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After the Fall: The First Dispensation of the Gospel

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After the Fall: The First Dispensation of the Gospel

The “Fall” has become reality. The judgments have been pronounced. Adam, Eve, and Lucifer know their earth-fate. Broken union with God for both man and woman; banishment from Eden—guarded away from the tree of life. No access to it—yet. It must have been a comfort to the stricken pair to know of its existence in the midst of God’s garden—a ray of hope which would linger in blurred memories of Eden. Cherubims and gleaming sword now barred “the way to it”; but would it always be so?

Penalties: (a) Upon Adam. For Adam as a result of his special part in the changed conditions through partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge: “Cursed is the ground for ⟨your⟩ [thy] sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth ⟨un⟩to thee; . . . ⟨by⟩ [In] the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return [un]to the ground; . . . for dust thou art, and [un]to dust shalt thou return”—**physical death** (Gen. 3:17-19).

(b) Upon Eve. To the woman: “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16).

Let it be remembered that these were but announced consequences of the “Fall,” resulting from the changed condition following the new order brought about by it, not vindictive cruelties invented from the anger of God. This parenthetically, now to return.

On the contents page introducing this chapter, Roberts noted: “Any of the standard dictionaries of the Bible or commentaries can be consulted sometimes with profit on these subjects, although they may not be relied upon as sustaining the views of the text of this work which is so largely influenced by the ‘new knowledge’ brought to light by the Prophet of the New Dispensation, Joseph Smith.”

(c) *Upon Lucifer.* To Lucifer (symbolized by the serpent), the Lord God said:

Because thou hast done this ⟨thing⟩ ⟨his part in the drama of early days in Eden and with evil intent towards man, and malice towards God⟩, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it ⟨the woman's seed⟩ shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Gen. 3:14-15)

Victory shall be with the seed of the woman; for, mark you, while Lucifer shall have power to bruise his [the woman's seed] heel; he [***the woman's seed***] shall have power to bruise Lucifer's head—wound him in a vital part. ~~bruise his head!~~

The “decrees” written in the book of experience. It is worthy of remark that these decrees forecasting what should befall man, and woman are as truly written in human experience as well as in the book of Genesis. And as for Lucifer, the sign and symbol and personification of evil, and in rebellion against God—who so despised, dreaded, feared, hated, as he? Well symbolized in the serpent—cold sinuous, clammy, noiseless in approach, fascinating, cunning, strong to crush in coils, deadly to strike with fang and poison with tooth, and merciless withal! And dreaded, and repulsive above all animals living, ***his symbol—the serpent.*** And as the symbol is, so the spirit of incarnate evil is—Lucifer! Of which “serpent” is the fitting sign.

The veil of forgetfulness. So man went forth from Eden bowed by the weight of sorrow, to his life and toil, and death. His “vision splendid” not yet risen, and as it was later said of a more glorious “Adam,” “In his humiliation his judgment ⟨knowledge on which judgment is based⟩ was taken ⟨from him⟩ [away]” (Acts 8:33),^a so may we say of this our first Adam—and more abundantly—“in his humiliation his judgment was taken from him”—a veil of forgetfulness cast over him, shutting out most memories of the creation days on this earth, and of the former home and friends and associates of the home-world where he had come to translation development^b to prepare him for this earth

^aActs 8:33 refers to Christ, but Roberts is identifying Adam as the “first Adam,” following the terminology of 1 Cor. 15:45, where Christ is identified as the “last Adam,” thus making it possible to apply the phrase in Acts 8:33 to Adam.

^bWhat Roberts meant by this phrase is unclear.

dispensation.[†] He perhaps remembered some little of the glory and splendor of the Lord God. Some recollection of the “tree of life” in the midst of the garden—did the memory carry with it a gleam of hope? Some remembrance, too, may have survived from that half-veiled promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. Perhaps a memory of the Lord God’s kindness survived seen in the gracious act of God making and giving to Adam and his wife coats of skin to “clothe them,” better covering than the fig-leafed aprons they had made to hide their nakedness in the first confusion following their disobedience. This was the parting act at the portals of Eden when they were driven forth. They would likely remember that and cherish it. Surely it portended good will. It was an act of mercy.

Adam’s world under the Fall. But Adam had come into no mere make-believe world, where there was to be no real hardships, only mock sorrows and sins that did not hurt, and that would have no lasting effect; where punishments would be light and all would be well in the end. Surely the Lord God had not framed such a thing as this for the earth-planned life of man! Charge not such folly to the Lord omniscient, and the Lord omnipotent!

Adam and Eve and all their posterity, numerous as the stars of heaven, or as the sand upon the seashore, were to learn that earth life was to be tremendously real; and in it would be real losses. There would be sorrows heart-breaking; suffering both mental and physical; severe tests of painful endurance to the point of blood-sweat and terror; disappointments to be endured that would stretch the heart strings to the point of breaking; death universal, and cruel, and pitiless, without remorse, without respect of persons, falling upon the young as upon the aged, upon the innocent as upon the sinful; striking quite recklessly, sinking some by slow and painful decay, cutting others off with the flash of lightning or the tempest’s fierceness, or the earthquake’s horror; by slow famine, or the shock of red battle—by any and all means by which life can be snuffed out, or crushed out—and so permanently! This a world where hope pales, faith falters, love weeps! Things are so obscure, so uncertain, so apparently meaningless; the light so dim and far away, the mists so recurrent and dense—they shut out the pathway to the tree of life. Scarce need to guard it, one would think, by cherubim and flaming sword!

[†]As in response to chapter 32, the committee of the Quorum of the Twelve noted on this occasion: “The question of ‘translation’ comes in here, and is questioned as in 32.”

Such was Adam's world into which he was driven from his Eden. How long it lasted so no one knows. Long enough to teach him the lessons to be derived from the knowledge of good and evil, no doubt. He is said to have lived nine hundred and thirty years in this world of broken harmonies!^c Cain's, Lamech's, and other wickedness appeared within his own days; his life doubtless approached sufficiently near the wickedness of Noah's times for him to see that the wickedness would be so great that "every imagination of the thoughts of his ⟨man's⟩ heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

The two deaths. Under the "Fall" Adam was confronted by two phases of death: spiritual death and physical death. The first a broken union with God; the second the separation of the spirit from the body, and the passing of the body back to dust whence it came. Both these deaths Adam realized in experience.

(a) *The spiritual death.* The first, or the spiritual death was experienced when Adam and his wife were driven from Eden, and shut out from the presence of God, the source of his spiritual life, and fountain that fed his spirit with love of the true, and good, and the beautiful. Separated from the source of spiritual life his spirit would languish into sluggish dullness and brutality; hope all but fled, faith strained to the breaking point, desire for righteousness fading—Adam wandering further and ever further from God! Let it but continue long enough and without renewal of conscious fellowship with the source of spiritual life, and there could be no doubt but that it would end in completely placing him beyond the power to repent, or desire for forgiveness—spiritual death.

The spiritual death consists of separation from God; and, with the banishment from Eden, is thus described in a modern revelation:

It came to pass that the devil tempted Adam, and he partook of the forbidden fruit and transgressed the commandment, wherein he became subject to the will of the devil, because he yielded unto temptation. Wherefore, I, the Lord God, caused that he should be cast out from the Garden of Eden, from my presence, because of his transgression, wherein he became spiritually dead, which is the first death, even that same death which is the last death, which is spiritual, which shall be pronounced upon the wicked when I shall say: Depart, ye cursed. (D&C 29:40-41)

"The last death, which is spiritual, . . . Depart, ye cursed!" (D&C 29:41). "Then will I ⟨confess⟩ [profess] unto them, I never knew you:

^cAdam's age is stated in Genesis 5:5.

depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:23). “Then shall he say also unto \langle those \rangle [them] on \langle his \rangle [the] left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). In each case *separation from God; and in each case* spiritual death; banished into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (cf. Matt. 13:49–50).

(b) *Physical death.* The dreadful reality and mystery of physical death came into man’s experience first through a greater calamity than death itself—through a murder. By this the first pair were shocked into a realization of the sentence passed upon them while yet in Eden, upon their posterity—upon the race—as well as upon themselves, and of this they had stern evidence in the death of their second son, Abel, murdered by his brother Cain.[†] It must have been mysterious and doubly painful, this first death. First because inflicted by a brother’s hand; second because falling upon one least deserving of it; one strong, manly, gentle withal, a keeper of sheep—righteous, for he is so alluded to in the scriptures in many places (Heb. 11:4; also 1 Jn. 3:12), and according to the story in Genesis, he and his offering were acceptable to God, while Cain and his offering were rejected. Why should thus fall upon the righteous—the innocent—this first **recorded** instance of death? But here it was, this physical death, the very palpable evidence of it, thrown into the trembling arms *of Adam and Eve*—a strange silence, and coldness!

The mystery of sacrifices. Sometime before the death of Abel, something significant happened, but one gets only slight knowledge of it in Genesis, and nothing directly. Nothing may be learned from Genesis on the origin of sacrifices, either of first fruits or animal, that is to say, blood sacrifices.¹ They are simply referred to as an established

[†]On “Abel, Adam’s second son,” the committee of the Quorum of the Twelve stated: “We question this in the light of the writings of Moses. Adam may have had many sons and daughters before Cain was born, so it appears.”

¹In tracing the history of sacrifice, from its first beginning to its perfect development in the Mosaic ritual, we are at once met by the long-disputed question, as to the *origin of sacrifice*; whether it arose from a natural instinct of man, sanctioned and guided by God, or whether it was the subject of some distinct primeval revelation. . . . The great difficulty in the theory which refers it to a distinct command of God is the total silence of Holy Scripture—a silence the more remarkable, when contrasted with the distinct reference made in Genesis 2 to the origin of the Sabbath. Sacrifice when first mentioned, in the case of Cain and Abel, is referred to as thing of course; it is said to have been brought by men; there is no hint of any command given by God. This consideration, the strength of which

thing with the first sons of Adam: “In the process of time” — “at the end of days,” is the marginal rendering of the text, as if it were at the end of some fixed period of days, that the time of sacrifice recurred, and so at the end of that recurring period—

it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought ~~sacrifice, but~~ of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. (Gen. 4:3-5)

Such the first mention of the offering of sacrifice in Genesis. What its origin or purpose, or significance we may not know from this introduction to it. Also the account is silent as to why the offering of the lamb by Abel—a blood sacrifice—was acceptable to the Lord God; and why the fruit offering by Cain was not acceptable. But while Genesis is strangely silent on this subject the fragment of the writings of Moses, brought to light by the Prophet of the New Dispensation, supplies the much needed information.

The first revelation after “the Fall”—“the morning breaks!” This revealed fragment of the writings of Moses makes it known that after the banishment from Eden,[†] Adam and Eve amidst their toil and labors in cultivating the earth and subduing the animal kingdom to their dominion, they begot both sons and daughters “and they began to multiply and replenish the earth. And from that time forth, the sons and daughters of Adam began to divide two and two in the land, and to till the land, and to tend flocks, and they also begat sons and daughters.” Then it would appear that moved by their recollections of the Lord God in Eden, both “Adam and Eve, his wife called upon the name of the Lord” (and apparently for the first time since being driven from Eden), and ~~Θ, Joy!~~

They heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. (Moses 5:4-5)

no ingenuity has been able to impair, although it does not actually disprove the formal revelation of sacrifice, yet at least forbids the assertion of it, as of a positive and important doctrine. (Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Sacrifice.”)

[†]The committee of the Quorum of the Twelve noted: “There is a question as to the time the law of sacrifice was given, whether it was in or out of the Garden.”

Observe, however, in all this there is no explanation as to “why” the sacrifice should be offered; but its kind was designated. It was to be of the firstlings of the flocks—a blood sacrifice. Perhaps that was the reason why Cain’s offering was not acceptable to the Lord God. He brought that for an offering which the Lord God had not appointed. He apparently set aside that which God had appointed and substituted something of his own devising, and insulted the majesty of God therewith.^d **A fruit offering did not symbolize the sacrifice to be offered up finally by the Christ.**

Communication with God established—revelation. But what a joy for Adam, this renewal of contact with the Lord God must have been! God’s silence was broken: “From the way toward the Garden of Eden” they had heard the voice of the Lord speaking to them. He had given a commandment, no matter what. The important thing was that communication with God had been resumed. The darkness in which Adam and Eve had lived, relieved only by fragment recollections, was breaking up, the shadows were fleeing. Of course they will obey the commandment, nor even ask the reason why. Blind obedience this? Nonsense! Intelligent obedience, under the circumstances; the unquestioning obedience was but natural obedience—the obedience which sprung from their joy—joyful obedience which forgot to ask the reasons why from the haste to obey.

A dispensation of the gospel to Adam. Then

after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel

^dIn regard to the reason the Lord rejected Cain’s sacrifice, Joseph Smith taught:

By faith in this atonement or plan of redemption, Abel offered to God a sacrifice that was accepted, which was the firstlings of the flock. Cain offered of the fruit of the ground, and was not accepted, because he could not do it in faith, he could have no faith, or could not exercise faith contrary to the plan of heaven. It must be shedding the blood of the Only Begotten to atone for man; for this was the plan of redemption; and without the shedding of blood was no remission; and as the sacrifice was instituted for a type, by which man was to discern the great Sacrifice which God had prepared; to offer a sacrifice contrary to that, no faith could be exercised, because redemption was not purchased in that way, or the power of atonement instituted after that order; consequently Cain could have no faith; and whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 58)

spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son . . . forevermore. And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will. (Moses 5:6-9)

Rejoicing: (a) Of Adam. What a sermon of enlightenment is here! What a gospel revealed! No wonder that the record quoted goes on to say—

And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God. (Moses 5:10)

(b) Of Eve. And Eve, too, sent forth her paean of praise:

And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient. And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters. (Moses 5:11-12)

This original pair of the earth's inhabitants in their joy were breaking into the harmonies that had prevailed in the heavens when God "laid the foundations of the earth. . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:4, 7), at the prospects opening before them for an earth-planned life. They would now live in hope of that "Eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). A dispensation of the gospel had been imparted to them, and they delivered knowledge of it unto their posterity.

The earth antiquity of the gospel. Quite contrary to the general belief of Christendom, now and of old, knowledge was had of the gospel from the earliest ages—from Adam.^c Our enlightening fragment

^cRoberts discussed the meaning and significance of the dispensations in the second year of the *Seventy's Course in Theology*, subtitled *Outline History of the Dispensations of the Gospel*. In particular, see his definition of dispensation (37-38), and his discussion that each dispensation had the gospel of Jesus Christ (100-101).

from the writings of Moses, brought to light by modern revelation, closes the fifth chapter I have been quoting with this declaration:

Thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost. 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; and thus it was. (Moses 5:58-59)

Further references recommended by Roberts for this lesson: 2 Ne. 2:14-30; Mosiah 4:4-12; Alma 11:38-46; 42; D&C 84; Moses 5-8.