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**Grave-side Service Address  
for Joel Erik Myers, March 20, 2001**

In a week I shall have my 91st birthday. What do I have to look forward to after that? The answer--as much as I ever had. Are we going anywhere in this life? The other side is where the real work is being done: "...there was a space granted unto man in which he might repent; therefore this life became a probationary state; a time to prepare to meet God; a time to prepare for that endless state which has been spoken of by us, which is after the resurrection of the dead" (Alma 12:24).

The history of the race, like the life of the individual, has been a succession of tests. They come in Dispensations. Joseph Smith in one book has given us comprehensive accounts of seven great Dispensations of the Gospel. It was an exercise unmatched in "extreme scholarship," yet we have ample means of controlling his account given when none of the rich apocryphal sources now available were known to the world. Each Dispensation which is a bestowal or handing down of the Gospel by direct revelation was immediately followed by general apostasy and wickedness.

Adam and Eve "mourned before the Lord" while their own offspring "loved Satan more than God." Enoch wept and "refused to be comforted"; he left the world with his righteous Zion to consign "the residue of mankind" to destruction. The Flood had barely dried up when the people of Noah's day were back to their old ways, "And the Lord said in his heart I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth..." (Gen. 8:1). Abraham's own parents turned from the Gospel to the practice of idolatry and human sacrifice (Abr. 1:5-7), while his people went directly into 400 years of bondage in Egypt, which they deserved. Hear Moses' farewell address: "...Behold, while I am yet alive with you this day ye have been rebellious against the Lord, and how much more after my death?" (Deut. 31:27)

Christ in his prophecies to the Apostles predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews as "but the beginning of sorrows"--2000 years of them: "For then shall be great troubles, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21). And finally, Joseph Smith was shown a vision of the Last Days so terrible that he begged the Lord to take it away.

As far back as the record goes, people have been edified by great temple dramas, depicting the Creation, the Council in Heaven, Satan's claim to complete control of the operation and his expulsion from Heaven. Joseph Smith has given us in the Book of Moses two such temple dramas, the one starring Moses and the other Enoch.

The editors of the Classical and Egyptian versions have been reminding us recently that the plays answer three main questions in their attempt to give majesty and purpose to the suffering of man. 1) Why is this world such a mean place? As Hamlet puts it, "Weary, flat, stale

and unprofitable, an unweeded garden that goes to seed--things rank and gross possess it merely" (Hamlet, Act II, Sc. ). There was a saying in the German villages where I spent my mission, "Das Leben ist wie ein Kinderhemd, kurz und besudelt." (Life is like a baby's bib, short and messy.) 2) Where is God when we need him? This had a special name with the Ancients, Aporia, "absence in emergency," "unable to make it," "out to lunch." Joseph Smith in Carthage Jail cries out, "O God where is thy hiding place?" And the Lord in Gethsemene pleads for relief, but knows he must go on to Golgotha. 3) The third question is, Why with our vast potential and talents is our life so ridiculously short? Even genius takes time to develop. This is Omar Khayam's complaint: "One moment in annihilation's waste, one moment of the wine of life to taste; the stars are setting and the caravan starts for the dawn of nothing--O make haste!" If you are being severely tested, why not be given a decent chance to show what you can really do?

These questions answer themselves. Don't tell me there is no answer--if there was no answer there would be no question. But the answers are very clear, especially in Joel's case. Almost everything that happens to us in this life presents us with a sort of test, from crossing the street to reaching the Moon; getting up in the morning and going to bed at night, the slightest exertion challenging inertia (Newton's First Law). Even more than our actions our very thoughts are an unceasing test. Experts on the brain tell us that, unlike God, we can only think of one thing at a time; every individual must decide for himself at every moment just what he is going think about.

So we are being tested here and there is no escape from it. To recapitulate, Carl Popper has explained that to test anything, whether a piece of machinery, building materials, a student's knowledge, or a weight lifter's strength, it must be tried to the limit. Anything that stops short of that leaves the question in doubt. We need only think of Gethsemene. So don't expect an easy test. 2) As to Aporia, God stands on the sidelines and does not interfere. Again we think of Gethsemene; angels brought comfort but no escape from the Cross.

The severest test ever given to a human was Abraham's, the sacrifice of his only son. And after the trial was over, he named the place Jehovah-jirea (Gen. 22:14), which means that God was watching all the time and knew exactly how it would turn out. Abraham may have known too because he told the men watching the pack animals that he and Isaac would be back in a little while. But Isaac did not know. For him it was the Akeda--Getheseme. But Abraham, like all who would become children of Abraham, was tested right up to the point where the angel cried, "Lay not thy hand upon the lad...for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:12).

3) And why is the time so short? It takes years to acquire knowledge, wisdom, skill, understanding and experience necessary to achieve our maximum in this world. So after years of preparation one comes primed and ready to take the examination. A 4-hour test would be a joyful opportunity--a chance to show off. But what happens? After five minutes the monitor says, "Time's up, drop your pens and hand in your papers." That is what happened to Joel. He worked like a demon, and was prepared to write a 10-hour examination at least. But what happens? As I lie in bed I look at a solid wall of books by my side, chosen over a lifetime with the greatest care--they put me into the picture of the ancient world as efficiently and pleasantly as

anything else could--and yet I have to turn over, fall asleep and dismiss them with a sigh--I have them at last, but no time left to read them.

Isn't the explanation to all three questions obvious? 1) The routine presented by a vicious and contrary world? 2) The absence of any ready assistance? 3) The grossly disappointing examination that nobody is going to read. And at the end? What are we being tested for if not for achievement or ability? What then is all this testing about? The answer is that all this is simply to show what kind of people we are. Obviously we are being groomed for an immensely important assignment, and for a vast expanse of time, and possibly for vicious and insidious opposition.

Have we the qualities to stand up to it? Because the next step we take will be for eternity. The Covenants we make explain it. For what specifically are we being tested? What are the qualities and talents we will need for an eternal task of dealing with the highest and the lowest forms of existence? They are characteristics well known to all of us. (1) First of all, in being willing to take the test, we show obedience, trusting our welfare to the wisdom of others. (2) And since this is going to require substantial yielding of our own sacro egoismo, that means sacrifice. (3) We are not alone and never will be; so we may never forget the rights and blessings of others which we share with them; the family is the model and sets the tone that prescribes our behavior; we are dealing always with others as dear to us as our own existence so there can be no clashing of wills and temperaments. Such is the Law of the Gospel.

(4) Naturally, the wanton and excessive excitement characteristic of Roman society, and our own, has no place in a world where all things are sacred. We accept the Law of Chastity. (5) The whole thing is summed up in life in the world of the living--we all have the same feelings of justice, righteousness, devoid of legal quibbling or sophistry--in other words perfectly spontaneous love for everything that is "good, true and beautiful." It is for all of us to give and to receive. That is the Law of Consecration.

Joseph Smith, the founder of this last Dispensation, was the only mortal aware of just what is going on. He regretted the impossibility of communicating all he had seen. The question remains--Is this all there is? Here I am free to speak. From reasons based on the evidence of things around us and above us, I have reason to believe that Joel is joyfully employed at present. My reasoning is not perfect but I can support it with a number of personal experiences that leave me in absolutely no doubt at all that Joel is engaged in a higher work. I expect to have this assertion confirmed in my own case before very long.

That we may comprehend the wisdom and love in God's dealings with all of us, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.