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## A Godlike Potential

*John Hale Gardner*

*The words poured over the heads of graduates often are not worthy of being preserved in print. There are exceptions. Printed below is a rare but worthy graduation speech. It was originally delivered as a "Charge to the Graduates" at Brigham Young University Graduate Convocation, 21 August 1970.*

I have been asked to give the charge to the graduates. This demands that I shall strive to indicate to you what is important and what has significance for you above all else.

I can quickly tell you the answer. What is important to you is what you enjoy. I can tell you more about your character and your destiny from a knowledge of what pleasures you seek, what brings joy to your heart, than any other information you can provide. For man is that he might have joy; and it is within God's power to cloak your eternal uncreated, indestructible will with that physical body, that biological sensor and computer for a brain, and provide you with that environment which will bring you the joy for which you strive. And I assert that he has done just that. Man is in very fact, here and now, that he might have joy.

Why then do we see everywhere about us anger, frustration, sorrow, and despair? Is there not a paradox here? Man is that he might have joy. Why then do we see so little of it? Has God failed us? We must of necessity answer this in the negative. God's work is perfect. The answer to the paradox is to be found in the nature of man.

Jesus, in the Parable of the Talents, describes a situation in which men are given money and are expected to produce in proportion to the amount given — the man who has given five talents was expected to return ten, he who was given two talents to return four, and so on. The Saviour compared the Kingdom of Heaven to this situation. The parable clearly was intended to express the fact that this same expectation applies to one's spiritual stature. One's character is not expected to remain static but to develop in proportion to one's present endowments. But is this an expectation for this life only? Joseph Smith has stated otherwise. This is an eternal law,



the law of eternal progression. And only a mathematician or a prophet can divine what this implies. It implies to the mathematician exponential growth; it implies to a prophet that a man in a relatively short time may become so vastly superior to his present state that to other men he would be regarded as a God. Hence, we begin to understand the very difficult 82nd Psalm, 6th verse, "I have said, ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High."

We discover in the parable of the talents a fundamental characteristic of man, most revelatory of his nature: A godlike potential stemming from his capacity to grow in proportion to his stature. A most remarkable and awesome suggestion of the validity of this principle is found in Hubble's law of the recession of the galaxies, the most important astronomical discovery since Isaac Newton's discovery of the universal law of gravitation. According to Hubble's law, the galaxies are receding from one another at a rate proportional to their separations. If this law is taken as an exact law of the universe it translates mathematically into the law of exponential growth for the universe, the exponentially expanding universe in complete harmony with the Parable of the Talents to which the Savior likened the Kingdom of Heaven.

But here we are perhaps reaching too far beyond what can readily be understood by man with his finite understanding and in the light of present scientific knowledge. Let us return to the problem of what is important to you as graduates, namely what gives you joy. We live in a time when men's hearts fail them and gloom and despair are everywhere about us. We are trying to understand this in view of God's purpose for man. With our un-

derstanding of man as an eternal exponentially-growing being we realize that what is important is not the joy of a moment of time, but rather a joy of cosmic proportion. In this we are reminded of Joseph Smith's passionate appeal in Liberty jail, "O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place? How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ears be penetrated with their cries? Yea, O Lord, how long shall they suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thy heart shall be softened towards them, and thy bowels be moved to compassion toward them?"

And the Lord's answer: "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes. . . ."

Evil in the form of oppression, war, hypocrisy, deceit, poverty, racism, etc. is not new to this generation. Furthermore, it is likely that these evils will have to be faced by generations yet unborn, regardless of the accomplishments or failures of the present generation. Times of great tumult, of great troubles and trials are indeed difficult to bear. But they also bring great challenge, and they produce great men and great women and bring ultimately great joy to those who triumph.

The tragedy of many of your generation is their lack of philosophy to give them perspective, to calm their spirits and temper their actions, to bring peace to their souls. Your generation yearns for individuality, for fulfillment of self, perhaps more than any other generation. But consider Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They were faced with an impossible choice: They were commanded not to partake of the tree of knowledge but also they were commanded to multiply and replenish the earth, two commandments which were, in the light of modern scripture, mutually exclusive. They were faced with a dilemma. To partake or not to partake, that was the question. By placing them in this dilemma God gave them their freedom. They had to make their own choice. Inaction would have been a free choice just as much as was the act they choose. According to the knowledge they possessed no choice they could make could please God. They had to please themselves. They had no way of escape from their freedom. You, as the heirs of Adam and Eve can likewise not escape your freedom. Your choices are your own and the choices you make will make you. From this comes the tremendous variety, the fascination, the exciting challenge of life. Out of this you acquire your uniqueness as an individual. That is why what is most important to you is what gives you pleasure.

My greatest pleasures come from mastering a new skill, coming upon a new concept, perceiving a new relationship, gaining mastery of a difficult situation, rising to a challenge. Among my most sublime moments are those when I see one of my children's or my student's eyes light up with a new discovery. Growth and life are synonymous. When growth ceases decay sets in and death ensues. This earth was created and you were placed upon it in a condition to foster growth because it is God's intent to provide for your growth in that which brings you joy. And that growth is individual and characteristic of you since you are free. You are creating, by your choices,

your own future, which, though constrained and disciplined by universal law, is nonetheless determined by your willingness to persevere in the pursuit of your heart's desire. Though you may be confronted with seemingly insurmountable difficulties, frustrations, and harassments, and though you may at times feel that the Lord has abandoned you, you can have peace in your heart, for your suffering is for but a small moment, and if you endure it well how great will be your joy.

You graduates here today are perhaps unique in all the world because of the philosophy you have that is not shared by others of your generation. Because of your knowledge of your nature and your vision of the greatness of your possibilities, you will influence the course of human history in far greater proportion than your numbers would suggest. You are the light of the world. The torch is yours, bear it well.

## Foolsmate

Gordon C. Thomasson

the time has come  
the walrus said  
to speak of many things  
. . . of cabbages and kings

*Some Mormon Theologians hold that Joseph Smith had a plan for world government and that he believed that, as President of the Church and Prophet, he was the only legitimate and rightful ruler of this world. To this end, they maintain, Joseph Smith had himself crowned "king on earth" and then set about to organize a political Kingdom of God on earth. Gordon C. Thomasson offers comfort for those who are shocked to learn that there actually are reports from Nauvoo that Joseph Smith was anointed "king." Thomasson takes issue with Klaus Hansen (DIALOGUE, 6 [Spring 1971], 73-76) who feels that James Strang's "dreams of empire" were an outgrowth of similar desires in Joseph Smith. Thomasson suggests that the temple ordinances provide the factual basis for the stories about Joseph Smith's supposed earthly kingship and a point from which to begin to understand the Mormon concept of the Kingdom of God.*

Klaus J. Hansen's review of Doyle L. Fitzpatrick's *The King Strang Story: A Vindication of James J. Strang, the Beaver Island King* in the Spring 1971 *Dialogue* is the latest manifestation of a currently popular scholarly perspective on Mormonism which is most easily recognized by its emphasis on "the political kingdom of God." The works of Hansen, Hyrum Andrus, and others illustrate this view. Seldom have so many individuals from so many isolated and otherwise antagonistic "camps" of Mormon scholarship shown such agreement in their interpretation of our tradition. The last decade has seen a number of highly influential studies which depend on assumptions about the existence of a political kingdom of God.

Since Hansen began his review with a note on the place of amateurs in scholarship I would seek to justify my entering the debate by recalling Hugh Nibley's oft-cited example of how illiterate Bedouin boys could explain the function of Qumran artifacts which had stumped the professional archaeologists. Everyone can play the game. Nevertheless, by the time an entire