

BH Porter
15 June 2019
John 17:14-20

Are there any questions to get us started?

Question: *In your opinion, what is the greatest gift Christ gave us? How about “agency”?*

You’d have to talk about the atonement and connected to that is the resurrection. You can call agency a gift of God, and D&C 93 says that without agency there is no existence.

30 All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence.

Regarding agency: we don’t exist unless we can choose. The second a government or individual begins to take away your agency then your existence is limited. All truth, all intelligence, needs to be able to act for itself in the sphere (environment) in which God has placed it. For example, if a cow is placed in an environment where it can act for itself, then it will be able to eat and drink and lay down when it wants to. If you take that same cow and put it in a corral in Montana, then its agency is now dependent upon someone else.

Satan was cast out because he sought to destroy the agency of man (Moses 4:3). His plan was that not one soul would be lost (Moses 4:1). In order to do that he would have had to take away agency. To take away agency, you have to institute laws; to institute laws you take away freedom, and when freedom is taken away, you also forfeit your agency. When an animal or a human is taken out of the environment in which God has placed it, then its existence becomes limited. God made sure that our agency would be preserved. We either survive or die. We are damned or we are exalted based on our own agency. Agency plays a bigger part in our exaltation or judgment than we would often like to admit. The Book of Mormon tells us that we condemn ourselves, or we condemn ourselves by the character we have developed. Our perfected character is developed by agency, and not by miracle, magic wand or by any ordinance. Our thoughts, our deeds, our actions, our words or attitudes are not perfected by any ordinance. We are perfected in those things because we have chosen to become such. God does not arbitrarily choose those who will inherit the Celestial Kingdom, or even the Telestial Kingdom, rather we will choose to go where we will feel the most comfortable. This is why God’s judgment will be just.

29 And this to the intent that whosoever will believe might be saved, and that whosoever will not believe, a righteous judgment might come upon them; and also if they are condemned they bring upon themselves their own condemnation.

30 And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free. (Hel 14:29-30)

7 ... thus they stand or fall; for behold, they are their own judges, whether to do good or do evil. (Alma 41:7)

Agency was not only necessary in the pre-earth life, and during this earth-life, but agency will be necessary for our existence in our life to come.

John 17

We're in John 17, and before we move on, I want to review two verses in Moses and in 2 Nephi. The first is Moses 7:53:

And the Lord said: Blessed is he through whose seed Messiah shall come; for he saith—I am Messiah, the King of Zion, the Rock of Heaven, which is broad as eternity; *whoso cometh in at the gate and climbeth up by me shall never fall*; wherefore, blessed are they of whom I have spoken, for they shall come forth with songs of everlasting joy. **(This is that joy we talked about last time.)**

When I read this I immediately thought of the Middle East or Jerusalem — you cannot go anywhere in Jerusalem except that you have to walk up a hill. Coming unto Christ will be arduous. We have trials and tribulations in life, and as long as we continue to climb and continue in our effort, Christ promises that we will not fall.

2 Nephi 2:24-26

24 But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things.

God's point of view is a point of view in eternity. His viewpoint is of the pre-earth life, this earth-life, and our post earth-life, and even into exaltation. Whenever we receive a commandment from God it is from His eternal viewpoint. He has an eternal perspective and His view is perfect. He knoweth all things.

25 Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. **(Anytime you see this word, 'joy', it is connected to the joy of our redemption. (see Eve's and Adam's comments in Moses 5:10-11)). When the Plan was presented, the sons of God shouted for Joy, because of the redemption (Job 38:7).**

26 And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, **that** he may redeem the children of men from the fall. **[Everyone is going to be redeemed from the Fall. This is the free gift of Grace.] ...**

Everyone, everyone, everyone is going to be saved from the Fall. This is what Paul is talking about when he taught, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; not of yourselves: it is a gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph 2:8-9) Everyone is going to be saved from the Fall, and everyone is going to be resurrected, and everyone is going to be brought back into the presence of God; however, whether or not we remain there will be up to you and the character we have developed. Our Book of Mormon tells us that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Ne 25:23). *After all we can do* means, no matter *what* we do. What we are being saved from is the physical and spiritual death of the Fall. But we are going to be judged according to our works — according to our character.

.... And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

John 17:14

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 17:14 I have given them my doctrine (logos)
and the world has hated (aor.) them, because they don't belong to the world
(partitive gna.) just as I am not of the world.

Keep in mind that in this context, “thy word” is the *logos*, Father’s doctrine, or plan, or plan of salvation. These things the Lord has given them are not part of the world, and these, His disciples, are also hated because they are not part of the world either, even as Christ is not part of the world.

The statistics in the Church, we are told, indicate that we are about seven (7) years behind the world in terms of divorces, out of wedlock births, and all other indicators of society’s malfunctions. If we are 7 years behind, then the destination will still be the same. We will still be in our Suburban’s and BMW’s, but we will get there just a little bit later. If we are not headed in a different direction, then we will end up in the same place as the rest of the world. To me, this is a scary thought. But there is the fact that every spiritual revival in the history of the world is centered on the scriptures. **Examples:**

- Enoch establishes the City of Enoch by reading and teaching from the Book of Adam;
- Noah preaches the Word for over 200 years before the Flood;
- Abraham and Sarah converted 365 men and 365 women by teaching the Gospel;
- The Children of Israel experienced a spiritual revival as they came out of Egypt when Moses gives them the Law of the Lord after coming off the mountain at Sinai.
- King Josiah, in 2 Kings 22-23, discovers the scriptures in the temple and creates another spiritual revival among the people that created reforms and increased devotion.
- Christ creates the spiritual revival during His three-year ministry as He teaches the *Word* He receives from the Father.
- The teachings and writings found in the New Testament establish Christianity throughout the Roman world and the letters of Paul.
- The Reformation began a spiritual revival with the invention of the Guttenberg press, and when the scriptures are printed in English when translated from the Latin.
- A spiritual revival occurred in the lives of the Pilgrims when they had the Word they could actually read in the English tongue.
- A spiritual revival takes places with the restoration of the church and the Book of Mormon comes forth containing the fullness of the everlasting Gospel.

Every single spiritual revival taking place in the world has centered on the scriptures! I can guarantee that if we don’t become centered on the scriptures *again*, there will not be a spiritual revival in or out of the Church. If we’re seven years behind the world, then we need that

spiritual revival. We need to become like the people in the days of Josiah who broke away from the world once they discovered the scriptures.

John 17:15

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

15. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but rather to preserve them from thou ponerou. (KJV "evil". IN what sense?

From suffering evil or from DOING it? Both: but the basic meaning of the word is (Ld.&Sct.) "CAUSING pain or hardship," injwing others. The second meaning of poneros is one SUFFERING distress or pain.

The evil from whibh they are to be kept is that of DOING evil, for the Aposltes thereafter suffered all manner of tribulation, as the Lord here tells them they will--that they cannot escape. But the COMMITTING of evil deeds--that is the danger! "On tribulation"

It has become common to justify damaging others to keep them from damaging you--preventing strikes, prior restraint, preventive detention--attacking others because they MIGHT just attack us.

OT: You cannot punish a person for a crime he has not yet committed.

The Lord is praying that His disciples will be kept from Evil — the causing pain or hardship or suffering to others. They will experience the same types of tribulation as did Christ, but He desires that they be kept from committing any evil deeds, such as damaging others before they themselves are attacked.

16 They (the Apostles) are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

We are to liken these scriptures to ourselves; what Christ says to the Apostles, is also what He says to us. We are being counseled to not be part of the world. There's an old saying in the Jewish *Talmud* that says, "Everything Abraham did, Adam did, and everything Adam did, we must do." We're not any different; we must go through the same things.

16. They don't belong to the world any more than I belong to the world: SANTIFY them in the truth.

[HAGIOS (L & S) "devoted, sacer, set apart

SANC-tus (Saints) fence

QADOSH *cut off, se*

By COV. they are completely severed from the world, placed behind a protective or isolating "fence", joined to one who by nature is NOT of this world. This is the basic idea of the O.T. and N.T. more than any other books.

17. The truth being "thy doctrine (logos)".

This is saying when we 'come unto Christ', we will be able to separate ourselves from the world. We are to connect ourselves to Him who is not of this world so that we can separate ourselves from the world. (See John 8:23; 18:36) The truth is the Doctrine — the scriptures — the words of God, the words of Christ, and the words of His prophets are the standard of truth! If you don't have a standard, you don't have a standard! If you are trusting in your own arm of flesh, or your teachers or your professors — you are going to fail. No Question! If the collective

church is only seven years behind the world, we need that standard that is telling us we need to change.

Question: *Where does forgiveness fit into this equation?*

Forgiveness is a character trait connected to loving our fellowman. Christ said, “Upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets — loving God and loving our fellowman”. Forgiveness is the only conditional element in the Lord’s Prayer, “forgive us this day as we forgive our debtors”. Our D&C teaches us in section 64:

9 Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

10 I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

Forgiveness is an aspect of not only loving God but loving other people. It is something that is required.

When I was young, I was punching cows with a bunch of guys on the ranch. One early morning we had to pick up another cowboy at his house. As we drove up, he came out of his house somewhat half-dressed and a prostitute was standing behind him. I got out of the truck to talk to him, and when I got back in the truck one of the finest old cowboys I have ever known said, “That’s the guy you don’t like before you meet, and you can’t stand after you do”. (*Much laughter*)

Back to John

If we’re not going to be in the world, just as Christ is not of the world, then we must sanctify ourselves through TRUTH and by the commandments given to us by a God who can see the end from the beginning. His only interest is in our happiness and our exaltation, “*For behold, this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and the eternal life of man*” (Moses 1:39).

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

18. And as you sent me INTO the world, now I have sent them INTO the world.

Why, if (I) hopelessly bad?

19. And for their sakes I have SANCTIFIED myself

[this shows that such is the meaning of hagiazo—he would not make himself HOLY, but remove himself, ~~with~~ separate himself from humanity and from the celestial environment

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; (Now, He is praying for us who shall believe in Christ through the teachings of the Apostles.)

We are to become holy. Our D&C says we are to stand in ‘holy places’ (D&C 45:32; 87:8; 101:22). To stand in holy places does not mean we are to run to the Temple grounds or to our meeting houses, rather it means if we are holy, then where we stand will also be holy.

Our hearts, our minds and our character need to be consecrated in order to be made sacred, that we are made holy, and where we stand will be that sacred space.

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Nibley's commentary follows:

20. I -am not asking for their sakes only, but also for the sake of those who believe on me through their teaching (logos), that all may be ONE (hen, not heis--neut.: A Unity, not one person) even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, just so they too may be in us; and so the World may believe that you sent me. Why not I?

Notice the Greek word, *hen*. It is a unity, not one person; a unity between us and the Father and the Son — a oneness. Christ is praying for all those who shall believe in Him through the teachings of the Apostles, i.e., the scriptures. If our character and thoughts and will is the same, then we become one also with the Father and the Son. If our work and glory is the same as the Father's work and glory, the world might also believe Christ has been sent from the Father. To become one with God is to testify of Jesus Christ, that the world might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Question: *Why do you suppose that other Christian denominations still maintain that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are all the same being? Is it because of Satan's influence?*

Tradition is stronger than truth and is stronger than doctrine! Many of these denominations fall back on the interpretations that were given historically, even calling it "historical Christianity". As much as the "born again" movement or the evangelicals dislike Catholicism, they all rest their beliefs on the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity established at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

Satan fights against God and the divine Son-ship of Christ in two ways:

- 1) He seeks to destroy the physical nature of God, and
- 2) He seeks to destroy the necessity of the atonement.

He destroys the true nature of God the Father by teaching that God and Christ and the Holy Ghost are all one being, or that they are just spirit, being every where, but no where. God's true nature is that *He has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's* (D&C 130:22). If God is only a spirit, then this destroys the concept of exaltation. ("As God is, man once was, and as God is, man may become".) Christ taught the Apostles earlier in this chapter: "*This is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent*" (John 17:3). If Satan can destroy the true nature of God, then his teachings also will erode the concepts of salvation and exaltation.

Satan knows that he will never be able to take the place of Christ, as Christ is the First Born, but he fights Them continually by seeking to destroy the necessity of the atonement. In today's traditional Christianity, all one has to do is say, "I believe". As such, one doesn't have to worry about repentance (character change) because that one statement wipes away all sins and you now have a perfect character....so they believe.

If you look at all the Christian denominations today, you can see how successful Satan has been in accomplishing those two goals of destroying the true nature of God and also the necessity for the atonement. If their beliefs are not based on the Catholic tradition concerning the nature of God, then they teach that salvation is based on grace alone, thus doing away with the necessity of the atonement.

The scriptures are full of references that explain the separate nature of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Stephen sees Christ standing on the right hand of God in Acts 7:55-56. When Moses comes down off the mount, we see in Exodus 33:11, that the “Lord spake unto Moses face to face”, and so that we cannot misunderstand, the text adds, “as a man speaketh unto his friend.” There is more evidence in our standard works about the separate nature of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost than almost any other doctrine found. Yet, we see the other Christian denominations relying on the traditional concepts that have all been based on the Council of Nicaea. When questioned almost all pastors and priests will say, “The nature of God is a mystery”. You cannot teach anything to anyone who doesn’t want to know. Many people, in their arrogance, think they know; therefore they will never know that which they don’t know. Moroni has given us a formula to know and understand truth. (See Moroni 10:3-5)

3 Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down unto the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

4 And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

5 And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

The Formula: You read it, you receive it, you ponder it, you ask with a real intent and a sincere heart (meaning you really want to know), and then the Holy Ghost will manifest the truth. Remember, you cannot teach any one anything they do not want to know. Br Nibley once said he’d rather teach a crying baby than a smart Dean — you cannot teach a Dean anything.

Question: *How do you feel about these so-called modern attempts to make the scriptures easier to read and understand by relying on different translations?*

I maintain that the scriptures are our standard of truth and doctrine. They are the best commentary on the scriptures. I don’t care what anyone else says. Joseph Smith taught a very important insight when studying or reading the scriptures:

I make this broad declaration, that whenever God gives a vision of an image, or beast, or figure of any kind, He always holds Himself responsible to give a revelation or interpretation of the meaning thereof, otherwise we are not responsible or accountable for our belief in it. Don’t be afraid of being damned for not knowing the meaning of a vision or figure, if God has not given a revelation or interpretation of the subject. (TPJS, p 291)

This means the answer is always going to be in the scriptures. We want things to be easy.

I was in Deseret Book the other day, and it reminded me that it ought to be called *Desperate* Book. I saw three rows of LDS fiction, mingled with scripture. There was only one row pertaining to scriptures, and only a half row devoted to the words of our leaders. To me this is scary. I have submitted doctrinal manuscripts to Deseret Book in the past and received a letter stating, “We prefer fiction, not doctrine. We desire to see books from 100 to 150 pages so that they can be read in one sitting.” I really don’t blame Deseret Book, because they are in it for the dollar. They want what sells, and it is not Deseret Book that determines the market — it is the consumer that determines the market. History has proven this over and over — there will be no spiritual revival unless it is centered in the scriptures.

By centering on the scriptures, we will see the changes that initiate our becoming ‘not of the world’. When Ammon and Aaron begin teaching the Lamanites, they quoted scripture. They began with the Creation, then the Fall and conclude with the Atonement. (See Alma 18:36-39; 22:12-14) When Enoch creates his city, he taught from the Book of Adam. (Moses 6:46-68) It’s hard for me to conceive that there are members who feel that the Church ought to change their doctrine and policies to keep up with the times we are in. This is nothing but foolishness.

Our doctrines are given by a God who can see the end from the beginning; they are from a God who knows what will create happiness for us here and in the next life. The commandments come from a God who knows all things, and He has given us these things. To think we can change the mind of a perfect God in order to make things worse is ridiculous. To think we can by vote, or vigil, or petition, change the doctrine of the Church is equally insane. For a religion to exist its doctrines must be founded on an unchangeable standard. If the doctrines can change by whatever Prophet, then we belong to a club, not a religion. Those members just don’t understand that a loving God has given us these things so that we can be the happiest here in this life and in the next.