

Sons and Daughters of God

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Wana na Mabinti wa Mungu

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We truly believe that we are all literally the children of God, and because of that, we have the potential to become like Him.

Today I would like to address one of the most joyful, glorious, and powerful gospel truths that God has revealed. At the same time, it is ironically one for which we have been criticized. An experience I had some years ago profoundly deepened my appreciation for this gospel truth.

As a representative of the Church, I was once invited to a religious conference where it was announced that from that moment on they would recognize as valid all baptisms performed by almost all other Christian churches, as long as the ordinance was done with water and in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Then it was explained that this policy did not apply to baptisms performed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

After the conference I was able to delve deeper into the reasons for that exception with the leader in charge of the announcement. We had a wonderful and insightful conversation.

In short, he explained to me that that exception had primarily to do with our particular beliefs about the Godhead, which other Christian denominations often refer to as the Trinity. I expressed my appreciation for him taking the time to explain to me his beliefs and the policy of his church. At the end of our conversation, we hugged and then said goodbye.

As I later contemplated our discussion, what this leader said about Latter-day Saints not understanding what he called the “mystery of the

Tunaamini kweli kwamba sisi sote hakika ni watoto wa Mungu, na kwa sababu hiyo, tuna uwezo wa kuwa kama Yeye.

Leo ningependa kuzungumzia juu ya mojawapo ya kweli za shangwe sana, tukufu zaidi na yenye nguvu zaidi ambayo Mungu ameifunua. Wakati huo huo, ni mojawapo ya kweli ambazo kwayo tumekosolewa mara kwa mara. Uzoefu niliokuwa nao miaka kadhaa iliyopita umekuza kwa kina shukrani zangu kwa ukweli huu wa injili.

Kama mwakilishi wa Kanisa, niliwahi kualikwa kwenye mkutano wa kidini ambapo ilitangazwa kwamba kuanzia wakati huo na kuendelea wangetambua ubatizo wote uliofanywa na karibu makanisa yote ya Kikristo, alimradi tu ibada ilifanywa kwa maji na katika jina la Baba na la Mwana na la Roho Mtakatifu. Kisha, ilifafanuliwa kwamba sera hii haitumiki kwenye ubatizo unaofanywa na Kanisa la Yesu Kristo la Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho.

Baada ya mkutano niliweza kuchimbua kwa undani sababu ya upekee huo kutoka kwa kiongozi aliyetoa tangazo. Tulikuwa na mazungumzo mazuri na yenye mtazamo.

Kwa ufupi, alinifafanulia kwamba upekee ulihusiana hasa na baadhi ya imani zetu kuhusu Uungu, ambao madhehebu mengine ya Kikristo mara nyingi huuita Utatu. Nilielezea shukrani zangu kwa yeye kuchukua muda wake kunielezea imani zake na sera ya kanisa lake. Mwisho wa mazungumzo yetu, tulikumbatiana na kuagana.

Baadaye nilipotafakari mazungumzo yetu, kile kiongozi huyu alichokisema kuhusu Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho kutoelewa kile ali-

Trinity” stayed in my mind. What was he referring to? Well, it had to do with our understanding of the nature of God. We believe that God the Father “is an exalted man” with a glorified “body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; [and] the Son also.” Thus, every time we talk about the nature of God, in some way, somehow, we are also talking about our own nature.

And this is true not only because we all were made “in [His] image, after [His] likeness,” but also because, as the Psalmist recorded, God said, “Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.” This is for us a precious doctrine now recovered with the advent of the Restoration. In summary, it is nothing more or less than what our missionaries teach as the first lesson, first paragraph, first line: “God is our Heavenly Father, and we are His children.”

Now, you might say, “But many people believe we are children of God.” Yes, that is true, but their understanding may be a little different from the implication of its deeper meaning that we affirm. For Latter-day Saints, this teaching is not metaphorical. Rather, we truly believe that we are all literally the children of God. He is “the Father of [our] spirits,” and because of that, we have the potential to become like Him, which seems to be inconceivable to some.

It has now been over 200 years since the First Vision opened the doors to the Restoration. At the time, young Joseph Smith sought guidance from heaven to know what church to join. Through the revelation he received that day, and in later revelations given to him, the Prophet Joseph obtained knowledge about the nature of God and our relationship to Him as His children.

Because of that, we learn more clearly that our Heavenly Father has taught this precious doctrine from the very beginning. Allow me to cite at least two accounts from the scriptures to illustrate this.

You might remember God’s instructions to Moses as recorded in the Pearl of Great Price.

We read that “God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name.” In other words, Moses, I want you to know who I am. Then He added, “And, behold, thou art my son.” Later he said, “And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in

chokiita “dhana ya Utatu” kilibaki akilini mwan-gu. Alimaanisha nini? Ndio, ilihusu uelewa wetu wa asili ya Mungu. Tunaamini kwamba Mungu Baba “ni mtu aliyeinuliwa” mwenye “mwili ulio-tukuka wa nyama na mifupa unaoshikika kama wa mwanadamu; [na] Mwana pia.” Kwa hiyo, kila mara tunapozungumza kuhusu asili ya Mungu, kwa jinsi hii, kwa njia fulani, tunazungumza pia kuhusu asili yetu wenyewe.

Na hili ni kweli si tu kwa sababu tuliumbwa “kwa mfano [Wake], kwa sura [Yake],” lakini pia kwa sababu, kama Mtunga Zaburi alivyoandika, “Ndinyi miungu; na wana wa aliye Juu.” Haya kwetu sisi ni mafundisho ya thamani sasa yakipatikana tena kwa ujio wa Urejesho. Kwa muhtasari, si zaidi au pungufu ya kile wamisionari wetu wanachofundisha kama somo la kwanza, aya ya kwanza, mstari wa kwanza: “Mungu ni Baba yetu wa Mbinguni na sisi ni watoto Wake.”

Sasa, ungeweza kusema, “Lakini watu wengi wanaamini sisi ni watoto wa Mungu.” Ndiyo, hiyo ni kweli, lakini uelewa wao unaweza kuwa tofauti kidogo kutoka kwenye hitimisho la maana yake ya kina ambayo tuna uhakika nayo. Kwa Watakatifu wa Siku za Mwisho, fundisho hili si la kisitiari. Bali, kwa hakika tunaamini kwamba sisi sote hakika ni watoto wa Mungu. Yeye ni “Baba wa roho [zetu],” na kwa sababu ya hilo, tuna uwezekano wa kuwa kama Yeye, kitu ambacho huonekana cha kufikirika kwa baadhi ya watu.

Sasa ni zaidi ya miaka 200 tangu Ono la Kwanza lilipofungua milango ya Urejesho. Wakati huo, Joseph Smith mdogo alitafuta mwongozo kutoka mbinguni ili kujua kanisa lipi ajiunge nalo. Kupitia ufunuo alioupokea siku ile, na kwenye mafunuo mengine kwake, Nabii Joseph alipata maarifa kuhusu uhalisia wa Mungu na uhusiano wetu Kwake kama watoto Wake.

Kwa sababu ya hilo, tunajifunza wazi zaidi kwamba Baba yetu wa Mbinguni amefundisha fundisho hili la thamani tangu mwanzo kabisa. Niruhusu ninukuu angalau simulizi mbili kutoka kwenye maandiko ili kuelezea hili.

Unaweza kukumbuka maelekezo ya Mungu kwa Musa kama yalivyoandikwa ndani ya Lulu ya Thamani Kuu.

Tunasoma kwamba “Mungu akamwambia Musa, akisema: Tazama, Mimi ndimi Bwana Mungu Mwenyezi, na Bila Mwisho ndilo jina langu.” Kwa maneno mengine, Musa, nataka ujue Mimi ni nani. Kisha aliongeza, “Na, tazama, wewe u mwanangu.” Baadaye alisema, “Nina kazi kwa

the similitude of mine Only Begotten.” And then finally, He ended with, “And now, behold, this one thing I show unto thee, Moses, my son.”

It appears that God was determined to teach Moses at least one lesson: “You are my child,” which He repeated at least three times. He could not even mention the name of Moses without immediately adding that he was His son.

However, after Moses was left alone, he felt weak because he was no longer in the presence of God. That is when Satan came to tempt him. Can you see a pattern here? The first thing he said was, “Moses, son of man, worship me.”

In this context, Satan’s request to worship him may have been only a distraction. A significant temptation for Moses in that moment of weakness was to become confused and believe that he was only a “son of man,” rather than a child of God.

“And it came to pass that Moses looked upon Satan and said: Who art thou? For behold, I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten.” Fortunately, Moses was not confused and did not allow himself to become distracted. He had learned the lesson of who he really was.

The next account is found in Matthew 4. Scholars have entitled this “the three temptations of Jesus,” as if the Lord was tempted only three times, which of course is not the case.

Hundreds of gallons of ink have been used to explain the meaning and content of these temptations. As we know, the chapter begins by explaining that Jesus had gone into the desert, “and when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”

Satan’s first temptation apparently had only to do with satisfying the Lord’s physical needs. “Command that these stones be made bread,” he challenged the Savior.

A second enticement may have had to do with tempting God: “Cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee.”

Finally, Satan’s third temptation referred to the aspirations and glory of the world. After Jesus had been shown “all the kingdoms of the world, ... [Satan] saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

ajili yako, Musa, mwanangu; nawe u mfano wa Mwanangu wa Pekee.” Na hatimaye, Yeye alihitimisha kwa, “Na sasa, tazama, jambo hili moja ninalionyesha kwako, Musa, mwanangu.”

Ilionekana kwamba Mungu alikusudia kumfundisha Musa angalau somo moja: “Wewe ni mtoto wangu,” jambo ambalo alilirudia angalau mara tatu. Hangetaja jina la Musa bila kuongeza kwa haraka kwamba alikuwa Mwanaye.

Hata hivyo, baada ya Musa kuachwa peke yake, alihisi dhaifu kwa sababu hakuwa tena katika uwepo wa Mungu. Hapo ndipo Shetani alipokuja kumjaribu. Je, unaweza kuona mpangilio hapa? Jambo la kwanza yeye alilosema lilikuwa, “Musa, mwana wa mtu, niabudu mimi.”

Katika muktadha huu, ombi la Shetani la kuabudiwa linaweza kuwa lilikuwa tu kivuruga umakini. Jaribu muhimu kwa Musa katika wasaa ule wa udhaifu lilikuwa kukanganyikiwa na kuamini kwamba alikuwa tu “mwana wa mtu,” badala ya mtoto wa Mungu.

“Na ikawa kwamba Musa akamtazama Shetani na akasema: Wewe ni nani? Kwa maana tazama, mimi ni mwana wa Mungu, katika mfano wa Mwanawe wa Pekee.” Kwa bahati nzuri, Musa hakukanganyikiwa na hakujiruhusu kuvurugwa umakini. Alikuwa amejifunza somo la yeye alikuwa nani hasa.

Tukio linalofuata linapatikana katika Mathayo 4. Wanazuoni wamelipa hili kichwa cha habari “majaribu matatu ya Yesu” kana kwamba Bwana wetu alijaribiwa mara tatu pekee, ambayo kwa kweli sivyo ilivyokuwa.

Mamia ya galoni za wino yametumika kufafanua maana na undani wa majaribu haya. Kama tujuavyo, sura inanza kwa kufafanua kwamba Yesu alikuwa amekwenda nyikani, “na baada ya kufunga siku arobaini mchana na usiku, mwisho akaona njaa.”

Jaribu la kwanza la shetani ni wazi lilikuwa kukidhi mahitaji ya kimwili ya Bwana. “Amuru mawe haya yawe mikate,” alimjaribu Mwokozi.

Ulaghai wa pili unaweza kuwa ulikuwa kumjaribu Mungu: “Jitupe chini: maana imeandikwa, atakuagizia malaika zake wakulinde.”

Mwisho, jaribu la tatu la Shetani lilihusu matamano na utukufu wa ulimwengu. Baada ya Yesu kuonyeshwa “milki zote za ulimwengu, ... [Shetani] akamwambia, Haya yote nitakupa, ukianguka na kunisujudia.”

In truth, Satan's ultimate temptation may have had less to do with those three specific provocations and more to do with tempting Jesus Christ to question His divine nature. At least twice, the enticement was preceded by the challenging accusation from Satan: "If thou be the Son of God"—if you really believe it, then do this or that.

Please notice what had happened immediately before Jesus went into the desert to fast and pray: we find the account of Christ's baptism. And when He had come out of the water, there came "a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Do we see the connection? Can we recognize a pattern here?

It is no wonder that every time we are taught about our divine nature and destiny, the adversary of all righteousness tempts us to call them into question.

How different our decisions would be if we really knew who we really are.

We live in a challenging world, a world of increasing commotion, where honorable people strive to at least emphasize our human dignity, while we belong to a church and embrace a gospel that lift our vision and invite us into the divine.

Jesus's commandment to be "perfect, even as [our] Father which is in heaven is perfect" is a clear reflection of His high expectations and our eternal possibilities. Now, none of this will happen overnight. In the words of President Jeffrey R. Holland, it will happen "eventually." But the promise is that if we "come unto Christ," we will "be perfected in him." That requires a lot of work—not just any work, but a divine work. His work!

Now, the good news is that it is precisely our Father in Heaven who has said, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."

President Russell M. Nelson's invitation to "think celestial" implies a wonderful reminder of our divine nature, origin, and potential destination. We can obtain the celestial only through Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice.

Perhaps that is why Satan enticed Jesus with the very same temptation from the beginning to the end of His earthly ministry. Matthew recorded that while Jesus hung on the cross, those "that

Katika ukweli, jaribu la mwisho la Shetani lilikuwa kidogo sana kuhusu uchochezi huo maalumu wa aina tatu lakini zaidi lilihusu kumjaribu Yesu Kristo kutilia shaka asili Yake takatifu. Angalau mara mbili, ulaghai ulitanguliwa na shitaka lenye changamoto kutoka kwa Shetani: "Ukiwa ndiwe Mwana wa Mungu"—ikiwa unaamini hilo, basi fanya hili au lile.

Tafadhali tambua kile ambacho kilikuwa kimetokea kabla ya Yesu kwenda nyikani kufunga na kusali: tunapata simulizi ya ubatizo wa Kristo Na Yeye alipokwisha kutoka majini, na tazama "sauti kutoka mbinguni ikisema, Huyu ni Mwanangu mpendwa, ninayependezwa naye."

Je, tunaona muunganiko? Je, tunaweza kutambua mpangilio hapa?

Haishangazi kwamba kila mara tunapofundishwa kuhusu asili yetu takatifu na hatma, adui wa haki yote hutujaribu tuyatilie shaka.

Ingeleta tofauti kubwa kwenye maamuzi yetu ikiwa tungejua sisi ni akina nani hasa.

Tunaishi kwenye ulimwengu wenye changamoto, ulimwengu wenye ongezeko la vurugu, ambapo watu wenye heshima wanajaribu angalau kusisitiza utu wa ubinadamu wetu, waka-ti tuwapo kanisani na kuikumbatia injili ambayo huinua ono letu na kutualika kwenye utakatifu.

Amri ya Yesu ya kuwa "wakamilifu, kama Baba [yetu] wa mbinguni alivyo mkamilifu" ni dhihirisho la matarajio Yake ya juu na uwezekano wetu wa milele. Sasa, hakuna kati ya hili linaweza kutokea siku moja. Katika maneno ya Rais Jeffrey R. Holland, litatokea "hatimaye." Lakini ahadi ni kwamba ikiwa "tutakuja kwa Kristo," "tutakamilishwa ndani yake." Hiyo huhitaji kazi nyingi—si tu kazi yoyote, bali kazi ya kiungu. Kazi Yake!

Sasa, habari njema ni kwamba hakika ni Baba yetu wa Mbinguni ambaye alisema "Kwani tazama, hii ndiyokazi yanguna utukufu wangu—kuleta kutokufa na uzima wa milele wa mwana-damu."

Mwaliko wa Rais Russell M. Nelson wa "fikiria selestia" unatoa ukumbusho mzuri wa asili yetu takatifu, chanzo na hatma ya uwezekano wetu. Tunaweza kuipata selestia tu kupitia dhambi-hu ya Yesu Kristo ya kulipia dhambi.

Pengine hiyo ndiyo sababu Shetani alimlaghai Yesu kwa majaribu yale yale kuanzia mwanzo hadi mwisho kabisa wa huduma Yake ya duniani. Mathayo aliandika kwamba wakati Yesu

passed by reviled him, ... saying, ...If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”Glory be to God that He did not hearken but instead provided the way for us to receive all celestial blessings.

Let us always remember, there was a great price paid for our happiness.

I testify as with the Apostle Paul that “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

akining’inia msalabani, wale “waliopita njiani walimdhihaki, ... wakisema, ...ukiwa ndiwe Mwana wa Mungu, shuka msalabani.”Utukufu uwe kwa Mungu kwamba Yeye hakisikiliza lakini badala yake alitoa njia kwa ajili yetu tupokee baraka zote za selestia.

Acha sisi daima tukumbuke kulikuwa na gharama kubwa iliyolipwa kwa ajili ya furaha yetu.

Ninashuhudia kama Mtume Paulo kwamba “Roho mwenyewe hushuhudia pamoja na roho zetu, ya kuwa sisi tu watoto wa Mungu: na kama tu watoto, basi tu warithi wa Mungu, warithio pamoja na Kristo; naam tukiteswa pamoja naye ili tupate na kutukuzwa pamoja naye”Katika jina la Yesu Kristo, amina.