

A CONVERT CALLED PETER

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I shall tell you a story, a glorious and wondrous story, than which there are few greater in all the literature of all those inspired narrators whose words are good and great. It is the story of one of our friends and fellow servants—of a man whose heart was once wrenched with agony and despair, but whose soul later burned with a zealous fire that raised him to spiritual heights of glory and wonder.

I shall tell you the classical story of conversion, the account recorded in holy writ of how an unlearned, untutored, rustic Galilean became a polished shaft in the hands of the Almighty. It is the recitation of how a strong, unbending oak bowed 'neath the gospel rod; of how a man of passion and a flashing sword had every dot of dross and evil burned out of his soul by the refiner's fire; of how a human soul was born again and became a new creation by the power of the Holy Ghost.

I shall tell you the story of Simon Peter, of a convert from Capernaum, of a convert called Peter. It is the story of a Galilean boatman who forsook the waters of Gennesaret to become a fisher of men. It is the story of how a man filled with passion and zeal overcame the world and became a joint-heir with his Lord because he was converted.

Our story begins at Bethabara after the baptism of the Lord Jesus. The noble son of a priestly Zacharias and a saintly Ellsabeth, in the presence of the Holy One, has born the fervent witness: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Then, on the next day, the Blessed Baptist, standing with John and Andrea,, two of his own disciples, "And looking upon Jesus as he walked," again testifies: "Behold the Lamb of God!" And the disciples of the Baptist leave him, follow Jesus, are taught the gospel, and believe the newly found word. (See John 1:29-40.)

This is the beginning of the mortal ministry of the Lord Jesus, and the conversion processes are beginning to operate upon those saints-to-be who will follow him in this life and reign with him in the life to come.

It was James who said, "Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example." (James 5:10.) Let us, then, with a sort of seeric hindsight, take the prophet Peter as our example. Let us learn how the conversion processes operated in his life and know thereby what must be in our lives.

Conversion begins with belief, belief in the Lord, belief in his word, belief in the gospel; and every true believer seeks others that they may join with him in worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth.

And so Andrew “findeth his own brother Simon,” and says: “We have found the Messias.” “He is the Deliverer, the Christ, the Lamb of God, of whom John testified.”

And so Andrew brings Simon—Simon Peter!—unto Jesus, who says: “Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas.” This new name—which is by interpretation, a seer, or a stone—forecasts what is to be in the life of Andrew’s brother; in the life of the man who as a seer, grounded upon the Stone of Israel, will one day preside over the earthly kingdom. And Peter, having been brought to the Messias, also believes.

The completeness and surety of his initial conversion, together with that of John and Andrew, is attested in these words of scripture: “And they were fishermen. And they straightway left all and followed Jesus.” (John 1:41-51; JST, John 1:42, 44.)

During the ensuing year Peter and the others are constantly with Jesus. They become his friends. Together they walk and talk and eat and sleep on a friendly basis. The new disciples believe and learn and preach and teach.

They see the water become wine at Cana, the moneychangers flee from the desecrated temple, the miracles wrought at the Passover and throughout all Judea. They are baptized and in turn baptize others, and they are ordained to offices in the holy priesthood. This is a year of training, of preparation, of schooling, for Peter and his fellows.

Then comes the day of his call, and of theirs, on formal missions. Peter and Andrew, fishing on Gennesaret, have toiled the whole night and caught nothing. Now, they are ashore washing their nets. Jesus enters Peter’s ship, has it “thrust out a little from the land,” preaches to those on shore, and then directs Peter to “launch out into the deep” and cast down his nets again. Peter obeys and the nets are miraculously filled, so much so that two ships begin to sink from the weight.

This is the occasion when Peter, feeling his own nothingness and awed even to be ha the presence of the King, the Lord of hosts, fell at Jesus’ “knees and pied: “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

This also is the day when Jesus testified: “I am he of whom it is written by the prophets; follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And then it was that Peter and Andrew, “believing on his words, left their net, and straightway followed him.” (Luke 5:1-11; JST, Luke 5:2, 10; Matthew 4:18-22; JST, Matthew 4:18-21; Mark 1:16-20; JST, Mark 1:18.)

What wonders now await Peter as his service in the ministry increases. Jesus, his Master, lives in Simon’s home in Capernaum. It is there that Peter’s mother-in-law is healed; it is

there that Jesus first forgives and then heals the paralytic. It is on a nearby hill—a small mountain if you will—where Peter is called and ordained an apostle and where Jesus preaches an ordination sermon—The Sermon on the Mount.

The faith of Peter now is as that of the greatest of the prophets. When our Lord invites him to walk on the surging, tempestuous waves of the Galilean sea, he does so. Peter walks on the water; let us not forget that.

When many fall away because of the strong doctrine in the Sermon on the Bread of Life, and Jesus asks of the Twelve, “Will ye also go away?” it is Simon Peter who answers: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” (John 6:67-68.)

Soon after this we find Peter and the others with Jesus up beyond the borders of Israel, not far from the foot of Mount Hermon. There in the coasts of Caesarea-Philipi he made again the great confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” and received the promise that to him would be given “the keys of the kingdom of heaven.”

After all this, as Jesus foretells his own sufferings and death, it is Peter who takes it upon himself “to rebuke” the Lord and say he should not be called upon so to suffer.

Then comes one of the severest rebukes ever given a believing disciple: “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men,” which gives us cause to wonder and ponder whether we, in spite of our testimony and service and devotion may not on occasion run counter to the divine will and be deserving of a like rebuke. (See Matthew 16:13-23.)

But Peter, chastened by that Lord who loves him, arises from despair to wondrous glory in a few short days. Jesus takes him and James and John into the Holy Mount where they hear the voice of God, see in vision the transfigured earth, and receive from Jesus and Moses and Elijah the keys of the kingdom.

And still the tempering and preparing of the soul of Peter continues. He finds the tribute money in the mouth of the fish. He first rejects and then accepts the ordinance of the washing of feet. Told that he cannot then follow Jesus into the realms ahead, Peter makes the rash declaration: “I will lay down my life for thy sake.” (John 13:37.) Told also: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat”—for Satan seeks to harvest all of the souls he can “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

Peter was an apostle; he had borne as fervent a testimony as any man ever did; he had been on a mission, had worked miracles, heard the voice of God, and been visited by angelic ministrants. And yet his full conversion lies ahead! And again we are left to wonder and ponder about our own miniscule words of testimony and works of devotion.

As to Peter, “being aggrieved” at Jesus’ words to him, he says: “Lord, I am ready to go with you, both into prison, and unto death.” Then come the prophetic words: “I tell you, Peter, that the cock shall not crow this day, before that you will thrice deny that you know me.” (Luke 22:31-34.)

These things are spoken in the Upper Room. Then, as the Holy Party traverses its weary way to Gethsemane, Jesus says: “All ye shall be offended because of me this night.” Peter, still brooding over what he esteems to be his total devotion to his Lord, says: “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.”

Again the prophetic word falls from the lips of the Chief Prophet: “Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.” And Peter still persists: “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.” (Matthew 26:30-35.)

Then in Gethsemane, Peter saw the agony of Jesus, beheld how an angel strengthened him, and in spite of the import of that hour fell asleep, only to be awakened by the call: “Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” (Mark 14:37-38.)

When Jesus is arrested, it is Peter who slashes off the ear of Malchus, and then, being reproved by Jesus, flees with the others. Then in the courtyard of Caiaphas, as the mockery of a Sanhedrin trial goes forward, Peter, before the cock crows twice, denies thrice that he knows who Jesus is. And then as the Lord turns and looks at him, he goes off into the night and weeps bitterly. He is not yet converted.

We see him next on Easter morn. He rushes into an open tomb; later he is told by Mary Magdalene that Christ is risen; and then he himself, alone, sees the Resurrected One. That night in the Upper Room he and a small congregation of believers are privileged to feel the nail prints in the holy hands and sacred feet and, as we suppose, thrust their hands into the riven side. A week later, with Thomas present, he again sees Him of whom he is the chief mortal witness.

Awaiting the day of a promised visitation on a mountain in Galilee—could it have been other than the Mount of Ordination where the Sermon on the Mount was preached?—Peter says: “I go a fishing.” Six of the Eleven go with him.

Then, at the Sea of Tiberius, he and his apostolic colleagues again see their Lord. Peter is thrice asked: “Lovest thou me?” and he thrice so affirms and is thrice commanded: Feed my lambs; feed my sheep; feed my sheep. And he is then told the manner of his death—an agonizing death by crucifixion on a cruel cross.

At the appointed time on the mountain in Galilee he and his fellows are commanded to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, with the promise that signs

shall follow, then as always, those who believe. And yet again we see him on the Mount of Olivet as the Lord Jesus, with angels attending, ascends to his Father.

As we ponder and wonder how the processes of conversion operated in the life of Peter, we come to the Day of Pentecost when holy fire rests upon the ancient saints and they are endowed with power from on high. The Holy Ghost comes upon them and they become new creatures. Dross and evil is burned out of their souls as though by fire. They are born again and are in process of being sanctified so as to be able to inherit celestial glory.

Their souls now aflame with divine fire, Peter and John come upon a man, lame from his mother's womb, asking alms at the temple gate. "Look on us," Peter commands, and the man, expecting some paltry pence of earthly worth, does so. Then comes the heaven-sent word. Peter says: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I unto thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Thereupon the man arises and walking and leaping and praising God he goes into the temple where thousands see him and greatly wonder at his healing.

This healing was as the opening of the eyes of the man who was blind from birth, after he washed in the pool of Siloam. The seeing eyes and the leaping legs stood as witnesses of divine power and commanded the attention of all men to the testimony of the divine Sonship that followed each miracle.

When the hosts of wondering Israel assemble before Peter he accuses, chastises, and condemns them for crucifying the Lord of Glory. He tells them plainly that they "killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead." They are murderers, and he says so plainly. There is neither faltering nor fear in his denouncement.

He testifies that the lame man leaps because of Christ and the faith that is in him. It is a far cry from what happened in the court of Caiaphas.

Then comes the prophetic word about the times of restitution in which we live, followed by further witness of Christ. (See Acts 3.)

About 5000 men believe Peter's words, but he and John are nonetheless arrested, held overnight, and hailed the next day before the Great Sanhedrin. "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" they are asked.

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:8-12.)

Unable to deny the miracle, fearful of the spread of truth, after due consultation, the Sanhedrin “commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”

But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. (Acts 4:19-20.)

What then shall we say of the conversion of Peter? Shall we not say: Behold what the Lord hath wrought!

Behold how a carnal, fallen soul has received a new birth, has put on the garments of righteousness, has partaken of the divine nature of his Lord!

Here is a weak and lowly Galilean fisherman who became a great and mighty fisher of men. What if his man-made nets had drawn from the sea of Tiberius more fish than the world can hold, would it compare with the worth of a single soul caught in the heaven-made gospel net which he cast into the sea of the world?

And what of our own pursuits? Are we fishing for money or for men? Are our hearts centered on that which moth and rust doth corrupt or upon treasures laid up in heaven?

Here is a weak, untutored, unlearned man without rabbinical status; one who had never mastered the learning of the priests, nor the lore of the Levites; one whose very dialect—a harsh, Galilean, country brogue—betrayed him in high priestly courts.

And yet, receiving the Holy Ghost, he spake with the tongue of angels; receiving light and truth and knowledge from on high, his heaven-given oratory converted thousands; and his dialect-tainted words were transformed into the sublimest language in the New Testament.

Yes, here is a man; a weak, faltering follower of the Lowly Nazarene; a man of like passions to us all; a man who in time of trial forsook his Lord, even swearing with an oath that he did not so much as know the Suffering Servant of Israel.

And yet, after the Pentecostal fires had burned dross and evil from his soul; after he had put off the world and put on Christ; after his conversion was perfected—then he went, rejoicing, to a martyr's death. He too, tradition says it was with head downward, was crucified upon a cross—the cross that was prelude to the crown—that even in death he might be one with Him whom he so much loved in life.

Yes, here stands Peter, a rock and a stone, who withstood the floods and storms of his day; Peter, whose name, along with his Brethren of the Twelve, is engraved forever in the walls of the Holy City; Peter, whose life and struggles show forth the things we all must do if we are to gain that full conversion that came to him.

And what of us? Where stand we? Is the Lord saying to us, as he did to the Twelve in 1837, two and a half years after their call to the Holy Apostleship, that after much tribulation, if we harden not our hearts, and stiffen not our necks, that we yet shall be converted and he will heal us? (See D&C 112:13.)

Surely none of us claim to be anything but weak, sin-laden, strung mortals; as yet unlearned, untutored, and untaught to any degree in the things of the Spirit; yet deserving, hoping, seeking, aspiring for better things, as did our colleague and our pattern of old.

What, then, are the processes of conversion as seen in the life of Peter, and as they must operate in our lives if we walk where the saints have trod?

Perhaps they are seven in number:

1. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Belief is the beginning of conversion, but conversion is more than belief.

Faith is the foundation of all righteousness, but conversion follows faith.

A testimony charts the course and leads the way to that conversion of which we speak.

With Peter we believe and are sure that Jesus is Lord of all; that he is the Son of the living God; that he brought to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. And oh what a glorious beginning this is!

A testimony is the foundation upon which the house of conversion is built. To be converted in full we must believe all things, all doctrines, all the truths of heaven; and we must reject all error, all false doctrines, all of that wisdom of men which is foolishness with God.

Belief in Christ is synonymous with belief in his gospel, and signs always follow those who believe. Peter raised Dorcas from death because he had perfected his faith by

righteousness and there would be more miracles among us if our belief, meaning our faith, were greater.

“He that will not believe my words,” saith Jesus Christ, “will not believe me—that I am” (Ether 4:12), that is, will not believe that I am the divine being by whom salvation comes.

The more we believe the greater is the degree of our conversion. The two false doctrines that do more to keep some of the Latter-day Saints from perfecting their faith and gaining full conversion are:

First, the theories of organic evolution that postulate that all forms of life evolved from some one-celled ancestor, created as it were out of nothingness, in some primordial swamp. Twisted notions that this is the way God placed life and man on earth are as false as the out and out claims that there is no God, and that all life and creation came by chance.

Second, the theory espoused by some of our intellectuals, who supposing they know more than the Lord, and who, contrary to the scriptures and to the plain, blunt, and unequivocal declarations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, believe that God is a student Deity who is progressing in knowledge and will never come to an understanding of all truth.

Though we have testimonies and believe to a degree, I wonder if some of our views, adopted from the wisdom of the world, are not as much an abomination in his sight as are the creeds he condemned in the First Vision.

2. Ye must be born again and thus be reconciled to God.

Since the Fall and because of the Fall all men have become carnal, sensual, and devilish by nature. To be saved and return to the presence of God they must be born again, changed from their carnal and fallen state to a state of righteousness. They must be reconciled to God.

This new birth and this reconciliation lay the groundwork for full conversion. After faith comes repentance and baptism. Thus Alma, who had been baptized but not born again, and who was not as yet reconciled with his Maker, fell into a trance for three days. When he regained consciousness he said:

. . . I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;

And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. (Mosiah 27:24-26.)

New creatures of the Holy Ghost!

Born again!

Changed from a carnal and fallen state to a state of righteousness!

These are the processes of conversion. This is the way that men are reconciled to God and become again worthy to enter his presence. Thus, as Paul said:

. . . if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-20.)

Belief, the new birth, reconciliation with God, sanctification, perfection—all these are essential to salvation, and all come to us degree by degree.

After we believe the basic doctrines, then we can believe the mysteries of the kingdom. We die to sin and become alive to righteousness step by step. The nearer we come to God, the more secure is our reconciliation with him. We so live as to be perfect in one thing after another until we are perfect in all things. And in like manner our souls are sanctified to the degree we have overcome the world and no more.

How aptly, in addressing the saints in Corinth, Paul says:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

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.

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (1 Corinthians 3:1-3.)

And how aptly Alma, asks his “brethren of the church” whether they have been “spiritually born of God?” He then goes on for nearly the whole fifth chapter, asking questions and giving tests whereby the saints can determine for themselves the degree of their conversion.

3. Follow the Lord Jesus.

“Follow thou me” (2 Nephi 31:10), is the great cry of the Lord Jesus to his people.

“What manner of men ought ye to be?” he asks, and then answers: “Verily I say unto you, even as I am.” (3 Nephi 27:27.)

“Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2.)

Live the gospel; keep the commandments; abide in the truth.

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.” (D&C 121:45.) Gain “the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16.) “Walk in the light,” and “have fellowship one with another.” Then “the blood of Jesus Christ” will cleanse you “from all sin,” and your conversion will be complete. (1 John 1:7.)

“Seek not for riches but for wisdom,” knowing that *the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you,” and that then “shall you be made rich,” for “he that hath eternal life is rich.” (D&C 6:7.)

“Seek the face of the Lord always” (D&C 101:38), knowing that “no sinful man hath at any time, neither shall there be any sinful man at any time, that shall see my face and live,” saith the Lord. (JST, Exodus 33:20.)

And as to the Lord’s ministers these special words: “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” (D&C 133:5.) Lay aside your nets. Let others wait on tables. Be thou about thy Father’s business.

Such is the convert’s course; such is the course of reconciliation; such is the course of conversion.

4. Become fishers of men.

How can anyone claim to be a true convert who does not seek to win souls for Christ?

Can a member of the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth; who knows that salvation is gained through the restored gospel and in no other way; and who knows that those who are not baptized shall be damned—can such a person be a true convert unless he offers the good word of God to our Father’s other children, offering it fully without money and without price?

Is it not written in the holy word that all who embrace “this calling and commandment, shall be ordained and sent forth to preach the everlasting gospel among the nations?”

Has not the Lord said to the elders of his Church, “that every- man which will embrace it with singleness of heart may be ordained and sent forth,” even as he hath ‘spoken.” (D&C 36:5-7.)

5. Strengthen thy brethren.

Well said the Beloved John: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” (1 John 3:14.)

The word given to Peter applies to us all: “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” (Luke 22:32.)

Converted brethren love each other because they have passed from death to life.

Converted brethren strengthen each other, each esteeming his brother as himself, because all are one in Christ, all are partakers of the divine nature.

None of us is perfect, none is without fault, none is endowed with every gift. But each of us, fallible and faltering as we are, has some gift and must to give. Each of us can assist in building up the kingdom.

And when we are truly converted we strengthen—not weaken—each other—all for the glory of God, all for the onrolling of his eternal purposes.

It was Jesus who commanded Simon, “Feed my sheep” (John 21:16), and Peter who relayed the word to us, “Feed the flock of God which is among you.” (1 Peter 5:2.)

Sheep, unherded and lost in the deserts and mountains, may eat food of every sort, poisonous tares included. And men, unconverted and hearkening to discordant voices which cry lo here is Christ or lo there, are led into apostasy and despair, never finding the green pastures of peace and the still waters of salvation.

But we are to feed the good word of God to the Lord’s flock; because of our teaching they can feast upon the words of Christ. We are to “teach the principles of the gospel” (D&C 42:12) as found in the Standard Works.

We are to say “none other things than that which the apostles and prophets have written, and that” are taught us “by the Comforter through the prayer of faith.” (D&C 52:9.)

Our sole commission as the Lord’s agents is “to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth,” and everything we do other than this “is not of God.” (D&C 50:17-18.)

We are not sent to entertain; there is no salvation in entertainment. We have received no divine commission to act as comedians; comedians send no one to heaven, but many to hell.

It is not within the scope of our appointments to teach ethics and nothing more; any sectarian preacher can teach a social or an ethical gospel.

Our divine commission is to teach the doctrines of the gospel and to testify of their eternal verity. We are to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified; we are to teach one another the doctrines of the kingdom; and we are to stand as living, vocal, clear witnesses of the truth of the doctrines we teach. Truly, it pleases “God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” (1 Corinthians 1:21.)

Sadly, I think, we often fall short in these respects and need to be reminded that the Lord has made them a measure of the degree of our conversion.

7. Make your calling and election sure.

Our pathway now leads us to the mountain peak; and we call upon converted Peter to tell us what we, treading the path he trod, must do to make our calling and election sure.

His message is one of obedience, of personal righteousness, of putting our all on the altar.

If, he says, we are to gain such “exceeding great and precious promises;” if we are to “be partakers of the divine nature;” if we are to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust;” if we gain all things “that pertain unto life and godliness”—such will come “through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.”

. . . add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly

kindness charity.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:2-11.)

If we pursue this course we shall receive the “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19), which holy writ defines as “a man’s knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood.” (D&C 131:5.)

Those who have advanced far enough in spiritual progression to understand this doctrine will have no difficulty getting a knowledge of it for themselves.

What, then, think ye of conversion, of reconciliation, of spiritual rebirth, of sanctification, of perfection, of fellowship with saints and angels and gods?

Are they not all one doctrine, or at least parts of one grand gospel tapestry?

Are they not all found in varying degrees among those who love the Lord and seek to do his will?

Are they not available because of the redeeming sacrifice of the One who has bought us with his blood?

Shall we not, each individually, determine:

1. The extent of our conversion;
2. The degree to which we have been reconciled with God;
3. Whether we have been born again in full measure;
4. How far we have traveled on the way to sanctification;
5. The degree of perfection that is ours; and
6. What fellowship we have with holy beings on both sides of the veil.

If we live as we should ours will be the same promise, given to certain disciples of old: “Ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one.” (3 Nephi 28:10.)

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.