approximate time periods given should be accurate enough to assist readers in their search for the truth.

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## Appendix B

A Synopsis of the Apostasy and the Restoration

Only One True Church

In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants the following significant statement is made: "This church [is] . . . the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). This scripture does not mean that there are not good people in other churches—for there are. It does not mean that other churches do not have some truths—for they do. What it does mean is that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("the LDS Church") is the only church that has all the truths revealed in this dispensation, the only church that offers the ordinances necessary for salvation and exaltation, and the only church that has the priesthood of God, thereby making it possible to teach the doctrines with power and perform the ordinances with divine validity.

On one occasion I taught a Sunday School class of fourteen-year-olds. I put on the chalkboard a picture of the sun orbiting the earth. I asked the class for their comments. Immediately the students noticed I had things in reverse. "The earth rotates around the sun, not the other way around," they said. But that fact was not obvious five centuries ago. About A.D. 150 Ptolemy (an ancient astronomer) taught that the earth was the center of universe, and that the sun and other heavenly bodies rotated around it. For about 1400 years this was "gospel truth" in both the scientific and religious communities. Then, in 1543, Copernicus was bold enough to announce that he thought that theory was in direct opposition to the truth—instead, he announced, the earth orbited the sun. Later Galileo (who invented the telescope and charted the skies), together with Kepler and his mathematical formulas, proved the doctrine of an earth-centered universe to be false.

Likewise, for centuries Christian historians and scholars taught that Christ's Church continued uninterrupted since the meridian of time. Then a young boy named Joseph Smith came on the scene with his spiritual telescope, charting the spiritual skies. He announced that the doctrine of a continuous church was wrong. In

fact, he said, the truth was the complete opposite—the Church had been taken from the earth, and now there was a need for a restoration.

## The Apostasy Declared

The scriptures are clear that Christ and his apostles established a formal church while on the earth and that that church flourished for a season following his ascension. The LDS Church then makes this bold assertion: There was a spiritual decline of Christ's Church (an apostasy), which continued until Christ's Church was no longer on the earth.

## The Cause of the Apostasy

While we know that external persecution, both Judaic and Roman, was a historical fact, it was not the cause of the apostasy. The Lord revealed to King Mosiah the true cause: "This is my church and I will establish it; and *nothing* shall overthrow it, save it be the transgression of my people" (Mosiah 27:13). It was wickedness that would destroy the Church, manifest in two forms—first, disobedience to God's commandments, and second, heresy concerning the doctrines. When the disobedience became so widespread and the heresies so profound, the Lord withdrew his authority and his stamp of approval—so the integrity of his Church would not be compromised.

The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem was a prototype of the destruction of the Church. It was in this temple that Zacharias had seen an angel of God; it was in this temple that the Savior, as a baby, had come to be blessed; it was in this temple that the Savior had come at age twelve to be about his father's business; it was in this temple that the Savior preached the word of God; it was in this temple that he drove out the money changers, yet still declared it to be his Father's house. But at the conclusion of his ministry, when the wickedness was so great and the rejection so profound, he announced to the Jews, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:38). The physical structure remained for a time, but the Spirit was gone. As it had happened to the House of God, so it would happen to the Church of God—a visible institution remained, but the Spirit was missing. Will Durant, the noted historian, saw this destructive process from within: "Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it. . . . Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world."<sup>1</sup>

## Evidences of the Apostasy

There is an old saying that there is no such thing as a perfect crime—there are always clues or evidences to the observant onlooker. And so there are clues or evidences of the apostasy to the diligent seeker. The Savior put it another way: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20).

### ***First Evidence: The apostles were killed and the Quorum of Twelve Apostles was extinguished.***

Paul had declared that the apostles and prophets were the foundation of the Church and necessary to keep the Church united. The first official act of the apostles after the ascension of the Savior was the selection of an apostle to replace Judas: "Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, *must* one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22).

The apostles were essential to keeping the doctrine pure. Suppose I were to tell a story at one end of the row and let it work its way to the other end. As sure as can be, the story will inevitably change. While the apostles were alive, they would write epistles and preach sermons that would constantly correct the story as



it made its way "down the row." But with the death of the apostles, there was no check-and-balance system in place, and consequently heresies flourished.

Durant observed, "When the first generations of Christianity had passed away, and the oral tradition of the apostles began to fade . . . a hundred heresies disordered the Christian mind."<sup>2</sup>

The apostles were the spiritual glue that held the Church together, the moral compass that kept it on course, the mouthpieces through whom God spoke. Without them the fractionalization process began; but Satan always has a counterfeit, and soon ecumenical councils replaced the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and reason replaced revelation as the governing scepter in the ongoing church.

***Second Evidence: The scriptures are a historical witness that the apostasy was in progress and a prophetic witness it would be consummated before Christ's return.*** Even in Old Testament times the prophets knew of the great apostasy. Amos prophesied: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). And Micah spoke of the days that the "sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them" (Micah 3:6).

Paul was amazed that the Galatians were already in a state of apostasy: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6); and on another occasion Paul prophesied: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, *not sparing the flock*" (Acts 20:29). Peter spoke of "false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways" (2 Peter 2:1). And then this sad commentary of Paul to Timothy: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Timothy 1:15).

John saw the day when Satan would temporarily prevail: "And it was given unto him [Satan] to make war with the Saints, *and to overcome them*: and power was given him over all kindreds, tongues, and nations" (Revelation 13:7). Paul gave this descriptive and definitive prophecy of the apostasy: "For that day [Christ's second coming] shall not come, except there come a falling away first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

The foregoing is not an exhaustive list of scriptures on the subject. To the contrary, there are over seventy biblical scriptures that describe the apostasy in progress or as yet to be completed before the Second Coming.

***Third Evidence: The Bible ends about A.D. 100.*** Why does it end? The majority of epistles in the New Testament were written to correct some errors that were creeping into the Church, to resolve some disputed issues, or to clarify some doctrines. Does anyone really believe that about A.D. 100 all the errors had been corrected, all the moral issues resolved, all the doctrine clarified? If the Church had remained on the earth, the Bible would have continued because the apostles would have continued to receive revelation to guide a living, dynamic Church.

***Fourth Evidence: Loss of miracles and gifts of the Spirit.*** With rare exception after the first two centuries, there is little mention of miracles, healings, prophecies, and gifts of the Spirit. Paul Johnson, a noted historian, was aware of this void: "It had been acknowledged at least since imperial times that the 'age of miracles' was over, in the sense that Christian leaders could no longer spread the gospel, like the apostles, with the aid of supernatural power."<sup>3</sup>

John Wesley was quick to observe this loss of the Spirit in the ancient church:

It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost . . . were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian. . . . From this time they [the spiritual gifts] almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, (as has been vulgarly supposed), "because there was no more occasion for them," because all the world was become Christians. This is a miserable mistake; not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christian. The real cause of it was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so called, was "waxed cold." The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other Heathens. The Son of Man, when he came to examine his Church, could hardly "find faith upon the earth." *This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left.*<sup>4</sup>

***Fifth Evidence: The Dark Ages.*** If Christ's Church is designed to perfect us physically, spiritually, and intellectually, and if the Church was the dominant force in Western civilization, would it have been a time of dark ages or light ages? Isaiah saw it coming: "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people" (Isaiah 60:2).

Light is a preeminent sign of Christ and his gospel. John said, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:5–6). These are powerful words. It is one way or the other. Either Christ's Church was a dominant force in Western civilization and there were no Dark Ages, or the Dark Ages are a historical fact and Christ's Church, with its attendant light, was noticeably absent from the earth.

***Sixth Evidence: Many teachings were perverted or lost.*** Eusebius (A.D.270–340) wrote (quoting Hegesippus): "The Church continued until then as a pure and uncorrupt virgin, . . . but when the sacred choir of apostles became extinct, and the generation of those that had been privileged to hear their inspired wisdom had passed away, then also the combinations of impious error arose by the fraud and delusions of false teachers."<sup>5</sup>

With time *baptism* became diluted. It was changed from a commandment to a convenience. But how much clearer could the Savior's mandate have been: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The doctrine of the *premortals existence* as taught by Jeremiah and Job and the Savior was no longer to be taught in the ongoing church.

The *preaching of the gospel to the dead*, which explains so beautifully how all men will hear the gospel, just vanished from Christian theology. Canon Farrar, the Church of England minister who was so frequently quoted by Elder Bruce R. McConkie and Elder James E. Talmage, spoke of Christ preaching the gospel to the dead as recorded in 1 Peter 4:6. He acknowledged that this was a "half forgotten article of the Christian creed." Then he made this enlightened observation:

Few words of Scripture have been so tortured and emptied of their significance as these. . . . Every effort has been made to explain away the plain meaning of this passage. It is one of the most precious passages of Scripture, and it involves no ambiguity, except such as is created by the scholasticism of prejudiced theology.

. . . For if language have any meaning, this language means that Christ, when His Spirit descended into the lower world, proclaimed the message of salvation to the once impenitent dead.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of *eternal marriage* was lost. Paul taught, "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11). This doctrine was further affirmed by Peter, who spoke of husbands and wives as "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7). Not only was this doctrine lost, but worse yet, the ongoing church was advocating celibacy. This was no surprise to Paul, however, who had specifically prophesied of those apostates who would preach of "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats" (1 Timothy 4:3–4).

The doctrine that *man possessed the potential to become like God, his Father*, was converted from a glorious truth to an alleged blasphemy. The concept of *multiple heavens* disappeared from church theology. Other doctrines became corrupted, such as *the nature of God*, which became an enigmatic conglomeration of scripture and Greek philosophy. Instead of *grace and works* being mutually inclusive, they were pitted against each other as though they were some sort of spiritual enemies.

No wonder Thomas Jefferson, who saw this sad state of affairs, commented:

The religion-builders have so distorted and deformed the doctrines of Jesus, so muffled them in the mysticisms, fancies and falsehoods, have caricatured them into forms so monstrous and inconceivable as to shock reasonable thinkers. . . . *Happy in the prospect of a restoration of primitive Christianity*, I must leave to younger athletes to encounter and lop off the false branches which have been engrafted into it by the mythologists of the middle and modern ages.<sup>7</sup>

***Seventh Evidence: The ordinances changed.*** Isaiah knew it would happen, for he prophesied, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5).

*Blessing of babies.* The scriptures record that the Savior "took them [little children] up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:16). We have christening, we have baptisms, but where are the blessings of children today?

*Baptism was done by immersion.* The early Christian initiate went down into the water and came up out of the water (Acts 8:38–39). John baptized "in Aenon near to Salem, because there was much water there" (John 3:23). The symbolism of the act (meaning, the death, *burial*, and resurrection of Christ) required an immersion. Will Durant observed, "By the ninth century the early Christian method of baptism by total immersion had been gradually replaced by aspersion—sprinkling—as less dangerous to health in northern climes."<sup>8</sup>

*The sacrament* commenced as a simple ordinance. It was not long before it was associated with long prayers and candlesticks. Then the doctrine of transubstantiation arose, which contended that the wafer and wine were literally converted into the flesh and blood of Christ. Instead of a change in our hearts, the focus was a change in the nature of the wafer.

*The ordinances and covenants associated with the temple were lost.* In 1522 Pope Adrian VI acknowledged this corruption of the ordinances:

We know well that for many years things deserving of abhorrence have gathered round the Holy See. Sacred things have been misused, ordinances transgressed, so that in everything there has been a change for the worse. Thus it is not surprising that the malady has crept down from the head to the members, from the popes to the hierarchy. We all, prelates and clergy, have gone astray from the right way. . . . Therefore, . . . we shall use all diligence to reform before all else the Roman Curia, whence perhaps all these evils have had their origin. . . . The whole world is longing for such reform.<sup>9</sup>

***Eighth Evidence: The simple manner of prayer was altered.*** The Bible is clear that we pray to the Father through the Son, with the sincerity of our hearts. But sometime after the death of the apostles, the people were encouraged to pray to patron saints, through patron saints, from memorized texts. The principles of prayer were gradually and inexorably undermined. Little by little Satan cut the spiritual lifelines between man and God.

***Ninth Evidence: The scriptures were removed from the hands of the lay members.*** Paul noted that the Saints at Berea were more noble than the Saints at Thessalonica because they "searched the scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11). As time elapsed, the scriptures were removed from the hands of the lay members and found only in the hands of the clergy—oftentimes in a language not understood by the common man. Such a condition would be somewhat akin to a mayor of a city requiring all of his citizens to deliver their scriptures to his house. No one could retain a copy for his individual use. If a person wanted to read the scriptures, he would have to go to the mayor's home. But there was a further problem—there was only one copy available, and it was in Latin. Suffice it to say, such a condition would have a chilling effect on the spirituality of that town and its citizens. This circumstance triggered the ire of many of the Reformers. If Christ's Church had continued, scriptures would have remained in the hands of the lay people and most likely in a language they could understand. Without them the Saints were deprived of a vast spiritual reservoir that was essential to their salvation.

Tyndale, who translated the scriptures into English, made this unwitting prophecy: "If God spare me I will one day make the boy that drives the plough . . . to know more of the scriptures than the Pope does."<sup>10</sup>

***Tenth Evidence: The ongoing church no longer bore the Savior's name.*** In Book of Mormon times there was a dispute as to what the name of Christ's Church should be. The Savior gave this simple but understandable response: "How be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel" (3 Nephi 27:8).

Elder Talmage noted: "There are churches named after their place of origin—as the Church of England; other sects are designated in honor of their famous promoters—as Lutherans, Calvinists, Wesleyans; others are known from some peculiarity of creed or doctrine—as Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists; but down to the beginning of the nineteenth century there was no church even claiming name or title as the Church of Christ."<sup>11</sup>

***Eleventh Evidence: The priesthood was lost.*** Without the apostles, there was no ability to perpetuate the priesthood on an ongoing basis. Roger Williams sensed something was missing in his day and age: "The Apostasy . . . hath so far corrupted all, that there can be no recovery out of that apostasy until Christ shall send forth new apostles to plant churches anew."<sup>12</sup>

John Wesley's brother Charles recognized that men were now taking divine authority upon themselves. Of their own accord they were ordaining other men and thus nullifying God's mandate: "Ye have *not* chosen me, but I have chosen you. and ordained you" (John 15:16). After John Wesley ordained Thomas Coke a "superintendent" to administer the sacraments to the Methodists, Charles wrote:

So easily are bishops made  
By man's or woman's whim?  
W[esley], his hands on C[oke] hath laid,  
But who laid hands on Him?13

A teacher, reciting an ancient Hindu legend, spoke of the earth as being suspended in the universe. Finally someone asked: "What holds up the earth?" The teacher replied, "An elephant." Shortly thereafter, the question came, "What holds up the elephant?" The teacher replied, "A giant tortoise." A short time lapsed, then the further question came, "What holds up the tortoise?" The teacher, somewhat annoyed, replied, "Let's change the subject." Charles Wesley knew his brother would have to change the subject when the question came, "Who laid hands on him?" But no priesthood bearer in the restored Church will ever have to change the subject when asked, "Who laid hands on him?" because every such man can trace his lineage directly back to the Savior himself.

### When Was the Church Lost?

This question is tantamount to asking, "When did a certain senior citizen's hair turn grey?" We may not know with certainty the exact day, but we can know with certainty that the transition was complete. Not long after the death of the apostles, the Church was gone. There were still many good individuals during all these ages of apostasy, but the Church as an institution was no longer on the earth.

### Why Not Immediately Restore the Church to Earth?

Why wait approximately 1600 to 1700 years to restore the Church? Suppose for a moment you are the captain of a plane. Numerous passengers are on board. The engine catches on fire. Your immediate goal is to get the plane to the ground. The quickest way to accomplish this is to go into a nose dive, but the goal is not just to land the plane as soon as you can, but *rather as soon as you safely can*. And so the Lord had a master plan to land the "plane" (the Church) as soon as he could safely do so, in such a way that it would never again be taken from the earth. In order to do so, he needed to prepare an environment that was politically, socially, and religiously hospitable. And so, his master plan began.

That master plan included the Magna Carta, the Petition of Rights, and the Bill of Rights—all of which advanced political freedom. With the discovery of movable type, books began to free the minds of the people. Then a host of courageous men rose up: Wycliffe in England, Huss in Czechoslovakia, Calvin in France, Zwingli in Switzerland, and Luther in Germany. These men did not come on the scene by chance. Their births were not part of some random selection process. To the contrary, Paul observed that the Lord "hath determined the *times* before appointed, and the *bounds* of [our] habitation" (Acts 17:26). God knew both when and where they would be born.

Not only did God need to free the minds of the people politically and intellectually, but he also needed to establish a place apart from the customs and superstitions of the Old World. The Book of Mormon unveils the rest of the master plan. It prophesies of Columbus, who would discover America: "I beheld the Spirit of

God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren" (1 Nephi 13:12). Jacob Wasserman, who wrote Columbus's biography, quoted Columbus's feelings in this regard: "Our Lord unlocked my mind, sent me upon the sea, and gave me fire for the deed. Those who heard of my emprise called it foolish, mocked me, and laughed. *But who can doubt but that the Holy Ghost inspired me?*"<sup>14</sup>

The Book of Mormon spoke of the spirit working upon certain Gentiles who were in captivity: "And they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters" (1 Nephi 13:13). These were the Pilgrims. Speaking of the Puritans and their voyage to America, Alexis de Tocqueville (the French historian and philosopher) noted that they were "the scattering of the seed of a great people which God with His own hands is planting on a predestined shore."<sup>15</sup>

The Book of Mormon speaks of the Revolutionary War: "The power of God was with them [the American colonists], and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle" (1 Nephi 13:18). George Washington readily acknowledged this divine aid: "No People can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men more than the People of the United States. *Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.*"<sup>16</sup>

Why was God so concerned about reserving, discovering, and establishing America? Was it so he could raise up a political powerhouse to dominate the world? Or was it so he could prepare a receptive atmosphere where his Church could be restored to the earth, never again to be taken?

## The Restoration

Satan must have seen the plane circling (the Church about to be restored), but before the advent of something good and great Satan always works the hardest. It happened at the birth of the Savior with the slaying of the innocents. It occurred again when the Savior commenced his mission and was confronted with the three temptations. It occurred during the time of the Atonement, with the betrayal, the denunciation, and the mock trial. At every critical juncture, Satan was there. And so it would be with the Prophet Joseph before the advent of his great and glorious mission—Satan would be there in all his diabolic opposition. At all costs, Satan knew he must stop this young boy from proceeding to carry out his destined work.

When Joseph Smith was fourteen years of age (shortly before the First Vision), he was returning home, about to cross the threshold of his door, when a bullet flew past him. Quickly he jumped inside. The next morning, when it was light, the family could see where the assassin had been lying under a wagon. They found the bullet lodged in a cow that had been directly in Joseph's path. His mother entered in her journal: "We have not as yet discovered the man who made the attempt at murder, neither can we discover the cause thereof." But with hindsight we can guess the cause. Satan knew that the time was near at hand when his kingdom would be shaken to its roots.

A short time passed after that experience and Joseph was reading James 1:5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally." One can almost envision Satan nervously "wringing his hands" as he watched this young boy read that scripture again and again. In Joseph's own words he said: "Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12).

Shortly thereafter on a beautiful spring day, Joseph went to a nearby grove of trees, but he was not alone. As he knelt in prayer, he heard the sound of footsteps; his tongue was thickened so he could not speak, and he felt an overpowering gloom of darkness, to which he almost succumbed. It was at this moment that he acknowledged, "I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to some actual being from the unseen world" (Joseph Smith–History 1:16). Then a glorious light of heaven dispelled that cloud of darkness, and he saw God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, "whose brightness and glory defy all description" (Joseph Smith–History 1:17).

No sooner did Joseph receive the gold plates than there were multiple attempts to wrest them from him. Numerous lawsuits were filed against him to divert him, to discourage him, to deter him from his divinely appointed mission. He was falsely imprisoned at Richmond, Liberty, and Carthage. He suffered betrayals and apostasies; and finally 38 1/2 years after his birth, he suffered martyrdom, in which he sealed his testimony with his blood. Amidst all that opposition, all those storms, Joseph landed the plane safely to the ground. Through him, the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood and Melchizedek Priesthood were restored, the keys of gathering and temple work were returned to the earth, and the teachings and ordinances were revealed in their pristine purity. Peter declared that Christ could not come a second time until "the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21). That prophecy was now in its fulfillment.

Is it any wonder that Joseph Smith should declare with prophetic power:

No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.<sup>17</sup>

With such a history we can bear witness to all the world in humility, but with absolute certainty, that there was an apostasy, and subsequently, a glorious restoration of Christ's Church.

Notes to Appendix B: A Synopsis of the Apostasy and the Restoration

1. Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 595.
2. Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, 592.
3. Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, 162.
4. Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 7:26–27; emphasis added.
5. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History Book XXXII*, 118.
6. Farrar, *The Early Days of Christianity*, 1:140.
7. Cousins, *In God We Trust*, 157, 162.
8. Durant and Durant, *The Age of Faith*, 738.
9. Durant and Durant, *The Reformation*, 381.

10. Garr, "Preparing for the Restoration," *Ensign*, June 1999, 38.
11. Petersen, *The Great Apostasy*, 158.
12. Edward Underhill, "Struggles and Triumphs of Religious Liberty," in Anderson, *Apostasy or Succession, Which?* 9.
13. Wesley, *Representative Verse of Charles Wesley*, 368.
14. Petersen, *The Great Prologue*, 26.
15. Bennett, *Our Sacred Honor*, 365–66.
16. Bennett, *Our Sacred Honor*, 381–82.
17. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:540.

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