

# *The Eternal Conflict*

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I have one advantage over President Oaks and his father. The time at which I served as a corporal in the 145th Field Artillery was just before Noah's ark. They have claim to a more modern period.

Those occasions on which I come to the Y always serve to put me in a position where my heart beats a little longer and a little faster. And I am in trouble—if I put this manuscript on the podium I cannot see it, and if I hold it up I cannot see you. I'll hold it up. [laughter] Your youth, your hopes, your fears, your anticipations, your buoyancy, and, yes, your despairs seem to be so much a part of me that as I look at you I want to laugh with joy, but I want to weep also. You are so young and so fragile—and yet seem to have such abiding confidence that you know what you are about and where you are going.

The truth is that in a way you do know where you are going—not perhaps during the next fifty years, but during the eons of eternity. By reading a few words in the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants each of you may know where, in a larger sense, you are going. You may have the vain hope that by acting in a telestial or a terrestrial manner somehow you will become celestial. Or you may decide in the first place to be celestial and then really reach

that goal. The fact which you will ultimately face, whether you like it or not, is that the Lord God does not lie. He keeps his word, and by keeping that word he will inevitably place you in the kingdom you have earned. You, perhaps, will be glad to be where you are placed, thankful that it is better than you dared to hope. But if it is not as good as you could have had, as soon as you get used to the particular light in the place, you will realize that some of those you love are in a place much brighter, and that you could have been with them but did not choose to so live, but thought, rather, that the earthiness of the earth was more pleasure than the promise of the glory of that heaven where you cannot go.

Then you will be faced with the eternal question which constitutes the torture of living hell: "Why did I do the things which forfeited the glory?" No answer will come to you—perhaps that is what hell is like: eternally asking why but never having the satisfactory answer.

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We all should take warning that the Lord himself said that there be few who find eternal life, and resolve to be one of the few (see Matthew 7:14).

I have found that it helps me to look back to my beginnings—to know the purpose of my being and of the efforts of certain evil ones to circumvent that purpose. I realize that I cannot see it as it *really* was, but I can imagine the meaning to me of certain commandments given in the beginning, and see more clearly why I must aim high and be consistent—and not falter.

May I go back to the time when I surveyed eternity—and I assure you that for the next 150 pages this account is purely imaginary. There is not a bit of it that you can claim as doctrine—unless you want to—and I cannot be accused of plagiarizing anything.

*Each star declares the ordered law of heaven,  
Each rising sun the order of our day.  
Yet we on earth —  
A small one of creation,  
Held in its place by one law, heaven given —  
Ponder at our terrifying speed through space.  
We know exactly when the moon arises,  
And when the comet flashes into view.  
We look with precise telescopic vision,  
And endlessly count galaxies,  
Each one a million stars,  
Each star so far away that  
What we see today  
Took place so many  
Thousand thousand years ago  
That where they are  
Or what they are today  
We cannot know.  
Then, bursting through the cosmic  
Dark, the voice of prophecy is heard.  
We learn that Kolob is the nearest  
To the throne of God;  
Each revolution takes a thousand  
Of our years to make its day;  
That this great star*

*Has been assigned by Him who dwells  
On high  
To be the measuring rod  
Of our eternal way. [Abraham 3:3–4]*

*There was our home!  
Our spirits given birth  
By noble parentage;  
The Father of us all,  
A dweller in eternal light,  
Exalted Maker of the universe,  
Exalted Man.  
We bowed before him,  
Calling him by name  
Our Father, Elohim!  
And by his side  
Our heavenly mother sat  
As was her due,  
Not making earths  
Nor giving them law,  
But doing what a heavenly mother does,  
Teaching her spirit children to be true.  
The spirit children ask, as earthlings do,  
How may we be like Father, filled with light?  
How do we obtain a body  
Firm of flesh and bone? How do we gain the right  
To be exalted?*

*What do heavenly mothers say  
To heavenly children?  
Then faintly to our souls we  
Hear her sweet reply.  
Obey! That is the law  
Hear all of His commands.  
Obey each one. Listen and  
Hear the music of the spheres,  
Of the worlds as they come into being.  
Learn heaven's rhythm.  
Your Father gives you freedom  
To obey or disobey, but you  
Yourself must make decision  
If you would learn to live  
In heaven.*

I now pick up the words of Abraham (so you will know that I am not plagiarizing):

*And there stood one among them  
That was like unto God,  
And he said unto those who were  
With him: We will go down,  
For there is space there,  
And we will take of these materials,  
And we will make an earth whereon these  
May dwell. [Abraham 3:24; emphasis added]*

We—you and I—are “these.” Some of you here today are among those of whom he spoke when he said he would make some his rulers. But “it doth not yet appear what we shall be,” as John said (1 John 3:2), or which of you is designated.

I like to imagine what took place in that great assembly. In my mind I compare it, in a sense—though it cannot be compared—to this assembly today. We are all of the earth but from this position on the stand, we, your leaders, look over your thousands and, if the building were full, your twenty thousands, your vast assembly, and think of how it could have been then as the Father spoke to his children.

Let me try to describe it to you as I have imagined it was in that period of our lives—and I do not pretend to know that this is the way it really was, but I like to think that it might have been rather like this:

*The vast concourse of heaven  
Gathered at the Father’s call  
[as you gather here at President Oaks’s call].  
In seats of honor sat the noble ones,  
Those spirits bright.  
Jehovah sat upon his Father’s right  
Befitting one who is the  
Firstborn son.  
Seated next to him, a brilliant son,  
His face illumed with an inner light,  
Was Michael, then Gabriel  
And Raphael strong.*

*These great ones standing out  
Amid the throng.  
And there were others, too,  
Whose names were not revealed, but later,  
Given earthly names,  
Would carry forth the Father’s will,  
His every word and plan fulfill.*

*Then to the left were other brilliant sons  
Who liked to win their way by argument  
And skill in use of words,  
These were the angels of the sharp debate,  
Who suited sophistry and logic to their gain.  
They had not conquered hate. They had not  
Learned that love, that all-inclusive law of heaven,  
Implements the law that God has given.  
And here among them Lucifer held sway.  
No one could say he was not brilliant.  
He’d earned his name by brilliant thinking power,  
Not faith in Elohim and his great love,  
Not being kind,  
But by the logic and the process of the mind.  
A great star, a son of the morning. [Isaiah 14:12]*

*The Father spoke:  
The multitude of spirit children  
Silent grew, and listened  
To this great exalted Man,  
This Man of Holiness,  
Their Father, Elohim:*

*My children all: You see in me  
Exalted man, of flesh and bone  
And spirit pure. One time, long  
Long ago, I was as you, a spirit son  
Of an exalted Father. [see HC 6:302–17]  
You may become as now I have become  
But you must do as I have done.  
I’ll send one of my sons  
Out into space  
Where matter whirls unorganized  
Where he, by my command and his own faith,  
Will form this cosmic matter into earth  
Where each of you may go, and there  
Enter within a tabernacle made of earth.*

Each cell within your body will be of the earth.  
It will respond to earthly stimuli  
But you must conquer it  
To your own will  
Then bend your will to  
Be obedient to my command.  
If you obey, you shall be given  
Life eternal and  
Return unto this heaven  
To dwell with me forevermore  
To be like me, to share my power,  
Joint heirs  
With all of my exalted  
Sons. I give you now  
Free agency: the right  
To be obedient, or to  
Disobey—this right is  
Heaven-given to each one.  
If you should choose to  
Disobey, you lose your  
Place in my exalted heaven.  
The heavens rang with  
Paeons of exalted joy.  
The morning stars sang  
Forth their hymns of  
Praise.  
The sons of God with one united  
Voice  
Shouted hosannas to the  
Lord of hosts. [Job 38:7]  
All heaven stirred  
In holy jubilee.  
All nature trembled  
In its ecstasy.

But there were those  
Who took no part with  
The great joyous throng.  
To one side in proud disdain stood Lucifer:  
This rabble shouts in ignorance  
Of what they face.  
My plan was better.  
I would give them place  
Without an effort on their part  
If they would follow me.

If I can gain enough of  
Following, I may yet  
Win what I might have won,  
Take exaltation's throne,  
Displace that favored One,  
The Firstborn Son.

We do not know the means  
That Lucifer employed  
To gain his ends,  
Nor do we know just  
What is "War in Heaven." [Revelation 12:7]  
But war it was,  
Fought with the means  
At hand.  
The hosts of Lucifer  
Made a determined stand  
But lost. And mighty Michael  
And his angels won.

Out of heaven and into the earth  
The hosts of Lucifer were driven.  
One-third of all the heavenly  
Hosts thus lost their heaven.  
No home was theirs among  
The concourse of the stars.  
Their place was gone.  
They had no home  
Except to roam the earth,  
Unwitting agents in the  
Lord's own plan to  
Test the agency and  
Freedom granted unto man.

Let us consider for a moment what it might  
have felt like to be the first man. I have often  
thought of that—like being driven up Rock  
Creek Canyon with nothing in the canyon  
except rocks, suddenly pushed out from a self-  
sustaining Eden into a world where every gain  
was made by sacrifice and toil.

Adam looked about him  
And surveyed the world  
In which he lived.

Forgotten was the glory of his past;  
 Lost to him by heavenly decree,  
 His life in Eden lost to memory  
 His greatest worry how to  
 Feed and clothe his progeny.  
 And by him was his Eve,  
 The fairest of the fair  
 Of that far day.  
 A woman filled with loveliness.  
 She'd borne the pain  
 Of many children,  
 Scattered now upon the land,  
 And raising children of their own.  
 She'd stood by Adam's side  
 When first he tilled the land,  
 And planted seed. Then  
 Watched the growing plants  
 And harvested.  
 She'd learned to cook and sew  
 The skins which covered them,  
 To know  
 The times of change of the moon,  
 Of making of a home,  
 And much about a woman's softening  
 Touch upon her man.

Let us listen to a prayer that Adam might  
 have offered—I do not think he did, but he  
 might have (see Moses 5:4).

#### **Adam's Prayer**

O Lord, we have not heard thy voice  
 These many days.  
 Our sons and daughters grow  
 Without thy word.  
 Their children grow apace  
 In ignorance of thee—except  
 To know that once thou smiled  
 On us, when we began to be.  
 What shall we tell them, Lord?  
 What is our destiny?  
 Shall we ne'er see thee more?  
 Do we but knock in vain  
 Upon thy door?

There is always an answer to a righteous  
 prayer, you know.

#### **The First Visions**

One day while Adam tilled his field,  
 A wooden hoe he'd fashioned in his hand,  
 He heard a voice from over Eden way. [Moses 5:4]  
 The voice was one he recognized  
 As of the Lord  
 With sweet accord he kneeled  
 Upon the land and wiped the perspiration  
 From his face. I hear thee, Lord!

He heard the voice say:  
 Adam, offer sacrifice; begin this day!  
 Take the firstborn and the best from out  
 Thy flock or herd, build me an altar, and  
 With a fire consume the beast.  
 Take not the least, but best.  
 No explanation given—  
 Just that voice from over Eden way.

Adam built an altar on  
 The highest hill, a platform  
 Three feet high and ten feet square.  
 There, he said, I think that will  
 Do.  
 He laid the sticks and got the fire  
 Burning fierce and high  
 Then slew the firstborn lamb—the best  
 He had. No scrub was this.  
 It would have won a prize  
 At any fair.  
 The smoke, most black and thick  
 Rose high into the morning sky.  
 The stench of burning flesh  
 Was on the air.  
 His children and his grandchildren  
 Gathered round and asked:  
 Grandfather, why do you  
 Burn up the lamb,  
 The best one you have?  
 And he replied:  
 The Lord commanded me  
 And I obey.

*I pray you children likewise  
Will obey.  
Said one: If you must burn a lamb or calf  
Why do you take the best?  
Why not yon scrubby one?  
Then Adam said:  
The Lord said take the firstlings  
And the best.  
Some of his children hastened to obey  
And others kept their firstlings from  
That day.*

*The days and years passed by.  
At stated times the  
Sacrifice was made.  
The flocks and herds increased  
And Adam thus obeyed  
The Lord's command.  
One day there stood  
Before this loyal man  
An angel of the Lord  
Who said: Adam,  
Why dost thou offer  
Sacrifice?  
I do not know why.  
I  
Only know the Lord  
Called out of Eden:  
I recognized his voice.  
I had not heard it  
For these many years.  
He said: Adam, offer  
Sacrifice.  
I do not question  
When I hear that voice.  
I offer sacrifice;  
The best I have  
The firstlings of the flock.  
Some of my children offer too,  
Which thing  
I wish they all would do.*

*Then spoke the angel.  
You are accepted of the Lord  
With all they loyal sons.*

*This act is a similitude  
Of what the Son of God  
Will do  
When time shall  
Reach meridian.  
He'll die upon a cross  
Then resurrected be  
That you may come  
Once more into his presence,  
With all of your posterity,  
If they will obey as you obey.  
Each time you sacrifice  
You will remember him,  
Have faith in him,  
Repent of any evil acts  
You do.  
And be baptized, be born again,  
Of water and of spirit.  
You will then become his son  
As all must do. [see Moses 5:5–8; 6:64–68]  
Now teach your children  
They, too, must obey the  
Lord's command  
And offer sacrifice and  
Be baptized and worship  
Constantly the Lord  
Who is to come.  
One day those sons of Adam  
Who were skeptical  
Received a visitor.  
An angel came and  
Spoke to them (that Lucifer,  
That Satan to the world):  
Your father had an angel  
Speak to him and told him  
How to worship God—to kill  
A lamb or calf. I laugh at such  
Foolishness as he has taught.  
I, too, am a son of God.  
I say, believe it not!  
And they believed it not.  
Then Adam sent his  
Loyal sons to preach to  
Those who errant were,  
And by the spirit of the*

Holy Ghost to bring them  
Back, a promise gave  
That, if they would repent  
And be baptized, they yet  
Could gain their paradise.  
And many heard the  
Word and came  
Repenting to their father's  
Home. [Moses 5:13–15]  
But many would not come.  
Their selfish hearts  
Were filled with earthly sin.  
They could not feel the  
Words of truth within  
Their minds—but  
Rather, with sophisticated  
Thought,  
Believed it not,  
And bowed their heads  
To riches and to  
Gain.

Our mother Eve, the mother of all flesh  
Grieved in her heart  
The loss of these benighted sons  
And grieving, prayed:  
O Lord, give me a son  
Who will a comfort be;  
Who'll grow to manhood strong;  
Who'll worship thee, the Lord,  
And pray;  
Who'll keep all thy commands  
Who will not stray.

Then Cain was born.  
And Eve rejoiced,  
Believing that the  
Lord had heard her prayer,  
And praised his holy name  
And said: I have gotten a  
Man from the Lord.  
But Cain grew up  
Rebellious as had Lucifer  
Before:  
Who is the Lord, he said,

That I should worship him? [Moses 5:16]

His mother Eve mourned o'er  
This errant son.  
His father Adam sorrowed  
That this son rebelled.

Another son was born.  
To them was given Abel  
To heal their hearts.  
This son was one  
To be obedient  
To be what they had  
Hoped that Cain would  
Be, And as he grew in faithfulness  
He listened to his father  
Adam speak the truths  
Of God revealed  
To him. [Moses 5:17]  
Cain, growing tall and strong  
And handsome, as such  
Men are handsome,  
Looked upon a niece with  
Lustful fervor and married  
Her. But neither knew the  
Lord but turned their hearts  
Away from Adam, and away  
From all he taught and  
From the Lord.  
They could not hear Him  
Speak, nor feel when he  
Had spoken.  
Then Satan  
Came to Cain  
And put into his mind  
The Oath, the Oath  
Of Hell:  
Swear by thy throat  
That thou wilt not  
Tell this great secret  
To thy father Adam  
And I will show  
Thee how thou  
May obtain thy brother's  
Flocks and herds. [Moses 5:28–29]

*Then Cain swore by his throat  
And Satan made it plain  
To him  
Just how to murder  
And get gain.*

*Adam called his sons  
Unto his side and said:  
I heard the voice of him  
Who is our God  
From over Eden way,  
Say:  
Offer up an offering this day  
A sacrifice, a burning  
Sacrifice of firstborn  
Calf or lamb—an offering  
In blood. And I obey.  
So likewise you,  
Cain, my son, receive  
Command to do  
As I have done,  
And Abel too.  
Each one is to obey.  
This is a memorial  
To one who when  
The time is come  
Will offer up himself,  
The firstborn  
Of all the Father's children  
That we may return  
Again into his presence.*

*Then Abel called his family  
And said:  
My Father said to offer up  
The firstlings of my flocks of sheep  
And herds of kine  
He said God gave the word.*

*At his command I'll build  
An altar nigh  
And send the incense high  
To honor God and to  
Obey his word.  
The offering to be a sign*

*Of one to come, in some far day,  
Who will atone  
And wash our sins away.*

*Then Cain—with knowledge  
Of the oath to Satan—  
Heard his voice—the dulcet voice of Lucifer.  
You needn't offer up  
A cow or lamb.  
Throw on the fire  
Ears of corn, some  
Wheat, a beet or two  
You may be sure  
That God will know  
Your heart and recognize your praise  
If you give to him  
A part of what you raise. [Moses 5:18]*

*And Cain obeyed  
And called his family:  
And spoke:  
I am a farmer  
A tiller of the land.  
My corn and wheat  
Grow tall on either hand  
My garden stuff is  
Growing row on row.  
I'm almost ready now  
To harvest reap.  
Why should I buy and  
Offer up a sheep  
Or calf: I laugh  
With scorn at  
Such an idea now  
And I laugh still more  
To offer up a cow.  
I'll make my offering  
From what I gain from  
Land. I'll burn some  
Corn and beets and  
God will understand. [Moses 5:19]*

I now quote from the original account in  
Moses:



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 the Lord said unto Cain:  
 Why art thou wroth?  
 Why is thy countenance fallen?  
 If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted.  
 And if thou doest not well,  
 Sin lieth at the door,  
 And Satan desireth to have thee;  
 And except thou shalt hearken  
 Unto my commandments,  
 I will deliver thee up,  
 And it shall be unto  
 Thee according to his desire.  
 And thou shalt rule over him. . . .  
 And Cain was wroth, and  
 Listened not any more to  
 The voice of the Lord,  
 Neither to Abel, his brother,  
 Who walked in holiness  
 Before the Lord. [Moses 5:20–23, 26]

May I now again return to my imaginary account.

Abel's wife spoke to Adam:  
 Abel is not home this even'  
 It's growing late, and I  
 Am worried. Some  
 Fateful thing, the danger  
 Of the world, the cliff  
 O'erhangs the valley.  
 The streams are running  
 High,  
 He might have slipped  
 And fallen.

Then Adam said:  
 The morrow, daylight dawning,  
 Giving light, then I shall go  
 In search of him.  
 Likely he has gone too

Far in search of a lost lamb  
 To return in the dark,  
 And keeps a fire burning  
 There  
 To frighten both  
 The lion and the bear.

In early dawn he then set forth,  
 Not knowing the direction of  
 His going.  
 But soon he came into the field  
 Where Abel kept his sheep  
 And saw upon the ground  
 The lifeless body of his son,  
 The arms outstretched  
 (He could not be asleep),  
 The eyes half-closed  
 And sightless,  
 The white teeth showing  
 Through half-parted lips.  
 He spoke; he called;  
 He touched the stiffened  
 Arm—with no response.  
 He somehow knew that  
 This was death.  
 He knelt beside the  
 Stiffened corpse and  
 Wept.  
 Then Satan to his minions  
 Makes it plain:  
 We've taught them how  
 To murder and get gain.

And now we'll place  
 Into their minds  
 Perversion of the  
 Sacred act of  
 Procreation,  
 This gift the Father  
 Gave to all who  
 Come to earth,  
 When all his sons  
 Were shown that  
 Home and hearth  
 Are given as a

*Pattern showing men the way  
To heaven.  
Go forth, you servants of the Devil,  
And let men feel the power which  
Comes from evil.  
Then they, themselves, will  
Carry forth his work,  
They'll lie; they'll cheat;  
They'll rob and murder too.  
They'll teach perversion of  
The heavenly gift.  
They'll seek to spoil  
All those that God would save.  
They'll soul and body of mankind  
Enslave.*

Well, these are the last two pages; you will notice that they are 102 and 103. [laughter]

**First Great Lie**

***The Lie***

*As Cain drove  
Forth his brother's  
Flocks to his own  
Land, he heard  
The voice of God  
Speak to his  
Very soul, which said:  
Cain: Where is Abel, thy  
Brother?  
And Cain in  
Snarling, deep  
Satanic speech  
Replied:  
I know not. Am I  
My brother's keeper? [Moses 5:34]*

***The Answer***

*The Lord said [unto Cain]:  
[and this is the account that is in the  
Pearl of Great Price]  
What hast thou done?  
The voice of thy brother's  
Blood cries unto me  
From the ground. [Moses 5:35]*

You know the rest, and you know that it has gone on all the years since. Ever since that day, the conflict has been whether or not we will obey. And Satan, with all the power of his sophistry and smoothness, teaches us all to break all the laws of God.

We could go on and on and see with introspective horror the proud and haughty Cain, acting in the image of his sponsor, reply to the great question: "Where is thy brother?" answering with one of the greatest lies of all time: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Let us come back to our day and our time.

The first great law still holds. Obey! Obey the commandments of your Father and my Father. Do what I am sure that our heavenly parents taught you to do in that far day. Have the determination to go back into their presence when the time comes. And come it will, whether you like it or not.

If each of you is not there when the final family gathering takes place, your Heavenly Father will weep, as only an eternal being can weep. Let not any of us cause him that kind of sorrow.

Perhaps it was something like I have portrayed in the beginning. Now, after five thousand nine hundred years (plus or minus) we ourselves need not hear the Lord command Adam any more to desire to obey, for we have the Restoration—the full restoration—and that is that.

God surely lives and is our Father, and we know it. And not Adam but Joseph Smith presented his relationship to us through revelation so that we could understand. Joseph Smith was a prophet just as Adam was a prophet, and also a seer and a revelator. He was given the keys to open the way for us to reach out and find and know our Father and our elder brother, his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Let us not fail to reach, to seek, to find, and above all to obey.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.