

he would bring upon himself an eternal death both of body and spirit. Now is the opportunity for mercy to step in. Justice had consigned them to eternal death and misery, and mercy could not step in without destroying the claims of justice, only upon certain conditions. And what may be those conditions? Would God accept the sacrifice of a corrupted, sinful, degraded, fallen being as an atonement for his own sins? No; that would not satisfy the demands of justice. God could not exhibit the attribute of mercy on any principle whatsoever, only for a sinless being to suffer in behalf of sinful man. Inasmuch as the sin was against an infinite being—a transgression of a law issued by an infinite being, the atonement must be an infinite atonement. Hence God sent forth his only begotten Son in the meridian of time, who took upon himself the form of fallen man: that is, he entered into a tabernacle of flesh and bones, although he had not been guilty of the original sin. This he did voluntarily on his part.

For the edification of the Saints, I will refer to a passage in the inspired translation of the book of Abraham, where we read that in the counsels of eternity, before the foundation of the world, the Lord devised the great plan of salvation. When he came to that part of it, in relation to the future redemption of man, which pertains to a sacrifice, he made an inquiry—"Whom shall we send?" He did not feel, as it were, willing to say to any one of the council, *You* are the person, and *you* must go and make this atonement: he did not seem willing to exercise this authority upon an innocent being, but looked around upon the assembly as though he would have someone to volunteer. "And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me." Here, then, was an offer on the part of the

Son of God, the Firstborn—"I will go and redeem the human family upon the conditions that thou hast devised."

But how could he go and redeem them? He could not redeem them, unless he suffered for them and in their behalf. The penalty of death had passed upon them. His father might have reasoned with him in words something like these—If you, a pure sinless being, my only begotten Son, are willing to go and take upon you the same kind of body that the fallen sons of men have taken upon themselves—a fallen body of flesh and bones, subject to pain, disease, sickness, temptation, and finally death, and offer yourself as a sacrifice (although it is not required of you, for you have committed no sin that I should cause death to come on your body; yet if you do this voluntarily, and keep my commandments in all things, and not sin against me), I will accept the sacrifice which you make in behalf of your younger brethren; and I will have mercy on them, otherwise no mercy can be shown to them: justice must have its full effect, and they must suffer eternal misery, being captive to that being whom they have consented to obey.

Here, then, was the principle in which could be made manifest mercy in behalf of the fallen sons and daughters of men. When could this principle of mercy begin to be exercised? Could it be exercised before the blood of the atonement was shed? Yes. There was the free, voluntary offer of the Son of God to do all this work, and suffer and die for his brethren, before man was placed in the garden: hence, in the mind of God, it was just the same as though it had actually been fulfilled. Therefore he is called a lamb slain, as it were, before the foundation of the world: hence he could have mercy on Adam, on Enoch, on Noah, on Abraham, on