

Lectures on Faith

**From the School of
the Prophets at
Kirtland, Ohio**

Lectures on Faith

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Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith unto salvation. First, the idea that he actually exists. Secondly, a *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will. (*Lectures on Faith*, 3:2-5)

	Date		Topics
Week 1:	Sept. 1,	Aug. 27	Introduction; Historical Background
Weeks 2-3:	Sept. 8,15,	Sept. 3,10	Lecture 1: What Faith Is
Weeks 3-5:	Sept. 22,29	Sept. 17,24	Lecture 2: The object of faith
Weeks 5-6:	Oct. 6,20	Oct. 1,8	Lecture 3: Attributes of God
Weeks 7-8:	Oct. 27, 11/3	Oct. 15, 29	Lecture 4: Character of God
Weeks 9:	Nov. 10	Oct. 22	Lecture 5: The Godhead
Weeks 10-11:	Nov. 17, 24	Nov. 5, 12	Lecture 6: Sacrifice
Weeks 12-13:	Dec. 1,8	Nov. 19, Dec.	Lecture 7: Effects of faith

Introduction/Historical Background

- "Seek Learning by Faith," David A. Bednar; "Authorship and History of the Lectures on Faith," Larry Dahl

Lecture 1

- **Topical Guide:** ["Faith Faith BD,"](#) ["Assurance,"](#) ["Believe"](#) ["Confidence,"](#) ["Trust in God"](#)
- "Faith in God," Bruce R. McConkie; "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," Gerald N. Lund (attachment); "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," Kevin W. Pearson

Lecture 2

- **Topical Guide:** [Prophets;](#) [Revelation;](#) [Witness, Witnesses](#)
- **Bible Dictionary:** [Prophet;](#) [Revelation](#)
- **True to the Faith:** ["Prophets,"](#) ["Revelation"](#); Moroni 7:29-32
- **E-mail articles:** "Chosen Vessels and the Order of Priesthood," Joseph Fielding McConkie "The Grandeur of God," Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, Nov. 2003,70-72; "Faith and Keys," Henry B. Eyring, *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 26-29

Lecture 3 Lecture 4

- **Topical Guide:** [God, Creator;](#) [Mercy, Merciful;](#) [God, Eternal Nature of;](#) [Truth;](#) [God, Access to;](#) [God, Love of;](#) [God, Omniscience of;](#) [God, Power of;](#) [God, Justice of;](#) [Justice;](#) [Judgment;](#) [God, Mercy of](#)
- **Bible Dictionary:** [Faith](#)
- **True to the Faith:** ["Atonement of Jesus Christ,"](#) ["Faith"](#)
- **E-mail articles:** "Faith and the Nature of God," Bruce R. McConkie; "The Character of Christ," David A. Bednar; "The Nature and Character of God," Andrew Skinner

Lecture 5

- **Topical Guide:** [Godhead;](#) [God the Father – Elohim/Eloheim;](#) [Jesus Christ;](#) [Jesus Christ, Atonement through;](#) [Holy Ghost;](#) [Holy Ghost, Mission of;](#) [Holy Ghost, Source of Testimony.](#)
- **E-mail articles:** "Doctrinal Exposition on the Father and the Son," *Ensign*, April 2002, 13-18; "The Supreme Power over All Things: The Doctrine of the Godhead in the Lectures on Faith," Robert L. Millet; "The Eternal Godhead," Bruce R. McConkie

Lecture 6

- **Topical Guide:** [Agency;](#) [God, Will of;](#) [Humility;](#) [Obedience;](#) [Reconciliation;](#) [Sacrifice;](#) [Test, Try, Prove;](#) [Will](#)
- **True to the Faith:** ["Humility,"](#) ["Obedience,"](#) ["Sacrifice"](#)
- **E-mail articles:** Neal A. Maxwell, "Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 22-24; Richard G. Scott, "Trust in the Lord," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 16-18; "Great Faith Obtained Only Through Personal Sacrifice," Robert J. Matthews; "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," Bruce R. McConkie

Lecture 7

- **Topical Guide:** ["Grace,"](#) ["Jesus Christ, Exemplar,"](#) [Jesus Christ, Atonement through;](#) [Jesus Christ, Mission of;](#) [Jesus Christ, Relationships with the Father;](#) [Salvation](#)
- **Bible Dictionary:** [Grace](#)
- **True to the Faith:** ["Atonement of Jesus Christ,"](#) ["Grace,"](#) ["Salvation"](#)
- **E-mail articles:** "The Challenge to Become," Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32-34; "In the Strength of the Lord," David A. Bednar, *BYU Speeches*; "The Fruits of Faith," "Faith and Salvation," Bruce R. McConkie

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SEEK LEARNING BY FAITH

Elder David A. Bednar
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Address to CES Religious Educators • February 3, 2006 • Jordan Institute of Religion



I express my love to and for you—and the gratitude of the Brethren for the righteous influence you have upon the youth of the Church throughout the world. Thank you for blessing and strengthening the rising generation.

I pray that the Holy Ghost will bless and edify us as we share this special time together.

Companion Principles: Preaching by the Spirit and Learning by Faith

We are admonished repeatedly in the scriptures to preach the truths of the gospel by the power of the Spirit (see D&C 50:14). I believe the vast majority of us as parents and teachers in the Church are aware of this principle and generally strive appropriately to apply it. As important as this principle is, however, it is only one element of a much larger spiritual pattern. We also frequently are taught to seek learning by faith (see D&C 88:118). *Preaching by the spirit* and *learning by faith* are companion principles that we should strive to understand and apply concurrently and consistently.

I suspect we emphasize and know much more about a teacher teaching by the Spirit than we do about a learner learning by faith. Clearly, the principles and processes of both teaching and learning are spiritually essential. However, as we look to the future and anticipate the ever more confused and turbulent world in which we will live, I believe it will be essential for all of us to increase our capacity to seek learning by faith. In our personal lives, in our families, and in the Church, we can and will receive the blessings of spiritual strength, direction, and protection as we seek by faith to obtain and apply spiritual knowledge.

Nephi teaches us, “When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth [the message] unto the hearts of the

children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1). Please notice how the power of the Spirit carries the message *unto* but not necessarily *into* the heart. A teacher can explain, demonstrate, persuade, and testify, and do so with great spiritual power and effectiveness. Ultimately, however, the content of a message and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if a receiver allows them to enter.

Brothers and sisters, learning by faith opens the pathway *into* the heart. Tonight we will focus upon the individual responsibility each of us has to seek learning by faith. We also will consider the implications of this principle for us as teachers.

The Principle of Action: Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

The Apostle Paul defined faith as “the substance of things hoped for, [and] the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Alma declared that faith is not a perfect knowledge; rather, if we have faith, we “hope for things which are not seen, [but] are true” (Alma 32:21). Additionally, we learn in the *Lectures on Faith* that faith is “the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness” and that it is also “the principle of action in all intelligent beings” (Joseph Smith, comp., *Lectures on Faith* [1985], 1).

These teachings of Paul and of Alma and from the *Lectures on Faith* highlight three basic elements of faith: (1) faith as the *assurance* of things hoped for which are true, (2) faith as the *evidence* of things not seen, and (3) faith as the principle of *action* in all intelligent beings. I describe these three components of faith in the Savior as simultaneously facing the future, looking to the past, and initiating action in the present.

Faith as the assurance of things hoped for looks to the future. This assurance is founded upon a correct understanding about and trust in God and enables us to “press forward” (2 Nephi 31:20) into uncertain and often challenging situations in the service of the Savior.

For example, Nephi relied upon precisely this type of future-facing spiritual assurance as he returned to Jerusalem to obtain the plates of brass—“not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do. Nevertheless [he] went forth” (1 Nephi 4:6–7).

Faith in Christ is inextricably tied to and results in hope in Christ for our redemption and exaltation. And assurance and hope make it possible for us to walk to the edge of the light and take a few steps into the darkness—expecting and trusting the light to move and illuminate the way (see Boyd K. Packer, “The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 54). The combination of assurance and hope initiates action in the present.

Faith as the evidence of things not seen looks to the past and confirms our trust in God and our confidence in the truthfulness of things not seen. We stepped into the darkness with assurance and hope, and we received evidence and confirmation as the light in fact moved and provided the illumination we needed. The witness we obtained after the trial of our faith (see Ether 12:6) is evidence that enlarges and strengthens our assurance.

Assurance, action, and evidence influence each other in an ongoing process. This helix is like a coil, and as it spirals upward it expands and grows wider. These three elements of faith—assurance, action, and evidence—are not separate and discrete; rather, they are interrelated and continuous and cycle upward. And the faith that fuels this ongoing process develops and evolves and changes. As we again turn and face forward toward an uncertain future, assurance leads to action and produces evidence, which further increases assurance. Our confidence waxes stronger, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little.

We find a powerful example of the interaction among assurance, action, and evidence as the children of Israel transported the ark of the covenant under the leadership of Joshua (see Joshua 3:7–17). Recall how the Israelites came to the river Jordan and were promised the waters would part, or “stand upon an heap” (Joshua 3:13), and they would be able to cross over on dry ground. Interestingly, the waters did not part as the children of Israel stood on the banks of the river waiting for something to happen; rather, the soles of their feet were wet before the water parted. The faith of the Israelites was manifested in the fact

that they walked into the water *before* it parted. They walked into the river Jordan with a future-facing assurance of things hoped for. As the Israelites moved forward, the water parted, and as they crossed over on dry land, they looked back and beheld the evidence of things not seen. In this episode, faith as assurance led to action and produced the evidence of things not seen which were true.

True faith is focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ and always leads to action. Faith as the principle of action is highlighted in many scriptures with which we are all familiar:

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so *faith without works is dead* also” (James 2:26; italics added).

“But be ye *doers of the word*, and not hearers only” (James 1:22; italics added).

“But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an *experiment upon my words*, and exercise a particle of faith” (Alma 32:27; italics added).

And it is faith as the principle of action that is so central to the process of learning and applying spiritual truth.

Learning by Faith: To Act and Not to Be Acted Upon

How is faith as the principle of action in all intelligent beings related to gospel learning? And what does it mean to seek learning by faith?

In the grand division of all of God’s creations, there are things to act and things to be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:13–14). As sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father, we have been blessed with the gift of agency—the capacity and power of independent action. Endowed with agency, we are agents, and we primarily are to act and not only to be acted upon—especially as we seek to obtain and apply spiritual knowledge.

Learning by faith and from experience are two of the central features of the Father’s plan of happiness. The Savior preserved moral agency through the Atonement and made it possible for us to act and to learn by faith. Lucifer’s rebellion against the plan sought to destroy the agency of man, and his intent was that we as learners would only be acted upon.

Consider the question posed by Heavenly Father to Adam in the Garden of Eden, “Where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9). Obviously the Father knew where Adam was hiding, but He, nonetheless, asked the question. Why? A wise and loving Father enabled His child to act in the learning process and not merely be acted upon. There was no one-way lecture to a disobedient child, as perhaps many of us might be inclined to deliver. Rather, the Father helped Adam as a learner to act as an agent and appropriately exercise his agency.

Recall how Nephi desired to know about the things his father, Lehi, had seen in the vision of the tree of life. Interestingly, the Spirit of the Lord begins the tutorial with Nephi by asking the following question, “Behold, what desirest thou?” (1 Nephi 11:2). Clearly the Spirit knew what Nephi desired. So why ask the question? The Holy Ghost was helping Nephi to act in the learning process and not simply be acted upon. (I encourage you at a later time to study chapters 11–14 in 1 Nephi and notice how the Spirit both asked questions and encouraged Nephi to “look” as active elements in the learning process.)

From these examples we recognize that as learners, you and I are to act and be doers of the word and not simply hearers who are only acted upon. Are you and I agents who act and seek learning by faith, or are we waiting to be taught and acted upon? Are the students we serve acting and seeking to learn by faith, or are they waiting to be taught and acted upon? Are you and I encouraging and helping those whom we serve to seek learning by faith? You and I and our students are to be anxiously engaged in asking, seeking, and knocking (see 3 Nephi 14:7).

A learner exercising agency by acting in accordance with correct principles opens his or her heart to the Holy Ghost—and invites His teaching, testifying power, and confirming witness. Learning by faith requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception. It is in the sincerity and consistency of our faith-inspired action that we indicate to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, our willingness to learn and receive instruction from the Holy Ghost. Thus, learning by faith involves the exercise of moral agency to act upon the assurance of things hoped for and invites the evidence of things not seen from the only true teacher, the Spirit of the Lord.

Consider how missionaries help investigators to learn by faith. Making and keeping spiritual commitments, such as studying and praying about the Book of Mormon, attending Church meetings, and keeping the commandments, require an investigator to exercise faith and to act. One of the fundamental roles of a missionary is to help an investigator make and honor commitments—to act and learn by faith. Teaching, exhorting, and explaining, as important as they are, can never convey to an investigator a witness of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. Only as an investigator’s faith initiates action and opens the pathway to the heart can the Holy Ghost deliver a confirming witness. Missionaries obviously must learn to teach by the power of the Spirit. Of equal importance, however, is the responsibility missionaries have to help investigators learn by faith.

The learning I am describing reaches far beyond mere cognitive comprehension and the retaining and recalling of information. The type of learning about which I am speaking causes us to put off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19), to change our hearts (see Mosiah 5:2), and to be converted unto the Lord and to never fall away (see Alma 23:6). Learning by faith requires both “the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34). Learning by faith is the result of the Holy Ghost carrying the power of the word of God both unto and into the heart. Learning by faith cannot be transferred from an instructor to a student through a lecture, a demonstration, or an experiential exercise; rather, a student must exercise faith and act in order to obtain the knowledge for himself or herself.

The young boy Joseph Smith instinctively understood what it meant to seek learning by faith. One of the most well-known episodes in the life of Joseph Smith was his reading of verses about prayer and faith in the book of James in the New Testament (see James 1:5–6). This text inspired Joseph to retire to a grove of trees near his home to pray and to seek for spiritual knowledge. Please note the questions Joseph had formulated in his mind and felt in his heart—and which he took into the grove. He clearly had prepared himself to “ask in faith” (James 1:6) and to act.

“In the midst of this war of words and tumult of opinions, I often said to myself: What is to be done? Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them be right, which is it, and how shall I know it? . . .

“My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right . . . and which I should join” (Joseph Smith—History 1:10, 18).

Notice that Joseph’s questions focused not just on what he needed to know but also on what he needed to do. And his very first question centered on action and what was to be *done!* His prayer was not simply which church is right. His question was which church should he join. Joseph went to the grove to learn by faith. He was determined to act.

Ultimately, the responsibility to learn by faith and apply spiritual truth rests upon each of us individually. This is an increasingly serious and important responsibility in the world in which we do now and will yet live. What, how, and when we learn is supported by—but is not dependent upon—an instructor, a method of presentation, or a specific topic or lesson format.

Truly, one of the great challenges of mortality is to seek learning by faith. The Prophet Joseph Smith best summarizes the learning process and outcomes I am attempting to describe. In response to a request by the Twelve Apostles for instruction, Joseph taught, “The best way to obtain truth and wisdom is not to ask it from books, but to go to God in prayer, and obtain divine teaching” (*History of the Church*, 4:425).

And on another occasion, the Prophet Joseph explained that “reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to *them*, can never give *us* a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God” (*History of the Church*, 6:50).

Implications for Us as Teachers

The truths about learning by faith we have discussed thus far have profound implications for us as teachers. Let us now consider together three of these implications.

Implication 1. The Holy Ghost is the only true teacher.

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, and He is *the* teacher and witness of all truth. Elder James E. Talmage explained:

“The office of the Holy Ghost in His ministrations among men is described in scripture. He is a teacher sent from the Father; and unto those who are entitled to His tuition He will reveal all things necessary for the soul’s advancement” (*The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. [1924], 162).

We should always remember that the Holy Ghost is the teacher who, through proper invitation, can enter into a learner’s heart. Indeed, you and I have the responsibility to preach the gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter, as a prerequisite for the learning by faith that can be achieved only by and through the Holy Ghost (see D&C 50:14). In this regard, you and I are much like the long, thin strands of glass used to create the fiber-optic cables through which light signals are transmitted over very long distances. Just as the glass in these cables must be pure to conduct the light efficiently and effectively, so we should become and remain worthy conduits through whom the Spirit of the Lord can operate.

But brothers and sisters, we must be careful to remember in our service that we are conduits and channels; we are not the light. “For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Matthew 10:20). It is never about me and it is never about you. In fact, anything you or I do as an instructor that knowingly and intentionally draws attention to self—in the messages we present, in the methods we use, or in our personal demeanor—is a form of priestcraft that inhibits the teaching effectiveness of the Holy Ghost. “Doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? And if it be by some other way it is not of God” (D&C 50:17–18).

Implication 2. We are most effective as instructors when we encourage and facilitate learning by faith.

We are all familiar with the adage that giving a man a fish feeds him for one meal. Teaching the man to fish, on the other hand, feeds him for a lifetime. As gospel instructors, you and I are not in the business of distributing fish; rather, our work is to help individuals learn to “fish” and to become spiritually self-reliant. This important objective is best accomplished as we encourage and facilitate learners acting in accordance with correct principles—as we help them to learn by doing. “If any man will do his

will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John 7:17).

Please notice this implication in practice in the counsel given to Junius F. Wells by Brigham Young as Brother Wells was called in 1875 to organize the young men of the Church:

"At your meetings you should begin at the top of the roll and call upon as many members as there is time for to bear their testimonies and at the next meeting begin where you left off and call upon others, so that all shall take part and get into the practice of standing up and saying something. Many may think they haven't any testimony to bear, but get them to stand up and they will find the Lord will give them utterance to many truths they had not thought of before. More people have obtained a testimony while standing up trying to bear it than down on their knees praying for it" (in Junius F. Wells, "Historic Sketch of the YMMIA," *Improvement Era*, June 1925, 715).

President Boyd K. Packer has given similar counsel in our day:

"Oh, if I could teach you this one principle. A testimony is to be *found* in the *bearing* of it! Somewhere in your quest for spiritual knowledge, there is that 'leap of faith,' as the philosophers call it. It is the moment when you have gone to the edge of the light and stepped into the darkness to discover that the way is lighted ahead for just a footstep or two. 'The spirit of man, ' as the scripture says, indeed 'is the candle of the Lord.' (Prov. 20:27.)

"It is one thing to receive a witness from what you have read or what another has said; and that is a necessary beginning. It is quite another to have the Spirit confirm to you in your bosom that what *you* have testified is true. Can you not see that it will be supplied as you share it? As you give that which you have, there is a replacement, with increase!" (*Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 54–55).

I have observed a common characteristic among the instructors who have had the greatest influence in my life. They have helped me to seek learning by faith. They refused to give me easy answers to hard questions. In fact, they did not give me any answers at all. Rather, they pointed the way and helped me take the steps to find my own answers. I certainly did not always appreciate this approach, but experience

has enabled me to understand that an answer given by another person usually is not remembered for very long, if remembered at all. But an answer we discover or obtain through the exercise of faith, typically, is retained for a lifetime. The most important learnings of life are caught—not taught.

The spiritual understanding you and I have been blessed to receive, and which has been confirmed as true in our hearts, simply cannot be given to another person. The tuition of diligence and learning by faith must be paid to obtain and personally "own" such knowledge. Only in this way can what is known in the mind be transformed into what is felt in the heart. Only in this way can a person move beyond relying upon the spiritual knowledge and experience of others and claim those blessings for himself or herself. Only in this way can we be spiritually prepared for what is coming. We are to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118).

Implication 3. An instructor's faith is strengthened as he or she helps others seek learning by faith.

The Holy Ghost, who can "teach [us] all things, and bring all things to [our] remembrance" (John 14:26), is eager to help us learn as we act and exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Interestingly, this divine learning assistance is perhaps never more apparent than when we are teaching, either at home or in Church assignments. As Paul made clear to the Romans, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" (Romans 2:21).

Please notice in the following verses from the Doctrine and Covenants how teaching diligently invites heavenly grace and instruction:

"And I give unto *you* a commandment that *you* shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

"Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend *you*, that *you* may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for *you* to understand" (D&C 88:77–78; italics added).

Consider that the blessings described in these scriptures are intended specifically for the teacher: "Teach . . . diligently and my grace shall attend *you*"—that you, the teacher, may be instructed!

The same principle is evident in verse 122 from the same section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

“Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not *all* be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let *all* listen unto his sayings, that when *all* have spoken that *all* may be edified of *all*, and that every man may have an equal privilege” (D&C 88:122; italics added).

As all speak and as all listen in a dignified and orderly way, all are edified. The individual and collective exercise of faith in the Savior invites instruction and strength from the Spirit of the Lord.

Seek Learning by Faith: A Recent Example

All of us were blessed by the challenge from the First Presidency last August to read the Book of Mormon by the end of 2005. In extending the challenge, President Gordon B. Hinckley promised that faithfully observing this simple reading program would bring into our lives and into our homes “an added measure of the Spirit of the Lord, a strengthened resolution to walk in obedience to His commandments, and a stronger testimony of the living reality of the Son of God” (“A Testimony Vibrant and True,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2005, 6).

Please note how this inspired challenge is a classic example of learning by faith. First, you and I were not commanded, coerced, or required to read. Rather, we were invited to exercise our agency as agents and act in accordance with correct principles. President Hinckley, as an inspired teacher, encouraged us to act and not just be acted upon. Each of us, ultimately, had to decide if and how we would respond to the challenge—and if we would endure to the end of the task.

Second, in proffering the invitation to read and to act, President Hinckley was encouraging each of us to seek learning by faith. No new study materials were distributed to members of the Church, and no additional lessons, classes, or programs were created by the Church. Each of us had our copy of the Book

of Mormon—and a pathway into our heart opened wider through the exercise of our faith in the Savior as we responded to the First Presidency challenge. Thus, we were prepared to receive instruction from the only true teacher, the Holy Ghost.

In recent weeks I have been greatly impressed by the testimonies of so many members concerning their recent experiences reading the Book of Mormon. Important and timely spiritual lessons have been learned, lives have been changed for the better, and the promised blessings have been received. The Book of Mormon, a willing heart, and the Holy Ghost—it really is that simple. My faith and the faith of the other Brethren have been strengthened as we have responded to President Hinckley’s invitation and as we have observed so many of you acting and learning by faith.

As I stated earlier, the responsibility to seek learning by faith rests upon each of us individually, and this obligation will become increasingly important as the world in which we live grows more confused and troubled. Learning by faith is essential to our personal spiritual development and for the growth of the Church in these latter days. May each of us truly hunger and thirst after righteousness and be filled with the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 12:6)—that we might seek learning by faith.

I witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father. He is our Savior and Redeemer. I testify that as we learn of Him, listen to His words, and walk in the meekness of His Spirit (see D&C 19:23), we will be blessed with spiritual strength, protection, and peace.

As a servant of the Lord, I invoke this blessing upon each of you: even that your desire and capacity to seek learning by faith—and to appropriately help others to seek learning by faith—will increase and improve. This blessing will be a source of great treasures of spiritual knowledge in your personal life, for your family, and to those whom you instruct and serve. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Authorship and History of the Lectures on Faith

Larry E. Dahl

(in *Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, 1-21)

[1] Just what are the Lectures on Faith? Who prepared them? Who delivered them—to whom, where, when, and why? What is the history of their publication? Why have they not been included in editions of the Doctrine and Covenants since 1921? What benefit might we derive from acquainting ourselves with the content of the Lectures on Faith? This paper addresses these questions. It will not provide definitive answers to them all, but it will summarize the literature about them and propose some answers. A bibliography of the sources examined in the process of preparing this paper appears in Appendix B to this volume. This bibliography will facilitate and, hopefully, encourage others to check the reasonableness of the conclusions drawn in this paper, and it will stimulate further searching for more sources and more answers—and even more questions.

What Are the Lectures on Faith?

[1 - 2] Joseph Smith referred to the Lectures on Faith as "lectures on theology" (History of the Church 2:176; hereafter HC). There are seven of them. Lecture 1 explains what faith is; Lecture 2 describes how mankind comes to know about God; Lectures 3 and 4 make clear the necessary and unchanging attributes of God; Lecture 5 deals with the nature of God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost; Lecture 6 proclaims that the willingness to sacrifice all earthly things is prerequisite to gaining faith unto salvation; Lecture 7 treats the fruits of faith—perspective, power, and eventually perfection. In the original printing the lectures filled 74 pages. The lengths of the lectures differ, the longest being Lecture 2, and the shortest being Lecture 5. The format consists of numbered paragraphs in which principles are stated and scriptures quoted. Lectures 1 through 5 each sum up with a question and answer section, a kind of catechism pertaining to the principles stated in the lecture. These sections are often about as long as the lectures themselves. There are no questions and answers at the end of Lecture 6; rather, the following note appears: "This lecture is so plain and the facts set forth so self-evident that it is deemed unnecessary to form a catechism upon it. The student is, therefore, instructed to commit the whole to memory." Lecture 7 ends with a simple "Amen."

Who Wrote the Lectures on Faith?

It is a common understanding that Joseph Smith wrote the Lectures on Faith. Often we hear or read statements like "The Prophet Joseph Smith taught" as an introduction to a quotation from the Lectures. Those who have carefully studied the historical sources agree to the Prophet's close involvement with the Lectures, but acknowledge that others contributed heavily in their preparation, as the following representative quotations from Church leaders and others show:

1. The idea has been expressed that Sidney Rigdon wrote these lectures, but they were compiled by a number of the brethren and the Prophet himself had the final revision of them (Smith, Church History 137).

2. "Lectures on Faith" written by Sidney Rigdon and others . . . (Widtsoe 2).

[3] 3. Joseph Smith was not their sole author, but they were written by a committee over which he presided. . . . It is not known specifically which member, or members, of the committee put the Lectures on Faith in their written form. But there can be no doubt that the theological ideas which they contain came from Joseph Smith. All the major ideas within them can be found in his revelations and teachings before 1834 (Andrus 20 fn).

4. These statements that I now read were in part written by the Prophet and in whole approved by him and taught by him in the School of the Prophets (McConkie 4).

5. My analysis of the Lectures on faith [sic] leads me to three somewhat tentative conclusions: First, although Joseph Smith did not write the lectures as they appear in the 1835 version, his influence can be seen in images, examples, scriptural references, and phrasing. Second, Sidney Rigdon may well have prepared them for publication; however, the style throughout is not consistently his. Third, the lectures in their published version represent a compilation or collaboration rather than the work of a single person (Partridge 28).

[3 - 4] It is instructive to review the evidence that links Joseph Smith and others to the writing of the Lectures. First, perhaps, it should be noted that a committee of four men—Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and Frederick G. Williams (all presiding officers in the Church)—was appointed 24 September 1834 "to arrange the items of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, for the government of the Church of Latter-day Saints. These items are to be taken from the Bible, Book of Mormon, and the revelations which have been given to the Church up to this date, or that shall be given until

such arrangements are made" (HC 2:165). That committee reported to the priesthood councils of the Church nearly one year later, 17 August 1835, recommending the publication of a book they had prepared (HC 2:243-51). That book consisted of two parts. The first contained the Lectures on Faith; the second consisted of selected revelations and inspired declarations received since the beginning of this dispensation. The two parts together made up what were called the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church. The priesthood councils and other Church members assembled accepted the committee's recommendation. The result was the publication of the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, which came off the press about the middle of September 1835.¹

[4] **The First Edition of the Doctrine and Covenants**

A photographic reproduction of the title page of the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants is on the following page. The heading to the first part of the book (the Lectures) reads like this:

THEOLOGY.
LECTURE FIRST
ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH OF THE
LATTER DAY SAINTS.
Of Faith.
SECTION I.

The first lecture follows this heading. Lecture 2 is introduced simply as:

LECTURE SECOND.
Of Faith.
SECTION II.

This same simple pattern introduces the rest of the lectures.

The title page of the second part of the book, containing the revelations, is photographically reproduced on page 6. The revelations follow in order labelled SECTION II, SECTION III, etc., through SECTION CII (or 102).

[7] The preface to the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (1835) explains how the four committee members felt about the Lectures on Faith (see the preface on page 9). Although the preface is dated February 17, 1835, the book was not completed until August of that year.

A careful look at these divisions in the first edition of the Doctrine

and Covenants shows that the Lectures on Faith were considered the "Doctrine," and the revelations were viewed as the "Covenants," or more precisely, "Covenants and Commandments." In the 1921 edition and all subsequent editions, the title Doctrine and Covenants was retained, though the Lectures were not published with the revelations. The title is appropriate, however, for the revelations themselves contain much doctrine.

Historical Evidence Concerning Authorship

The foregoing information demonstrates that preparing and printing the Lectures on Faith was an official, purposeful activity of the committee appointed to compile the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Their preface says that the Lectures contain "the important doctrine of salvation," representing the belief of the committee members and what they perceived to be the beliefs of the Church as a body.

The question as to who actually wrote the Lectures then, may be of little consequence. However, we mortals are a curious lot, and sometimes pursue answers simply to have them, not because they are of great moment. Catering to that curiosity, we note now some historical evidence of Joseph Smith's participation in their preparation, and acknowledge two recent authorship studies which conclude that others, particularly Sidney Rigdon, were also involved.

[7 - 8] At the end of October 1834, Joseph's history states, "It being the last of the month, and the Elders beginning to come in, it was necessary to make preparations for the school for the Elders, wherein they might be more perfectly instructed in the great things of God, during the coming winter. . . . No month ever found me more busily engaged than November" (HC 2:169-70). It is possible, even probable, that some of the Prophet's busyness during that month pertained to the writing of the Lectures on Faith. Two months later, in January 1835, we find this entry—"During the month of January, I was engaged in the school of the Elders, and in preparing the lectures on theology for publication in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, which the committee appointed last September were now compiling" (HC 2:180). These two entries clearly establish Joseph Smith's close ties to preparing for the School of the Elders and to the content of the Lectures on Faith.

Authorship Studies

One of the authorship studies of the Lectures on Faith was done by Alan J. Phipps as a master's thesis in 1977. He compared the frequency of use of certain "function words" in the Lectures with the use of the same words in the writings of several persons who may have had a hand in writing the Lectures, ie, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, William W. Phelps, and Parley P. Pratt. He concludes:

The study showed that Sidney Rigdon's use of function words corresponded very closely with that in Lectures One and Seven, and fairly well with Two, Three, Four, and Six. Joseph Smith's use of function words matched closely those in Lecture Five, with some evidence of his having co-authored or edited Two, Three, Four, and Six. . . . The data and tests appear, therefore, to assign the authorship of the Lectures on Faith mainly to Sidney Rigdon, with Lecture Five and perhaps some parts of the other lectures, except One and Seven, to Joseph Smith (66-67).

[8 - 10] Using the same data as Phipps, but applying a somewhat different word-print analysis, Wayne A. Larsen and Alvin C. Rencher report: "Our conclusions largely support his results, with some differences . . ." (183-84). Both studies conclude that Sidney Rigdon was heavily involved, and that Joseph Smith was probably the author of Lecture 2. The differences suggest that Joseph Smith had less to do with Lectures 3, 4, and 6 than the Phipps study showed, and that William W. Phelps and/or Parley P. Pratt could have had at least some editorial influence on Lecture 5.² In fairness it should be recognized that Larsen's and Rencher's work with the Lectures on Faith was a peripheral, almost incidental glance, in a study of Book of Mormon authorship. If they were to focus primarily on the Lectures, perhaps they would adjust both the selection of data and perform additional tests and comparisons.

Conclusions About Authorship

What then can we conclude about authorship of the Lectures on Faith? It is clear that several of the brethren participated in writing them. It is also clear that Joseph Smith and perhaps others prepared them for publication after they were written. Undoubtedly, the Lectures were, in the words of President John Taylor, "published with the sanction and approval of the Prophet Joseph Smith" (Woodford 1:87). It would therefore seem appropriate to attribute the ideas, principles, and doctrines in the Lectures on Faith to the Prophet Joseph.

Who Delivered the Lectures—To Whom, When, Where, Why?

[10 - 11] Trying to identify who delivered the Lectures on Faith is as difficult as trying to decide who wrote them. Contemporary historical records are scarce. Yet, official histories, books, and articles generally agree that Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were the primary teachers, noting that others of the brethren may also have been involved (see Appendix B). Interestingly, however, there are seldom source citations for these conclusions, or the sources cited do not provide adequate historical data to clearly establish the point being made. It becomes at times a case of authors citing one another with no one having compelling documentary evidence.

[11] Some information from two men who were at the scene in 1834 is available and of particular interest. Zebedee Coltrin, in an 1883 remembrance, differentiated between the 1833 School of the Prophets which was held in the Prophet's home above the Whitney store—and located in the valley—and the 1834 School for the Elders in which the Lectures on Faith were studied. He said, "It was in a larger school on the hill afterwards, where Sidney presided that the lectures on faith that appear in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants were given" (Salt Lake [11 Oct] 44). His reference to "the school on the hill" points to the printing office built on a lot near the temple site, on land of much higher elevation than the valley where the store was located. The printing office was a 30- by 38-foot two-story building completed in November 1834. The lower story of the printing office was used for the School for the Elders (*HC* 1:417-418; 2:169-170). Even though Brother Coltrin said that Sidney Rigdon "presided" at the school where the seven lectures were given, it is likely that it was Joseph Smith and not Sidney Rigdon who "presided" over the school in the sense of being in charge of it because Joseph Smith organized and attended the school, and was the President of the Church. Perhaps Zebedee Coltrin's "presided" meant "taught."

Heber C. Kimball tells us something of how the school was conducted and who the teachers were:

In the winter of 1834-5 . . . I attended the Theological School established in Kirtland, in which the lectures on faith, contained in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, originated.

[11 - 12] A certain number were appointed to speak at each meeting. On one occasion I was called upon to speak on the principle of faith. Several brethren spoke before me and quoted every passage mentioned in the scriptures on the subject. I referred to an original

circumstance which took place in my family. My daughter had broke a saucer; her mother promised her a whipping, when she returned from a visit on which she was just starting; she went out under an apple tree and prayed that her mother's heart might be softened, that when she returned she might not whip her; although her mother was very punctual when she made a promise to her children to fulfil it, yet when she returned she had no disposition to chastise her child. Afterwards the child told her mother that she had prayed to God that she might not whip her.

[12] Joseph wept like a child on hearing this simple narrative and its application (*Journal History* [22 Dec 1834]).

In addition to being instructed by their presiding officers, it appears that the elders taught one another in the school. The School for the Elders began sometime between 25 November and 1 December 1834. Under the date of 25 November the Prophet records, "I continued my labors daily, preparing for the school" (HC 2:170). On 1 December he says,

Our school for the Elders was now well attended, and with the lectures on theology, which were regularly delivered, absorbed for the time being everything else of a temporal nature. The classes, being mostly Elders gave the most studious attention to the all-important object of qualifying themselves as messengers of Jesus Christ, to be ready to do His will in carrying glad tidings to all that would open their eyes, ears and hearts (HC 2:175-76).

[12 - 13] The Lectures on Faith phase of the School for the Elders evidently ended sometime before 22 December because on that date the Elders were joined by a number of sisters and also children—some one hundred thirty people total—and they all attended a grammar school with Sidney Rigdon and William E. McLellin as teachers (HC 2:200).³ Heber C. Kimball explains: "On the 22nd of December a Grammar school was opened in Kirtland, under the superintendence of Sidney Rigdon and William E. McLellin teachers, —and nearly all the elders and myself, and many of the sisters commenced going to school" (Kimball 6:868). Evidently the grammar school was also held in the printing office where the elders had met to study the Lectures on Faith. The curriculum for this grammar school consisted of "penmanship, arithmetic, English grammar, and geography . . . and writing" (HC 2:200), and according to Heber C. Kimball, nearly all the elders were in attendance. In his February 1835 report to the school trustees, William E. McLellin made no mention of the Lectures on Faith or other missionary training in connection with the grammar school. Since the Prophet was busy in January preparing the Lectures for publication, we could assume that by

then they had already been delivered. If the elders as a group did continue to study the Lectures on Faith after 22 December, the School for the Elders and the Kirtland Grammar School would necessarily have been two separate entities meeting at different times, but there is no specific mention of any such arrangement in the historical sources.

In answer then to the questions of who delivered the Lectures to whom, when, where, and why, I would say they were delivered by the presiding officers of the Church and some of the elders themselves to a School for the Elders, in the printing office in Kirtland, during November and December 1834, for the purpose of preparing the elders to be effective missionaries.

Publication History of the Lectures

The first publication of any of the Lectures on Faith was that of Lectures 5 and 6 in the May 1835 edition of the *Messenger and Advocate*, the Church monthly paper published in Kirtland. They were introduced with the following comments:

The following are two short lectures which were delivered before a Theological class, in this place last winter. These lectures are being compiled and arranged with other documents of instruction and regulation for the church, titled "Doctrine and Covenants of the church of the Latter Day Saints," &c. It may be well, for the information of the churches abroad, to say, that this book will contain the important revelations on doctrine and church government now extant, and will, we trust, give them a perfect understanding of the doctrine believed by this society. Such a work has long been called for, and if we are prospered a few weeks, shall have this volume ready for distribution. A full detail of its contents will be given hereafter.

[13 - 14] In giving the following lectures we have thought best to insert the catechism, that the reader may fully understand the manner in which this science was taught. It was found, that by annexing a catechism to the lectures as they were presented, the class made greater progress than otherwise; and in consequence of the additional scriptural proofs, it was preserved in compiling (Cowdery 122).

The next publication of any of the lectures was a broadside containing Lecture 1, probably published in June 1835.⁴

The first printing of all seven lectures was in September 1835, when they were printed as part of the first edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Between 1835 and 1921 the Lectures were printed in almost all of the

English language editions of the Doctrine and Covenants, and in many, but not all non-English editions.⁵ The issue of why the Lectures have not been printed in editions of the Doctrine and Covenants since 1921 will be discussed later. But first, let us review instances when the Lectures on Faith were published by themselves.

Between 1840 and 1843, Parley P. Pratt printed all seven lectures in the *Millennial Star* in England.⁶ Lecture 1, printed in September 1840, was introduced with the following comment: "We purpose to present our readers with a brief Course of Lectures on the first principles of Theology, or the Doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and commence our quotations from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, p. 5" (Pratt, "Lecture on Theology" 129). Lecture 5 was printed in December 1842 with this note: "We have thought [it] proper to give this month in our Star the fifth lecture on Faith, extracted from the above work (Doctrine and Covenants). The four lectures preceding it were given in the first volume of the Star. Having often heard the desire expressed for the publication of the remaining lectures, it is our intention to give them forthwith. -Ed" (Pratt, "Lecture on Faith" 135). As promised, Lectures 6 and 7 were published in the next two issues of the *Millennial Star*.

[15] All the lectures were published in 1845-46 by Sidney Rigdon in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He had left the Church after the death of Joseph Smith and started his own organization called the "Church of Christ." In Pittsburgh he published a paper also called *Messenger and Advocate*, in which he published the lectures serially each month from October 1845 through March 1846. Lectures 5 and 6 both appeared in the February 1846 issue. Rigdon did not include the catechisms at the end of each lecture except for Lecture 1. As he began publishing the Lectures, he explained:

There will be found in this paper a lecture on faith copied from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, which is the first of a course delivered before a theological class in Kirtland, O. in the winter of 1834 & 5. Faith being the first principle of action in all intelligent beings, and those lectures setting forth that principle in a clear and interesting manner, we thought perhaps we could not interest our readers more than by giving place to one of them at this time; we may copy others of them hereafter, if our space will admit (Rigdon 360-61).

Space did "admit," and all seven lectures were published as indicated above, without further editorial comment.

[15 - 16] There are three other separate publications of the Lectures, all of them appearing in the 20th century, we need to mention. N.

B. Lundwall of Salt Lake City published the Lectures on Faith along with a number of other items about 1940. We get the date from John W. Fitzgerald's master's thesis (346). Lundwall's is probably the most widely known publication of the Lectures in the Church. In 1952 the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints published the Lectures on Faith with an interesting preface written by their president, Israel A. Smith.⁷ The Deseret Book Company of Salt Lake City also published a hardbound edition of the Lectures on Faith in 1985. This edition was the first to incorporate references to the book of Moses, much of which corresponds with the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis.

[16] As an endnote to the discussion of publication history, it is interesting to learn of the changes that have appeared in the titles through the years. In 1835, they were originally referred to as "Lecture First—Of Faith," "Lecture Second—Of Faith," etc. When Parley P. Pratt published them in England in the 1840s, he called them "Lecture 1—On Faith," "Lecture 2—On Faith," etc. All Liverpool editions of the Doctrine and Covenants thereafter used the "On Faith" label, while the American editions kept the "Of Faith" designation until 1876. For some reason Sidney Rigdon in 1845 in Pittsburgh also called them lectures "On Faith." The 1985 Deseret Book edition carries the title Lectures on Faith, but inside, the lectures are referred to simply as "Lecture First," "Lecture Second," "Lecture Third," etc., with no reference to "of" or "on." This 1990 edited version uses the common reference of Lectures on Faith and refers to each lecture by its number, such as Lecture 1, Lecture 2, etc.

Why No Lectures with the D&C Since 1921?

[16 - 17] When a new edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was prepared in 1921, the Lectures on Faith were not included.⁸ The answers proposed as to why the Lectures were not included are varied. Many have pointed to the content of Lecture 5 concerning the Godhead, suggesting that it contains incomplete, if not erroneous doctrine—doctrine which was corrected or clarified in 1843 by Joseph Smith (D&C 130:22-23). The argument is that the Lectures were removed to avoid these inconsistencies. Some have claimed that the removal of the Lectures from the Doctrine and Covenants constitutes decanonization of material once affirmed by the Church as scripture. Those who take this view see the 1834 vote of the priesthood quorums and the general assembly to accept as true and to publish both the Lectures on Faith and the revelations of Joseph Smith in the

first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, as putting the Lectures on a par with the revelations, considering both to be canonized scripture (Van Wagoner, et al 72-77). Leaders of the Church, however, have consistently maintained that from the beginning a distinction was made between the Lectures on Faith and the revelations (see Penrose 16; Modern Revelation 34; Smith, Essentials 186). They also appeal to the occasion when the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was voted upon, citing the testimony of Elder John Smith, who represented the High Council in Kirtland. The minutes read as follows: Elder Smith "bore record that the revelations in said book were true, and that the lectures were judiciously arranged and compiled, and were profitable for doctrine. Whereupon, the High Council of Kirtland accepted and acknowledged them as the doctrine and covenants of their faith by a unanimous vote" (HC 2:244; emphasis added). Similarly, "Elder Levi Jackman, taking the lead for the High Council of the church in Missouri, bore testimony that the revelations in said book were true, and the said High Council of Missouri accepted and acknowledged them as the doctrine and covenants of their faith, by a unanimous vote" (HC 2:244; emphasis added). The minutes relative to the other quorums' acceptance of the work do not distinguish "revelations" from "lectures." They say only that these quorums gave testimony in favor of "the book" (HC 2:244; emphasis added).

[17 - 18] It can be reasoned then that a distinction was made early between the seven lectures and the revelations, and that the vote to accept the lectures as "judiciously arranged . . . and profitable for doctrine" was not to equate them with the divine revelations. Such is the message in the "Explanatory Introduction" of the 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants:

[18] Certain lessons, entitled "Lectures on Faith," which were bound in with the Doctrine and Covenants in some of its former issues, are not included in this edition. Those lessons were prepared for use in the School of the Elders, conducted in Kirtland, Ohio, during the winter of 1834-1835; but they were never presented to nor accepted by the Church as being otherwise than theological lectures or lessons (v).

Church leaders have acknowledged that the decision to omit the Lectures on Faith in the 1921 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was based not only on the fact that they are not revelations, but it also had to do with some of the teachings about the Godhead in Lecture 5, as I mentioned earlier. Elders James E. Talmage, John A. Widtsoe, and Joseph Fielding Smith served as a committee to consider whether to continue to publish the

Lectures on Faith with the revelations (Fitzgerald 345). Fitzgerald reports that he was told in a 22 July 1940 interview with Elder Joseph Fielding Smith:

They are not complete as to their teachings regarding the Godhead. More complete instructions on this point of doctrine are given in section 130 of . . . The Doctrine and Covenants.

It was thought by Elder James E. Talmage, chairman, and other members of the committee who were responsible for their omission that to avoid confusion and contention on this vital point of belief, it would be better not to have them bound in the same volume as the commandments or revelations which make up The Doctrine and Covenants (345).⁹

[18 - 19] It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss the doctrinal issues raised by Lecture 5. Professor Millet's paper will address that subject. It is sufficient to note here that Lecture 5 was one of the matters of concern influencing the decision not to publish the Lectures on Faith with the Doctrine and Covenants from 1921.

[19] The Lectures on Faith were written and published in the Doctrine and Covenants by men called of God to lead the Church in 1834. The decision not to print them in the Doctrine and Covenants was made by men called of God to lead the Church in 1921. I submit that both actions were appropriate.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper has attempted to shed some light on the authorship and history of the Lectures on Faith by bringing together and briefly discussing information that is available in an array of histories, books, and articles. The motivation for preparing the paper and the bibliography in Appendix B has been to stimulate an interest in the Lectures—to encourage people to study them carefully.

I love the Lectures on Faith. For me they carry a special spirit. They are a rich source of doctrinal treasures couched in clear and powerful language. One can drink as deeply from them as he has a mind to. I commend them to you.

NOTES

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Footnotes

1. Writing from Kirtland to the Saints in Missouri under the date of 16 September 1835, W. W. Phelps said, "We received some of the Commandments from Cleveland last week. I shall try and send 100 copies to the Saints in Zion this fall" (*Journal History* [16 Sep 1835]). An earlier compilation of revelations known as the Book of Commandments was being printed in 1833, when mobs destroyed the church press and all but a few copies of the book.
2. There is some historical evidence that W. W. Phelps could have had an editorial influence on the Lectures on Faith. *The History of the Church* (2:227) records that W. W. Phelps arrived in Kirtland from Missouri in May, 1835, lived in the Prophet Joseph's home, and "assisted the committee in compiling the Book of Doctrine and Covenants."
3. In reporting to the trustees of the "Kirtland School" in February 1835, W. E. McLellin indicated that because of overcrowding, they had dismissed the "small students," reducing the number to one hundred.
4. A comparison of the broadside and Lecture 1 as printed in the 1835 D&C by Wm. M. Powell is available in the Harold B. Lee Library, BYU—Mor/M208/Ala/#568.
5. Evidently some English language pocket editions published in the early 1900s also did not contain the Lectures on Faith (see Lambert).
6. See Appendix B under *Millennial Star* for editions containing the Lectures on Faith
7. The title page reads "LECTURES ON FAITH delivered in Kirtland Temple in 1834 and 1835 by the Prophet Joseph Smith . . . with the Revelation on the Rebellion as an appendix published in 1952 by Herald House, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Independence, Missouri." See Appendix A for the full text of Israel A. Smith's preface. The RLDS published the Lectures on Faith in their editions of the Doctrine and Covenants from 1863 through 1896. Of their 1897 edition, Richard P. Howard writes: "The 1897 edition was somewhat of a departure from the previous format. The Lectures on Faith, printed in every edition through 1896, were removed. The background of this decision has not been established, but it seems reasonable to consider that the extensive quotations from the New Translation of the Bible taken from the unpublished manuscripts were unacceptable in the light of the work as published in 1867. Also, the materials in these pages (being simply outlines of the lectures given in a strictly local situation to a class of elders) had lost much of their relevance to the circumstances of the church over half a century later" (Howard 236).
8. This was not the first time the question of omitting the Lectures had been raised. Orson Pratt proposed to President John Taylor in 1879 that they perhaps be published separately rather than in the Doctrine and Covenants. President Taylor's response was that "The Lectures on Faith were published with the sanction and approval of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and we do not feel that it is desirable to make any alteration in that regard, at any rate, not at present" (see Woodford 1:86-87).
9. Elder Smith is also reported to have said in this same interview that the Lectures are explanations of the principle of faith "but are not doctrine." In this statement he may have been comparing certain items in the Lectures (perhaps Lecture 5) with doctrine as understood in 1940, and not making an "historically erroneous" statement as has been suggested by some.

Lecture 1

ON FAITH

Faith, being the first principle in revealed religion and the foundation of all righteousness, necessarily claims the first place in a course of lectures designed to unfold to the understanding the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

2. In presenting the subject of faith, we shall observe the following order:

3. First, faith itself—what it is;

4. Secondly, the object on which it rests; and,

5. Thirdly, the effects which flow from it.

6. Agreeable to this order we have first to show what faith is.

7. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews gives the following definition of the word faith:

8. "Now faith is the substance [assurance] 1 of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (11:1).

9. From this we learn that faith is the assurance which men have of the existence of things which they have not seen and that it is also the principle of action in all intelligent beings.

10. If men were duly to consider themselves and turn their thoughts and reflections to the operations of their own minds, they would readily discover that it is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action in them; that without it both mind and body would be in a state of inactivity, and all their exertions would cease, both physical and mental.

11. Were each of you in this class to go back and reflect upon the history of your lives from the period of your first recollection, and ask yourselves what principle excited you to action, or what gave you energy and activity in all your lawful avocations, callings, and pursuits, what would be the answer? Would it not be that it was the assurance which you had of the existence of things which you had not seen as yet? Was it not the hope which you had, in consequence of your belief in the existence of unseen things, which stimulated you to action and exertion in order to obtain them? Are you not dependent on your faith, or belief, for the

acquisition of all knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence? Would you exert yourselves to obtain wisdom and intelligence unless you did believe that you could obtain them? Would you have ever sown if you had not believed that you would reap? Would you have ever planted if you had not believed that you would gather? Would you have ever asked, unless you had believed that you would receive? Would you have ever sought unless you had believed that you would find? Or, would you have ever knocked, unless you had believed that it would be opened unto you? In a word, is there anything that you would have done, either physical or mental, if you had not previously believed? Are not all your exertions of every kind dependent on your faith? Or, may we not ask, what have you or what do you possess which you have not obtained by reason of your faith? Your food, your raiment, your lodgings—are they not all by reason of your faith? Reflect, and ask yourselves if these things are not so. Turn your thoughts to your own minds and see if faith is not the moving cause of all action in yourselves, and if it is the moving cause in you, is it not also the moving cause in all other intelligent beings?

12. And as faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual. For the Savior has said, and that truly, that "he that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16; emphasis in 1835).

13. As we receive by faith all temporal blessings, so we in like manner receive by faith all spiritual blessings. But faith is not only the principle of action, it is also the principle of power in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth. Thus says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews:

14. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (11:3).

15. By this we understand that the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which he framed the worlds, was faith; and that it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity that all created things exist; so that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth exist by reason of faith as it existed in him.

16. Had it not been for the principle of faith, the worlds would never have been framed, neither

would man have been formed of the dust. It is the principle by which Jehovah works and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute (for it is an attribute) from the Deity and he would cease to exist.

17. Who cannot see that if God framed the worlds by faith, it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and faith is the principle of power? And if it is the principle of power in the Deity, it must be so in man as well? This is the testimony of all the sacred writers and the lesson which they have been endeavoring to teach to man.

18. The Savior says the reason the disciples could not cast out the devil was their unbelief: "For verily I say unto you," said he, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt 17:19-20).

19. Moroni, while abridging and compiling the record of his fathers, gave us the following account of faith as the principle of power. He says on page 563 of the 1830 Book of Mormon that it was the faith of Alma and Amulek which caused the walls of the prison to be rent (Ether 12:13), as recorded on the 264th page (Alma 14:27). It was the faith of Nephi and Lehi which caused a change to be wrought upon the hearts of the Lamanites when they were immersed with the Holy Spirit and with fire, as seen on the 421st page (Hel 5:43-45). And it was by faith that the mountain Zerin was removed when the brother of Jared spake in the name of the Lord. See also the 565th page (Ether 12:30).

20. In addition to this we are told in Hebrews that Gedeon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again" (11:33-35), etc.

21. Also Joshua, in the sight of all Israel, bade the sun and moon to stand still, and it was done (Joshua 10:12-13).

22. We here understand that the sacred writers say

that all these things were done by faith. It was by faith that the worlds were framed—God spake, chaos heard, and worlds came into order by reason of the faith there was in him. So with men also, they spake by faith in the name of God and the sun stood still, the moon obeyed, mountains removed, prisons fell, lions' mouths were closed, the human heart lost its enmity, fire its violence, armies their power, the sword its terror, and death its dominion; and all this by reason of the faith which was in them.

23. Had it not been for the faith which was in men, they might have spoken to the sun, the moon, the mountains, prisons, lions, the human heart, fire, armies, the sword, or to death in vain!

24. Faith, then, is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things. By it they exist; by it they are upheld; by it they are changed; or by it they remain, agreeable to the will of God. Without it there is no power, and without power there could be no creation nor existence!

Questions and Answers for Lecture¹

1. *Question*—What is theology?

Answer—It is that revealed science which treats the being and attributes of God, his relations to us, the dispensations of his providence, his will with respect to our actions, and his purposes with respect to our end (Buck's Theological Dictionary 582).

2. Q—What is the first principle in this revealed science?
A—Faith (Lecture 1:1).

3. Q—Why is faith the first principle in this revealed science?

A—Because it is the foundation of all righteousness. "Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]" (Heb 11:6). "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he [God] is righteous" (1 John 3:7; Lecture 1:1).

4. Q—What arrangement should be followed in presenting the subject of faith?

A—First, it should be shown what faith is (Lecture 1:3); secondly, the object upon which it rests (Lecture 1:4); and thirdly, the effects which flow from it (Lecture 1:5).

5. Q—What is faith?

A—It is the "assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (JST Heb 11:1); that is, it is the assurance which we have of the existence of unseen things, it must be the principle of action in all intelligent beings. "Through faith we understand that the worlds

were framed by the word of God" (Heb 11:3; Lecture 1:8-9).

6. Q—How do you prove that faith is the principle of action in all intelligent beings?

A—First, by duly considering the operations of your own mind; and secondly, by the direct declaration of scripture. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb 11:7-9). By faith Moses "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27; Lecture 1:10-11).

7. Q—Is not faith the principle of action in spiritual things as well as in temporal?

A—It is.

8. Q—How do you prove it?

A—"Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]" (Heb 11:6). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all" (Rom 4:16; Lecture 1:12-13).

9. Q—Is faith anything else besides the principle of action?

A—It is.

10. Q—What is it?

A—It is the principle of power also (Lecture 1:13).

11. Q—How do you prove it?

A—First, it is the principle of power in the Deity as well as in man. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb 11:3; Lecture 1:14-16). Secondly, it is the principle of power in man also. Book of Mormon, page 264: Alma and Amulek are delivered from prison (Alma 14:27). Page 421: Nephi and Lehi, with the Lamanites, are immersed with the Spirit (Hel 5:43-45). Page 565: The mountain Zerin, by the faith of the brother of Jared, is removed (Ether 12:30). "Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and

the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day" (Joshua 10:12-13). "Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt 17:19-20). "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb 11:32-35; Lecture 1:16-22).

12. Q—How would you define faith in its most unlimited sense?

A—It is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things (Lecture 1:24).

13. Q—How do you convey to the understanding more clearly the idea that faith is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things?

A—By it they exist, by it they are upheld, by it they are changed, and by it they remain, agreeable to the will of God. Without it there is no power, and without power there could be no creation nor existence! (Lecture 1:24).

Footnotes

1. Brackets in the 1835 edition. "Assurance" comes from the JST.
2. Bracketed material in 1835 edition, but without brackets.
3. Brackets in 1835 edition.
4. Bracketed material in 1835 edition, but without brackets.

Faith in God

(Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 163-170)

What Is Faith?

Faith bringeth salvation; miracles are wrought by faith; by faith the worlds were made. God is God because faith dwells in him independently; and faith is power, the very power of God himself. Any man who has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the full and true sense, will sit down with him on his throne in the kingdom of his Father. All who do not gain this saving faith will fall short of that inheritance which might have been theirs had they believed and obeyed the word of faith. Oh, how great the importance to make these things known unto all men, that they may learn what faith is, how it may be gained, and the eternal rewards reserved for all who gain this blessed boon.

"In presenting the subject of faith," the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "we shall observe the following order—First, faith itself—what it is. Secondly, the object on which it rests. And, Thirdly, the effects which flow from it." (*Lectures on Faith* 1:2-5.) We shall build our house of faith on the foundation he laid. Our desire is to know and feel and be as he was.

What, then, is faith? In the broad, generic, and universal sense of the word, having no particular reference to religion and salvation, the Prophet tells us that faith "is the moving cause of all action . . . in all intelligent beings." All accountable and intelligent beings have faith in this sense. Such is part of life itself. Because this faith dwells in the hearts of all mankind, they sow with the assurance of reaping; they plant with the hope of harvesting; they exert themselves in the pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence because they believe they can obtain them. Without this faith, "both mind and [page 164] body would be in a state of inactivity, and all their exertions would cease, both physical and mental."

Faith as so defined is not saving faith; it does not lead to life and salvation; an assurance that crops will grow is not an assurance of a celestial inheritance. Saving faith centers in the Lord Jesus Christ and through him in the Father. "As faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns," the Prophet continues, "so it is in spiritual. . . . As we receive by faith all temporal blessings that we do receive, so we in like manner receive by faith all spiritual blessings that we do receive." (*Lectures on Faith* 1:10-13.) Paul's statement that "faith is the substance [confidence or assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence [the demonstration or proof] of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1), applies to both temporal and spiritual concerns.

But faith in its true signification is more than the moving cause pursuant to which men and angels act. It is also a principle of power. Faith is power. And where there is power, there is faith; and where there is no power, there is no faith. Thus, Joseph Smith continues: "Faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth." Faith applies in all spheres. All intelligent beings—be they gods, angels, spirits, or men—all operate by its power.

Thus, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Hebrews 11:3.) By this we understand that the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which the worlds were framed, was faith; and that it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity, that all created things exist; so that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, exist by reason of faith as it existed in HIM." How came this earth into being? Whence came the sidereal heavens? the universe? and created things in all their varieties? The power that organizes chaotic matter; the power that sends worlds without number into governed orbits; the power that gives order and system, location and appointment, to worlds and life—that power is named faith. It is the power of God; it is the faith of God, the faith that dwells in him independently. "Had it not been for the principle of faith the worlds would never have been framed, neither would [page 165] man have been formed of the dust." Nor, without faith, would any other form of life have been created.

What if there were no faith? That would mean no power would exist to create or to control. Faith "is the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute—for it is an attribute—from the Deity, and he would cease to exist." Thus, if there is no faith, there is no power; if there is no power, there was no creation; if nothing exists, there is no God; or, conversely, if there is no God, there is nothing. And thus all things rest on the foundation of faith, and without faith there would be nothing.

"Who cannot see," the Prophet asks, "that if God framed the worlds by faith, that it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and that faith is the principle of power? And if the principle of power, it must be so in man as well as in the Deity?" (*Lectures on Faith* 1:13-17.) Truly, if all of God's acts are righteous, if his work is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man, and if all of his works are performed by faith, it follows that whatever man does, in righteousness, to gain salvation must also be done by faith, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:23.)

Thus: "It was by faith that the worlds were framed—God spake, chaos heard, and worlds came into

order by reason of the faith there was in HIM. So with man also; he spake by faith in the name of God, and the sun stood still, the moon obeyed, mountains removed, prisons fell, lions' mouths were closed, the human heart lost its enmity, fire its violence, armies their power, the sword its terror, and death its dominion; and all this by reason of the faith which was in him. Had it not been for the faith which was in men, they might have spoken to the sun, the moon, the mountains, prisons, the human heart, fire, armies, the sword, or to death in vain!" What miracles and marvels are wrought by faith. And it is the same whether they are done by men or angels or gods; the same faith (power!) always brings to pass the same eventuality.

How, then, shall we define faith? Joseph Smith answers: "Faith [is] the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness." "Faith . . . is the first great governing principle which has power, dominion, and authority over all things; by it they exist, by it they are upheld, by it [page 166] they are changed, or by it they remain, agreeable to the will of God. Without it there is no power, and without power there could be no creation nor existence!" (*Lectures on Faith* 1:1, 22-24.)

Knowledge Precedes Faith

Queries: Which comes first, faith or knowledge? Is faith a vague and uncertain hope in something unseen that, as a sprouting seed, may grow into knowledge? Or is faith based on truth and knowledge? Is faith something that grows out of and comes because of a prior knowledge of the truth?

Answers: Faith is the child of knowledge. It is reserved for those only who first have knowledge; there neither is nor can be any faith until there is knowledge. No one can have faith in a God of whom he knows nothing. Faith is founded on truth; it is the offspring of truth; it can never exist alone and apart from the truth. No one can have faith unto life and salvation in a false god; no idol ever had power to raise the dead or stop the sun. And faith is power. It is true that faith in some doctrine or on some theological point may be imperfect; it is true that sproutings of either faith or knowledge can become perfect relative to that doctrine or concept. But faith itself—the great and eternal power that creates and governs and saves, faith unto life and salvation—saving faith grows out of knowledge and cannot come in any other way.

"Faith cometh by hearing," Paul says, "and hearing the word of God" taught by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Romans 10:17.) Faith comes to those only who receive the word of truth. Hence the gospel truism that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21.) The gospel embraces all truth, and truth—nothing else—can bring salvation.

Thus Alma says, "If ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true." (Alma 32:21.) Indeed, faith is a hope in that which is not seen that is true, and there can be no faith in an unseen thing that is false. There is no power in falsehood. No one can have faith unto life and salvation in a god who is believed to be a spirit nothingness, or in a doctrine that denies the resurrection, or in a philosophy that postulates man's evolutionary evolvment from lower forms of life, or in anything that is not true. [page 167]

Truth, diamond truth, is the rock foundation upon which faith rests, and no one can have faith in God or in any gospel truth unless and until he comes to a knowledge of whatever truth is involved.

With reference to saving faith, to faith in that God whose we are, to the faith by which the worlds were made and miracles are wrought, the Prophet taught: "Three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. First, the idea that he actually exists. Secondly, a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will."

That is to say: (1) There is a true and living God, the very being who created all things. (2) He has a certain character; he possesses specified attributes; he is the embodiment of all perfections. (3) Man may so live as to have an actual knowledge that he is conforming to the mind and will of the Lord. Faith comes to those who know these truths and who keep the commandments. Those who meet this standard gain faith unto life and salvation. Where there is a deficiency, in part or in whole, there faith is either weak or entirely wanting. "Without an acquaintance with these three important facts," the blessed word continues, "the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:2-5.)

Knowing, then, that knowledge precedes faith, that faith is founded on truth, and that falsehood and error do not and cannot exercise any saving power, we are led to the inevitable conclusion that faith cannot be exercised contrary to the order of heaven. It takes the power of God (which is faith!) to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. All progress, all science, all religion, even life itself, exist and are because of truth. And faith can only be exercised in conformity with true principles.

For instance: The Prophet, discoursing upon the great plan of redemption and the sacrifices offered to typify the atoning sacrifice of our Lord, explained that Abel's sacrifice was accepted because it conformed to the true pattern. Then he said: "Cain offered of the fruit of the ground, and was not [page 168] accepted, because he could

not do it in faith, he could have no faith, or could not exercise faith contrary to the plan of heaven. . . . As the sacrifice was instituted for a type, by which man was to discern the great Sacrifice which God had prepared, to offer a sacrifice contrary to that, no faith could be exercised, because redemption was not purchased in that way, nor the power of the atonement instituted after that order; consequently, Cain could have no faith; and whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 58.)

Similarly, no faith unto life and salvation can be exercised in any false doctrine, in any false ordinance, or in any false system of religion. If a man believes with all his heart that there will be no resurrection; if every hope in his heart cries out in favor of annihilation of both soul and body at death; if he believes with every fiber of his being and every thought of his mind that death ends all—it does not matter one particle in the eternal sense. He cannot have faith in a doctrine that denies the resurrection. The fact, the reality, the truth is, there will be a resurrection, and there is nothing any of us can do about it one way or the other. A hope in an unseen expectancy that is false does not bring into being a single scintilla of faith. There is no such thing as faith unto life and salvation in a false doctrine. No man can exercise the slightest faith in infant baptism, or in baptism by sprinkling, or in a sacramental ordinance that has departed from the primitive similitude established by the Lord Jesus. All such are contrary to the order of heaven. They are not based and grounded on eternal truth. And faith is a hope in that which is not seen which is true.

Faith and the Knowledge of God

God the Father, in the ultimate and final sense, is the Creator of all things. He is the creator of spirit men, of mortal men, and of immortal men. He created life and death and immortality and eternal life. He made the laws whereby spirit men gain mortality, and mortal men gain immortality, and faithful men gain eternal life. The power he uses in these and in all things is faith. Faith is power, and the power of God is the faith of God. "In him the principle of faith dwells independently, and he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings center for life and salvation." (*Lectures on Faith* 2:2.) [page 169]

God the Father is an eternal being. The very name of the kind of life he lives is eternal life, and thus eternal life consists in living and being as he is. In other words, eternal life is to gain the power of God, which power is faith, and thus to be able to do what he does and to live as he lives. And the great and eternal plan of salvation that he has ordained and established consists of those laws, ordinances, and powers whereby faith is acquired and perfected until it is possessed in the same degree and to

the same extent that it exists in Deity. Faith will thus dwell independently in every person who gains eternal life.

It follows that to gain eternal life, men must know God. They must believe in the true and living God and do the things that will enable them to become like him. Knowledge of God is the foundation upon which a house of faith is built. This knowledge begins with the assurance that he actually is, that he exists and is indeed the Self-Existent One, and that Deity is as real and literal and actual as any of the common verities of life. As we have seen, "the knowledge of the existence of God came into the world" when he revealed himself to Adam and the ancients. And "it was by reason of the knowledge of his existence that there was a foundation laid for the exercise of faith in him, as the only Being in whom faith could center for life and salvation; for faith could not center in a Being of whose existence we have no idea, because the idea of his existence in the first instance is essential to the exercise of faith in him." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:1.)

But by the knowledge of God is meant not simply that he exists and is a personal being in whose image man is made; not merely that he is a resurrected, glorified, and perfected man who has all power, all might, and all dominion; not the mere fact that he is the Father of spirits and as such lives in the family unit; rather, in addition to all this, by the knowledge of God is meant the very nature and kind of being that he is. The knowledge of God includes an understanding of his character, perfections, and attributes. If men are to become like him, they must know what his characteristics and attributes are so that they can begin the process of obtaining these very acquirements, endowments, and personality traits. As the Prophet taught: "God became an object of faith among men after the fall," in consequence of which multitudes were "stirred up . . . [page 170] to search after a knowledge of his character, perfections and attributes, until they became extensively acquainted with him," so that they could "not only commune with him and behold his glory, but [also] be partakers of his power and stand in his presence." (*Lectures on Faith* 2:34.)

Accordingly, as the Prophet expressed it, "We shall proceed to examine his character, perfections, and attributes, in order that [we] may see, not only the just grounds which they [the ancient saints] have for the exercise of faith in him for life and salvation, but the reasons that all the world, also, as far as the idea of his existence extends, may have to exercise faith in him, the Father of all living." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:6.)

"Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ"

(Gerald N. Lund, *Selected Writings of Gerald N. Lund: Gospel Scholars Series*, 237-253)

Even without the fourth Article of Faith, which lists "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ" as the first principle of the gospel, it would be obvious to anyone opening the standard works that faith is a pervasive, all-encompassing principle. The word itself and its cognate forms are found hundreds of times. Its importance in the plan of salvation could best be summarized by Paul's statement that "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Joseph Smith, commenting on that verse, said, "If it should be asked—Why is it impossible to please God without faith? The answer would be—Because without faith it is impossible for men to be saved; and as God desires the salvation of men, he must, of course, desire that they should have faith; and he could not be pleased unless they had, or else he could be pleased with their destruction."¹

Clearly, then, faith is at the center of all that we do and teach in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, however, in the Church we occasionally find some whose attitude seems to be that, since it is the first principle of the gospel, it is also a simple principle, easily comprehended and left behind as one moves on to more complicated and challenging areas of study. However, this is not the case. Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone has summed up, as well as any, the challenge of studying faith as a concept:

"What a great thing it is if we understand what faith is. What is faith? How does it work? Do you have total faith? When we come to a full and total understanding of faith, then I think we ought to move on to repentance. When we understand that totally, then we should move through the principles. But I doubt we will ever really get through an understanding and complete knowledge of faith in a life-time. I don't care how intellectual you are, or how long you study, I doubt you will ever come to an end of the study of faith, the first principle of the gospel. The gospel is so simple that a fool will not err therein, but it is so beautiful and so sophisticated that I believe the greatest intellectual can make a study of faith and never come to an end of understanding."²

Faith—a Principle of Power

If a typical Church group were to give a one-word synonym for *faith*, the usual answers would be *belief*, *trust*, *assurance*, *hope*, and so on. Joseph Smith's *Lectures on Faith* gives a different definition for faith, one that has profound implication for our understanding. In the first lecture,

commenting on Heb. 11:3, the Prophet said: "Faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth. Thus says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews (11:3):

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."¹

"By this we understand that the principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which the worlds were framed, was faith; and that it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity, that all created things exist; so that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth exist by reason of faith as it existed in HIM.

"Had it not been for the principle of faith the worlds would never have been framed, neither would man have been formed of the dust. It is the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things. Take this principle or attribute—for it is an attribute—from the Deity, and he would cease to exist.

"Who cannot see, that if God framed the worlds by faith, that it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and that faith is the principle of power? And if the principle of power, it must be so in man as well as in the Deity? This is the testimony of all the sacred writers, and the lesson which they have been endeavoring to teach to man."³

That faith is a principle of power is evident in scripture. As we look in the standard works and find examples of men with faith, we find in virtually every case demonstrations of tremendous and marvelous power. We read about Enoch, for example, speaking the word of the Lord, and the earth trembling and the mountains fleeing! (see Moses 7:13). We see Joshua saying, "Sun, stand thou still"; and the sun obeys! (see Josh. 10:12-14). Or we find Peter spying a lame man near a gate of the temple—a man with a congenital birth defect who had been unable to walk for the forty years of his life. Peter said simply, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." The record states, "And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:1-10). Faith is the power by which God speaks, creating worlds, solar systems, and universes. So when we speak of faith, we speak of tremendous power, not only physical power, but even power that can save a man from temporal and spiritual death.

Requirements for Developing Faith

In the third lecture on faith, Joseph Smith described what is necessary for people to have faith sufficient to bring them salvation:

"Let us here observe, that three things are

necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

"First, the idea that he actually exists.

"Secondly, a *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes.

"Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will. For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."⁴

Looking at these three requirements carefully, we can see that each of the three involves knowledge; that is, we have an idea in the first one, a correct idea in the second one, and an actual knowledge in the third one. If a sequence were designed depicting an individual's movement toward salvation, it would look something like this:

Knowledge → **Faith** → **Salvation**

In other words, if we are to achieve salvation, we must have faith; and if we are to have faith, we must have knowledge. This is a crucial thing to know about faith and the means to develop it, and yet it raises a troubling question. If we say that knowledge is the requirement or prerequisite of faith, someone will invariably ask, But if knowledge leads to faith, how do you explain Alma 32, wherein Alma describes the process of faith leading to salvation as having faith first, which *then* leads us to a perfect knowledge?

After carefully rereading Alma 32 and studying the *Lectures on Faith*, I have come to some tentative conclusions about faith. Suppose, for instance, that faith in Jesus Christ is a *process* rather than simply a concept? Suppose that the same word is used by different prophets to describe different phases or stages of the process? Could that explain what seems to be a different use of the same term? And if that is true, can the process be described? Do the scriptures describe it? I believe that they do and that the best descriptions of that process are found within the Book of Mormon itself. In an attempt to describe this process, I have developed a paradigm, or model, of what the process of faith in Jesus Christ is.

Some words of caution need to be given, however, before we begin looking at the model itself. First, one danger of any model is that it tends to oversimplify. This is of value in one way, because the simplification helps us to conceptualize or grasp the relationships of a complex subject. But when we begin to apply the model closely to reality, we find that it may not hold up in all cases. Exceptions will exist that do not truly

fit the model. The paradigm of faith included in this chapter is only to help people conceptualize a grand and complex subject. Second, Elder Featherstone's comment that the study of faith can be pursued without ever reaching the end of understanding suggests that the model presented here should be refined or adapted as an individual pursues a deeper understanding of faith. Third, the model is based heavily on three major sections in the Book of Mormon dealing with faith in Jesus Christ: Alma 32, Ether 12, and Moro. 7. Thus, understanding the paradigm is based in part upon a thorough study of those chapters.

The Process We Call Faith

One of the challenges in describing or discussing faith is the idea that faith is a process involving various stages of development. A prophet may use the word *faith* to speak of faith as a whole or to refer to any one of the different stages of the process. This presents a challenge in studying the scriptures, and sometimes even results in confusion. Joseph Smith, for example, said that faith is power; Alma said that faith is hope. Both, however, can be easily understood if we use the process model of faith.

The tendency for prophets to use one word—*faith*—to discuss different aspects of faith makes it difficult to delineate the different stages of the process. After some consideration, I decided that, rather than try to generate new terms—terms the prophets did not use—I would instead use the basic word with a number, thus describing the stages of the process as Faith 1, Faith 2, and so on. In addition, it seems to me that each stage of faith always contains three basic components: hope, action, and confirmation. Again, because these may differ somewhat in their nature, depending on which level of the process of faith a person is at, I have chosen to designate these with subscripts too: Hope 1, Hope 2; Action 1, Action 2; Confirmation 1, Confirmation 2; and so on.

To begin, let us examine Alma 32. I have concluded after studying the chapter that it describes the initial process of the development of faith in Jesus Christ, or, in terms of our nomenclature, the development of Faith 1. Remember that Alma was speaking to the Zoramites, or, more precisely, a group of Zoramites who had been expelled from the congregations of the Zoramite churches because of their poor, lower-class status. The Zoramites had apostatized from the Nephites—they worshiped idols and had developed a proud and perverted way of worshiping (see Alma 31:8-23, 31). In other words, Alma was not speaking to members of Christ's church in the sermon recorded in Alma 32. Rather, he was speaking to a group who had just begun the process of developing faith. This situation has some important implications for Alma's discussion of faith.

When Alma spoke to these Zoramite poor, he seemed to have used the terms *faith* and *perfect knowledge* in a peculiar sense; that is, in a sense different from the normal usage of the terms. He equated faith with a hope or desire to believe what is not known to be true. Notice what he said in verse twenty-one of Alma 32: "Now as I said concerning faith—faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true." Notice that he said, "If ye have faith ye hope." In other words, he seemed to be defining faith as a hope or desire that the things he was telling them were true. He also limited his definition of faith to hoping for things that are actually true. That suggests that hoping for things that are untrue will not bring the results he described in the rest of the sermon.

Alma's use of the term *perfect knowledge* is revealed in verses eighteen to thirty-four. In verse eighteen he said, "If a man knoweth a thing he hath no cause to believe, for he knoweth it." In verse thirty-three, after telling the Zoramites how to experiment with the word, which he compared to a seed, he said that, when they begin to see it "swell" and "grow" in them, they must know that the seed is good. In other words, they didn't have to *hope* or desire to believe that it is good; they would know that it was good. Therefore he said in verse thirty-four, "Your knowledge is perfect in that thing." Obviously, he was not talking about perfect knowledge in any grand or universal sense; and he made that clear in verses thirty-five and thirty-six by saying that, once they had tasted this light, their knowledge was not perfect in an ultimate sense.

Notice also in Alma 32 that Alma gave two prerequisites for the development of faith (the very first level of faith). These prerequisites are, first, humility (see v. 16) and, second, hearing the word (see v. 23). If we are not willing to humble ourselves and make the experiment, we can never develop faith. Even more fundamental, if we do not have the word of the Lord on which to experiment, if we do not have knowledge or information on which to begin to believe, we cannot have faith. (For additional references, see also Moro. 7:24-25; Rom. 10:13-17.)

Level One: Faith or Hope

At each stage of faith, we must move through three components to reach the next level. Note the diagram of the first level of faith, or Faith I, on the following page. The three components are shown in their proper relationship to one another.

Hope I, or the initial level of hope, would be the beginning step for the whole process. This level of hope is really nothing more than the desire or wish that something be true. It is as though we are motivated to say, "I want to know if this is true." Notice in verse

twenty-seven, Alma said, "Even if ye can no more than desire to believe" (emphasis added). If we have Hope I, then we will be motivated to Action I, which is the second step of the process, the second component of faith. At the first level of faith, this action may be no more than a willingness to try to ascertain whether the word we have heard is true.

Moroni taught a valuable concept about this level of faith when he wrote, "I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen" (Ether 12:6). This is essentially what Paul told us in Heb. 11:1. In this case, faith, or the ability to trust in something not seen, is quite clear. We cannot "see" that the word we have heard is true; that is, we do not have empirical proof (proof based upon observation or experience) of the truthfulness of the word. Therefore, we must act on faith: we must trust or hope for something to be, although it is not yet based on seen evidence.

Moroni continued the verse by writing, "Dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith." In every case, in every level of the development of faith, there must be a trial of faith. That is, we are tested to see whether we will act on the basis of the hope that is in us. We have to show that we are motivated to behave according to the truths the Lord has given us, before we have actual evidence that these things are true. Notice again what Alma told the Zoramite poor in Alma 32:27-28: "If ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. . . . If ye do not cast it [the word] out by your unbelief, . . . it will begin to swell within your breasts." Notice the verbs of action that he used: *awake, arouse, exercise, desire, give place, not cast out*. We must act on our desire (which desire I call Hope I) to know if the word of the Lord is true. This initial level of action (Action I) is basically one of will, one of deciding to try to find out if the word is true.

When we act by experimenting, awaking, exercising, and so on, we are led to the third component of faith, which is a confirmation of our hope. This initial level of the faith process would be called confirmation. Alma described this kind of evidence through feelings. Though this evidence is available only to the feelings, it is still empirical, or real, evidence. It may be difficult to put into words, but that doesn't lessen its reality. Notice how Alma described this evidence through one's feelings, "It will begin to swell within your breasts; . . . it beginneth to enlarge [the] soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten [the] understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious" (v. 28).

Based on this real, though difficult to express evidence, we can say, as Alma did in verse thirty-three,

"Ye must needs *know* that the seed is good" (emphasis added). In other words, we now have knowledge based on empirical evidence. Alma called this "perfect knowledge." That perfect knowledge gained through the trial of faith and confirmed by real evidence then does away with the faith described by Alma (to the nonfaithful Zoramites), the faith that is a hope or desire to believe what is not known to be true. Since we have come to *know* that the word is good, we no longer need to *hope* that it is good. Perfect knowledge takes away, or swallows up, faith, as Alma used the term.

When we move through the trial of faith (hope that moves us to act, which leads to a confirmation of that hope), we can say that we have achieved the first stage of faith. These preliminary steps are at an investigator level: we are investigating whether something is true. Alma's description and discussion fit the Zoramite needs perfectly. Typically, we would hypothesize that when a person begins the process of developing and entering into Faith 1, described so perfectly by Alma, he will likely get confirmation quite rapidly. This is an experience missionaries see countless times. When people truly humble themselves upon hearing the word of God and experiment upon that word (for instance, seeking to know through prayer whether something is true), very often the confirmation, the swelling, the feeling of truthfulness, the almost indescribable sensation that this is good come quickly, and they know that the word of the Lord is a good seed.

Level Two: Faith or Knowledge

When we have achieved Faith 1, have we achieved all that there is to have? Obviously not. Alma himself encouraged the people to continue on once they had received this "perfect knowledge." He told them to nourish the seed that was starting to grow until it became a great tree providing them with the fruit of eternal life (see vv. 25-43). In other words, once we have Faith 1, we can move on to the next level of the process in developing faith. The second stage of faith (Faith 2), diagrammed on the following page, is a level of faith entailing belief and knowledge.

Once again there are the three components: Hope 2, Action 2, and Confirmation 2. In the second level of hope, we have more than a desire to know if something is true. Now our attitude could be described not as "I want to know if this is true," but as "I desire this truth." As Moroni stated it, we may "with surety hope for a better world" (Ether 12:4). This is a major step upward from the Faith 1 level. In his sermon to the Zoramites, Alma did not discuss in detail this second level of faith (probably because of the nature of his audience). But others did. Besides Moroni's statement in Ether 12:4 above, we find statements like these from Mormon: You "shall have hope

through the atonement of Christ . . . to be raised unto life eternal" (Moro. 7:41) or "Without faith [could this be Faith 1?] there cannot be any hope" (Moro. 7:42).

When we move into this second level of hope (Hope 2), where we begin to sincerely believe in the things we have heard rather than simply desiring to believe, we will then be motivated to action again. However, this action (Action 2) is on a higher level than that of Faith 1 and could be defined as a willingness to live the truths we believe to be true. Whereas we had previously acted to find out if the Lord's word was true, now we act to incorporate into our lives the truths we have learned. Here again we find in operation the principle in Ether 12:6: we must have our faith tried; we must prove by our actions that the hope in us truly is sincere and serious. Notice what Moroni said about this hope: it makes "an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works" (Ether 12:4). In his letter on faith, hope, and charity, Mormon said, "They who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing" (Moro. 7:28). This seems to be what Alma meant when he said, "If ye nourish [the word] with much care it will get root" (Alma 32:37).

When we operate at the Action 2 level, we again undergo the trial of faith. We must show that we are willing to trust in things not seen. When we do so, we receive confirmation (Confirmation 2), specifically evidence on a behavioral level. This empirical evidence is more outward than that received in Confirmation 1, where the evidence consisted mostly of inner feelings (although Confirmation 2 still includes many feelings). Such evidence is easier to identify and to put into words. It would involve statements such as "Yes, my prayer was answered" or "I can see that this principle works in my life." Such confirmation leads us to say not "I believe . . ." but "*I know* the gospel is true." The word has grown to the point where we can actually begin to taste the fruits of it in our lives (see Alma 32:42). In Moro. 7:25 we read, "Thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing."

Now that we have examined the first two levels of faith, we begin to appreciate the profound implications of the discussion of faith and works James the apostle gave. If we do not have works joined to our faith, then our faith is dead, "being alone" (see James 2:17). If we have the hope or desire that something is true (Hope 1) but refuse to act on that hope, we will receive no confirmation, and our faith, even at this early stage, will be dead. The same is true in level two. Once we believe that something is true but refuse to live the truth, then we have faith without works, and our faith dies. We will receive no confirmation. The confirmation comes only after the trial of faith. But in this second level, our trial is not on an investigator level; we are tried on a higher level involving conversion, or testimony.

Level Three—Faith or Power

Now we are prepared to look at the next level of faith, which brings us to faith as Joseph Smith defined it. We could say that Faith 3, diagrammed on the next page, is the power level of faith. Once again we are describing a major step upward from the previous level, and once again we find all three components operating as in the previous levels.

Hope 1 is to hope that something is true, and Hope 2 is to believe that it is true. After having gone through the process of Faith 2, however, we have confirmation and knowledge that the things we cannot see are indeed true. This makes a new level of hope possible. Hope 3, the third level of hope, could be described as a knowledge and assurance of things not seen. At this level, our attitude is reflected by this statement: I have the truth, and I desire to use it to become like God. This is, I believe, what Moroni meant by the phrase "a more excellent hope" (Ether 12:32). This desire seems to also describe what Nephi meant by "a perfect brightness of hope" (2 Ne. 31:20). When our hope is this strong, when we truly have knowledge and assurance of unseen things, we move into more committed action (Action 3). This higher level of action could be described as a willingness to do whatever God requires of a person. This, again, is a great trial of faith. Action 3 may involve a wide range of behaviors, including working on a Church welfare project or taking care of a sick neighbor's children. It may be something as trying and challenging as God's request to Abraham that he sacrifice his only son.

In our development of faith, if we have reached this point of hope or knowledge but refuse to act accordingly, then, as James said, "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). We have failed the trial of faith and will receive no confirmation of our hope. Notice the quotation by Joseph Smith from the *Lectures on Faith* included in the diagram. He said that only a willingness to sacrifice whatever God requires brings the knowledge that allows us to obtain the faith required for salvation.⁵

If we operate at this level of action, we would expect that confirmation of this hope would be forthcoming, and such is the case. We could describe this level of confirmation (Confirmation 3) as evidence on many levels of experience. It can not only involve experiences of inner feelings and knowledge, but also include experiences available to the senses, such as visions, visitations of angels, the demonstration of power in miracles, speaking in tongues, and the like. These may still be hard to express in words (in the sense that words are inadequate to describe them), but they are irrefutable kinds of evidence, demonstrations that the honest person cannot deny.

Notice the promises cited under the Confirmation 3 level in the diagram. This is what the Lord meant when he said, "These signs shall follow them that believe" (Mark 16:17). This power level of faith also helps us to better understand what the Lord meant when he said: "Faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow those that believe. Yea, signs come by faith, not by the will of men, nor as they please, but by the will of God. Yea, signs come by faith, unto mighty works, for without faith no man pleaseth God" (D&C 63:9-11).

I believe that understanding the process of Faith 3 also gives us added insight as to why those who seek signs to bolster faith are called "a wicked and adulterous generation" (Matt. 16:4). A person who wants to build his faith only on the basis of confirmation or evidence, without living the principles, seeks to circumvent the trial of faith that Moroni described. That is, he wants to have confirmation without paying the price of hope and action. And this "adulterates" or pollutes the proper relationship in the developmental process of faith. Satan seems to understand the significance of this and often prompts his servants to demand a sign, to demand faith without paying any price (see, for example, Jacob 7:13; Alma 30:43; Ether 12:5).

Level Four—Faith or Perfection

In level three of faith, or the power level, we looked to the faith shown by the people in the scriptures whom we typically characterize as having great faith. Many people might think of this as being the highest level of faith, but I feel that there is a fourth level of faith, which could be described as the perfection level.

Once again, this is a major step upward. We have to be a little more speculative as we describe this level of the process of faith because relatively few have achieved it; and those who have seem reticent (by direction of the Spirit) to talk about it in much detail. But I believe again that it involves our three components of hope, action, and confirmation, as diagrammed on the following page.

In level three, hope involved knowledge and assurance. How could one come to a higher level than that? I suggest that Hope 4 is the actual knowledge that one will become like God, and it can be characterized by the attitude, *I desire to be as God is*. Two scriptures come to mind: "The more sure word of prophecy means a *man's knowing that he is sealed up* unto eternal life" (D&C 131:5; emphasis added); and "If ye do these things, ye *shall never fall*" (2 Pet. 1:10; emphasis added), which is Peter's promise to those who were laboring to make their calling and election sure.

When someone has reached this level of faith in mortality, his calling and election is made sure, and he is told by the more sure word of prophecy that he will be exalted. Imagine the level of hope or desire that such a

revelation would create in him. Such hope would lead him to the fourth or highest level of action (Action 4)—the level where his life becomes more and more godlike until he is made perfect and becomes worthy to become a god. Whether the phrase "trial of faith" adequately describes Action 4 is not important. What is important is to know that the person must still live at a level of action commensurate with the level of hope within him. When he does so, he will receive a level of confirmation also commensurate with his level of action. In the highest level of confirmation (Confirmation 4), a man receives the ultimate proof of the truths of the gospel—he is made a god!

As discussed at the beginning, the paradigm of the four levels of faith in Jesus Christ is inadequate to describe all the complexities of faith. Certainly it needs further clarification and refinement. But I have found it to be tremendously helpful as I think through what the prophets have said about faith. When Joseph Smith said faith is power, he was obviously speaking about a different level of faith than when Alma said to experiment upon his words so that faith could be swallowed up in perfect knowledge.

I also find it helpful to think of the three components—hope, action, and confirmation—at each level of faith, for I find the three principles operating in the lives of those who demonstrate faith. These principles also have relationship to repentance, baptism, and enduring to the end. Often we risk the danger of becoming sign seekers by talking of having one's calling and election made sure. As we talk about this important concept, we must clearly define the price to be paid so we do not end up testing God. Rather, we should operate according to the level of knowledge and hope that the Lord has granted us. Then we will receive a greater and greater confirmation until Jesus Christ makes us joint heirs with him, and we become gods. I firmly believe that this is the process that we must follow in our lives if we are to find that power. Joseph Smith said this:

"All the saints of whom we have account, in all the revelations of God which are extant, obtained the knowledge which they had of their acceptance in his sight through the sacrifice which they offered unto him; and through the knowledge thus obtained their faith became sufficiently strong to lay hold upon the promise of eternal life, and to endure as seeing him who is invisible; and were enabled, through faith, to combat the powers of darkness, contend against the wiles of the adversary, overcome the world, and obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."⁶

Until now, we have not said anything about charity, though faith, hope, and charity are clearly interwoven, interdependent concepts (see 1 Cor. 13; Moro. 7:44-48). We can understand the interrelationship

of faith and hope fairly clearly through the paradigm, but where does charity enter in? As I have pondered this, I find a profoundly moving answer—charity enters in at every level, every aspect, every point. The pure love of Christ validates every level of action to make it productive. This seems to be what Paul meant when he said that one can prophesy or give alms or do numerous other things, yet such actions are meaningless if not done because of a love for God and fellowman. Charity is what lights our hope, strengthens our will, deepens our confirmation. It suffers long, endures much, is properly motivated, hopes for all things, and endures all things. I have not shown charity in the paradigm because it would need to be shown everywhere, for it permeates the whole process of faith and salvation. Mormon explained it thus:

"Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure" (Moro. 7:47-48).

Notes

From "An Exploration of the Process of Faith as Taught in the Book of Mormon," in *The Second Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators' Symposium: A Symposium on the Book of Mormon* (Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies, 1978), 74-80.

1. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985), 7:7.
2. Vaughn J. Featherstone, "As If They Would Ask Him to Tarry a Little Longer," in *Speeches of the Year, 1975* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 375.
3. Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 1:13-17.
4. *Ibid.*, 3:2-5.
5. *Ibid.*, 6:7.
6. *Ibid.*, 6:11.

FAITH 1—HOPE

*Trial of Faith (Ether 12:6)
Investigator Level*

CONFIRMATION 1—EVIDENCE
BECAUSE OF FEELINGS

Empirical **evidence**—inner feelings; may be difficult to verbalize, but still **real** (v. 35)

"It will begin to swell" (v. 28)

"It **beginneth** to enlarge my soul, . . . enlighten my **understanding**, . . . be delicious to me" (v. 28)

Based on this evidence, you "must needs know that [it] is good" or true (v. 33). Then you have perfect knowledge (that is, empirical knowledge), and your faith (that is, your hope that it is true) becomes dormant (see vv. 34–35).

ACTION 1—WILLINGNESS
TO TRY TO FIND OUT IF IT
IS TRUE

Trial of faith

"Experiment upon my words" (v. 27)

"Awake and arouse your faculties" (v. 27)

"Exercise a particle of faith" (v. 27)

"Give place for a portion of my words" (v. 27)

"Do not cast it out by your unbelief (v. 28)

HOPE 1—DESIRE TO BELIEVE
SOMETHING IS TRUE

I want to know if this is true, "even if [I] can no more than desire to believe" (v. 27)

PREREQUISITES

1. Humility (v. 16)
2. Hearing the word (v. 23)

(See also Moro. 7:24–25; Rom. 10:13–17)

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, references in this chart are in Alma 32.

FAITH 2—BELIEF
AND KNOWLEDGE

*Trial of Faith (Ether 12:6)
Conversion or Testimony Level*

CONFIRMATION 2—EVIDENCE
ON A BEHAVIORAL LEVEL

Empirical **evidence**—more outward proof, easier to identify and verbalize, though still much on the feeling level

"Because of your diligence and your **faith** . . . with the word in nourishing it, . . . by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof (Alma 32:42)

"**Thus** by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing" (Moro. 7:25)

"For if **they** . . . have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27)

ACTION 2—WILLINGNESS TO LIVE
THE TRUTHS ONE BELIEVES TO
BE TRUE

Trial of faith

"**Which** hope cometh of faith, **maketh** an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works" (Ether 12:4)

"**They** who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing" (Moro. 7:28)

"But if ye will nourish the word . . . it shall take root" (Alma 32:41)

HOPE 2—BELIEF OR A MORE SURE HOPE

I desire this truth

"Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world" (Ether 12:4)

"Ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ . . . to be raised unto life eternal" (Moro. 7:41)

"Without faith [Faith 1] there cannot be any hope" (Moro. 7:42)

CONFIRMATION 1

FAITH 3—POWER

Trial of Faith (Ether 12:6)
Power Level

CONFIRMATION 3—EVIDENCE ON MANY LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE

Empirical **evidence**—**experiences** through feelings, knowing, and senses (though these may be hard to visualize, they are irrefutable kinds of evidence, including hearing, visualizing, touching, and demonstrating of power)

"All they who wrought miracles wrought them by faith" (Ether 12:16)

"There were many whose faith was so exceedingly **strong** . . . who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith" (Ether 12:19)

"It is by faith that miracles are wrought, and it is by faith that angels appear" (Moro. 7:37)

"**Whatever** thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto you" (Moro. 7:26)

ACTION 3—WILLINGNESS TO DO WHATEVER GOD REQUIRES

Trial of faith

"Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and **salvation**. . . . When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his **life** . . . he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his **sacrifice**. . . . Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life" (Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 6:7).

HOPE 3—KNOWLEDGE AND ASSURANCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN

I have the truth and desire to use it to become like God

"A more excellent hope" (Ether 12:32)

"A perfect brightness of hope" (2 Ne. 31:20)

CONFIRMATION 2

FAITH 4—PERFECTION

Trial of Faith (Ether 12:6)
Fulness of All Things

CONFIRMATION 4—HE BECOMES LIKE GOD

I become a joint heir with Christ, receiving of his fulness of glory

"Now are we the sons of God, and . . . when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 Jn. 3:2)

"They shall pass by the angels, and the gods, . . . to their exaltation and glory in all things, . . . which glory shall be a **fulness**. . . .

"Then shall they be gods" (D&C 132:19-20)

ACTION 4—LIVES A LIFE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD

I do all things according to God's will

"This is life **eternal**, that they might know **thee** the only true God, and Jesus **Christ**, whom **thou** hast sent" (John 17:3)

HOPE 4—KNOWLEDGE THAT ONE WILL BECOME LIKE GOD

I have a sure promise that I will be as God

"The more sure word of prophecy means a man's knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life" (D&C 131:5)

"Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Pet. 1:10)

CONFIRMATION 3

Taken from "Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," by Gerald N. Lund, in *Selected Writings of Gerald N. Lund: Gospel Scholars Series*, 243, 246, 248, 251

of Him in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. John 16:33.
2. Charles Dickens, "The Uncommercial Traveler," *All the Year Round*, July 4, 1863, 449; see also David M. W. Pickup, *The Pick and Flower of England* (2001), 2.
3. *All the Year Round*, July 4, 1863, 446.
4. See Alma 4:10.
5. See Paul Johnson, "Militant Atheism and God," *Forbes*, Oct. 8, 2007, 27; John Gray, "Faith in Reason: Secular Fantasies of a Godless Age," *Harper's Magazine*, Jan. 2008, 86.
6. D&C 45:32.
7. D&C 45:29.
8. William Lee Adams, "Christians and Atheists Battle in London Bus Wars," *Time*, Feb. 8, 2009, www.time.com.
9. See Luke 18:8.
10. Some have mistakenly cited Revelation 22:18, but this has reference to the book of Revelation, not the Bible as a whole. See also Deuteronomy 4:2.
11. See Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (2007), xvii–xxviii.
12. Gary G. Ely, May 16, 2008, conversation preparatory to his service as president of the Colorado Denver North Mission.
13. In Newell Cook McMillan, comp., *The Life and History of Phineas Wolcott Cook* (1980), 19–20.
14. See Frederic W. Farrar, *Eternal Hope* (1892), xxxvi–xlii. For an expanded discussion of this topic, see H. Wallace Goddard, "God's Plan—Kinder Than We Dare to Expect," *Meridian Magazine*, www.ldsmag.com/myth/060217plan.html.
15. *Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Henry Frowde (1907), 387–88.
16. See Frederic W. Farrar, *Eternal Hope* (1892), xxii.
17. See D&C 29:46–50; 137:7–10.
18. Alma 40:12.
19. See 2 Nephi 9:10–14; D&C 76:84–86.
20. Alma 40:14.
21. See D&C 76:89.
22. See Isaiah 14:12–15; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:7–9; D&C 76:32–37.
23. D&C 76:41; see also 1 Corinthians 15:22.
24. John 14:1–2.
25. Moses 1:39.
26. Joseph Smith—History 1:19; see also v. 20.
27. See 2 Nephi 31:2–21; see also Hebrews 6:1–2; 2 John 1:9–10; 3 Nephi 11:30–40.
28. Mary Jordan, "The New Face of Global Mormonism," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 19, 2007, p. A01.
29. Gordon B. Hinckley, "This Is the Work of the Master," *Ensign*, May 1995, 71.
30. See Luke 6:37.
31. 2 Nephi 26:27.
32. See D&C 93:1.
33. D&C 93:20.
34. "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, no. 30.
35. Orson F. Whitney, *Saturday Night Thoughts* (1921), 323.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

ELDER KEVIN W. PEARSON

Of the Seventy

In a household of faith, there is no need to fear or doubt. Choose to live by faith and not fear.



I humbly invite the companionship of the Holy Ghost as we discuss a vital principle of the gospel: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I acknowledge with deep appreciation and love great examples of true faith and faithfulness in my own life. To goodly parents, family, priesthood leaders, beloved missionaries, wonderful children, and a precious eternal companion, I express my deepest love and gratitude. I acknowledge my own need and desire for greater faith as a disciple and witness of Christ. There has never been a greater need for faith in my own life than now.

As parents, we have been commanded to teach our children "to

understand the doctrine of . . . faith in Christ the Son of the living God" (D&C 68:25). This requires more than merely recognizing faith as a gospel principle. "To have faith is to have confidence in something or someone" (Bible Dictionary, "Faith," 669). True faith must be centered in Jesus Christ. "Faith is a principle of action and of power" (Bible Dictionary, 670). It requires us to do, not merely to believe. Faith is a spiritual gift from God that comes through the Holy Ghost. It requires a correct understanding and knowledge of Jesus Christ, His divine attributes and perfect character, His teachings, Atonement, Resurrection, and priesthood power. Obedience to these principles develops complete trust in Him and His ordained servants and assurance of His promised blessings.

There is no other thing in which we can have absolute assurance. There is no other foundation in life that can bring the same peace, joy, and hope. In uncertain and difficult times, faith is truly a spiritual gift worthy of our utmost efforts. We can give our children education, lessons, athletics, the arts, and material possessions, but if we do not give them faith in Christ, we have given little.

"Faith is kindled by hearing the testimony of those who have faith"

(Bible Dictionary, 669; see also Romans 10:14–17). Do your children know that you know? Do they see and feel your conviction? “Strong faith is developed by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Bible Dictionary, 669).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “*Faith is a gift of God bestowed as a reward for personal righteousness.* It is always given when righteousness is present, and the greater the measure of obedience to God’s laws the greater will be the endowment of faith” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 264). If we desire more faith, we must be more obedient. When we teach our children by example or precept to be casual or situational in obeying God’s commandments, we prevent them from receiving this vital spiritual gift. Faith requires an attitude of exact obedience, even in the small, simple things.

Desire is a particle of faith that develops within us as we experience divine truth. It is like spiritual photosynthesis. The influence of the Holy Ghost, acting on the Light of Christ within every human being, produces the spiritual equivalent of a chemical reaction—a stirring, a change of heart, or a desire to know. Hope develops as particles of faith become molecules and as simple efforts to live true principles occur.

As patterns of obedience develop, the specific blessings associated with obedience are realized and belief emerges. Desire, hope, and belief are forms of faith, but faith as a principle of power comes from a consistent pattern of obedient behavior and attitudes. Personal righteousness is a choice. Faith is a gift from God, and one possessed of it can receive enormous spiritual power.

There is a quality of faith which develops as we focus all of our heart, might, mind, and strength. It is seen and felt in the eyes of a great missionary, a valiant and virtuous young

woman, and righteous mothers, fathers, and grandparents. It can be seen in the lives of individuals young and old, in every land and culture, speaking every language, in every circumstance and station in life. It is the “eye of faith” spoken of by the prophet Alma (see Alma 5:15–26)—the ability to focus and be steadfast, continually holding fast to true

principles, nothing wavering, even when the mist of darkness confronting us is exceedingly great. This quality of faith is exceedingly powerful.

However, “it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. . . . The Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it



São Paulo, Brazil

should be that he was enticed by the one or the other” (2 Nephi 2:11, 16). And so it is with faith. It can be enticing to choose doubt and disbelief over faith.

As Jesus returned from the transcendent spiritual experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, He was approached by a desperate father whose son needed help. The father pleaded, “If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.”

Jesus replied, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

“And straightway the father . . . cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:22–24).

Faith and fear cannot coexist. One gives way to the other. The simple fact is we all need to constantly build faith and overcome sources of destructive disbelief. The Savior’s teaching comparing faith to a grain of mustard seed recognizes this reality (see Matthew 13:31–32). Consider it this way: our net usable faith is what we have left to exercise after we subtract our sources of doubt and disbelief. You might ask yourself this question: “Is my own

net faith positive or negative?” If your faith exceeds your doubt and disbelief, the answer is likely positive. If you allow doubt and disbelief to control you, the answer might be negative.

We do have a choice. We get what we focus on consistently. Because there is an opposition in all things, there are forces that erode our faith. Some are the result of Satan’s direct influence. But for others, we have no one but ourselves to blame. These stem from personal tendencies, attitudes, and habits we can learn to change. I will refer to these influences as the “Six Destructive Ds.” As I do, consider their influence on you or your children.

First is *doubt*. Doubt is not a principle of the gospel. It does not come from the Light of Christ or the influence of the Holy Ghost. Doubt is a negative emotion related to fear. It comes from a lack of confidence in one’s self or abilities. It is inconsistent with our divine identity as children of God.

Doubt leads to *discouragement*. Discouragement comes from missed expectations. Chronic discouragement leads to lower expectations, decreased effort, weakened desire, and greater

difficulty feeling and following the Spirit (see *Preach My Gospel* [2004], 10). Discouragement and despair are the very antithesis of faith.

Discouragement leads to *distraction*, a lack of focus. Distraction eliminates the very focus the eye of faith requires. Discouragement and distraction are two of Satan’s most effective tools, but they are also bad habits.

Distraction leads to a *lack of diligence*, a reduced commitment to remain true and faithful and to carry on through despite hardship and disappointment. Disappointment is an inevitable part of life, but it need not lead to doubt, discouragement, distraction, or lack of diligence.

If not reversed, this path ultimately leads to *disobedience*, which undermines the very basis of faith. So often the result is disbelief, the conscious or unconscious refusal to believe.

The scriptures describe *disbelief* as the state of having chosen to harden one’s heart. It is to be past feeling.

These Six Destructive Ds—*doubt, discouragement, distraction, lack of diligence, disobedience, and disbelief*—all erode and destroy our faith. We can choose to avoid and overcome them.

Challenging times require greater spiritual power. Consider carefully the Savior’s promise: “If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me” (Moroni 7:33).

I humbly declare that God, our Heavenly Father, lives and loves each of us, His children. Jesus Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. He lives and personally leads His Church through President Monson, His anointed prophet. Because He lives, there is always hope smiling brightly before us. In a household of faith, there is no need to fear or doubt. Choose to live by faith and not fear. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■



Lecture 2

ON FAITH

1. Having shown in our previous lecture "faith itself—what it is," we shall proceed to show, secondly, the object on which it rests.

2. We here observe that God is the only supreme governor and independent being in whom all fulness and perfection dwell. He is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient, without beginning of days or end of life. In him every good gift and every good principle dwell, and he is the Father of lights. In him the principle of faith dwells independently, and he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings centers for life and salvation.

3. In order to present this part of the subject in a clear and conspicuous point of light, it is necessary to go back and show the evidences which mankind have had to believe in the existence of a God and also to show the foundation on which these evidences are and have been based since the creation.

4. We do not mean those evidences which are manifested by the works of creation which we daily behold with our natural eyes. We are sensible that, after a revelation of Jesus Christ, the works of creation clearly exhibit his eternal power and Godhead throughout their vast forms and varieties. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead" (Rom 1:20). But we do mean those evidences by which the first thoughts were suggested to the minds of men that there was a God who created all things.

5. We shall now proceed to examine the situation of man at his first creation. Moses, the historian, has given us the following account of him in Genesis. We quote from the New Translation: 1

6. "And I, God, said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and it was so.

7. "And I, God, said, Let them have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

8. "And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them. And I, God, blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

9. "And I, God, said unto man, Behold, I have given you every herb, bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth; and every tree in the which shall be the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat" (JST Gen 1:27-31; see also Moses 2:26-29).

10. Again, in Genesis: "And I, the Lord God, took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it. And I, the Lord God, commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; Nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but remember that I forbid it; For in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. . . .

11. "And out of the ground, I the Lord God, formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and commanded that they should come unto Adam, to see what he would call them. And . . . whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that should be the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field" (JST Gen 2:18-22, 25-27; see also Moses 3:15-17, 19-20).

12. From the foregoing we learn of man's situation at his first creation, the knowledge with which he was endowed, and the high and exalted station in which he was placed—lord, or governor, of all things on earth, and at the same time enjoying communion and intercourse with his Maker, without a veil to separate between. We shall next proceed to examine the account given of his fall and of his being driven out of the garden of Eden and from the presence of the Lord.

13. Moses proceeds: "And they [Adam and Eve] 2 heard the voice of the Lord God, as they were walking in the garden, in the cool of the day. And Adam and his wife went to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God, amongst the trees of the garden. And I, the Lord God, called unto Adam,

and said unto him, Where goest thou? And he said, I heard thy voice, in the garden, and I was afraid, because I beheld that I was naked, and I hid myself.

14. "And I, the Lord God, said unto Adam, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, if so thou shouldst surely die? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest me, and commanded that she should remain with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree, and I did eat.

15. "And I, the Lord God, said unto the woman, What is this thing which thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (JST Gen 3:13-19; see also Moses 4:14-19).

16. And again, the Lord said unto the woman, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

17. "And unto Adam, I, the Lord God, said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the fruit of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed shall be the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; by the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou shalt return unto the ground, for thou shalt surely die; for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou wast, and unto dust shalt thou return" (JST Gen 3:22-25; see also Moses 4:22-25). This was immediately followed by the fulfilment of what we previously said: Man was driven or sent out of Eden.

18. Two important items are shown from the former quotations: First, after man was created, he was not left without intelligence or understanding to wander in darkness and spend an existence in ignorance and doubt on the great and important point which effected his happiness as to the real fact by whom he was created, or unto whom he was amenable for his conduct. God conversed with him face to face: in his presence he was permitted to stand, and from his own mouth he was permitted to receive instruction. He heard his voice, walked before him, and gazed upon his glory, while intelligence burst upon his understanding and enabled him to give names to the vast assemblage of his Maker's works.

19. Secondly, we have seen that though man did transgress, his transgression did not deprive him of the previous knowledge with which he had been endowed relative to the existence and glory of his Creator; for no sooner did he hear his voice than he sought to hide himself from his presence.

20. Having shown, then, in the first instance, that God began to converse with man immediately after he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," and that he did not cease to manifest himself to him, even after his fall, we shall next proceed to show, that even though man was cast out from the garden of Eden, he did not lose his knowledge of the existence of God, neither did God cease to manifest his will unto him.

21. We next proceed to present the account of the direct revelation which man received after he was cast out of Eden, and further copy from the New Translation:

22. After Adam had been driven out of the garden, he "began to till the earth, and to have dominion over all the beasts of the field, and to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, as I, the Lord had commanded him. . . . And Adam called upon the name of the Lord, and Eve also, his wife; and they heard the voice of the Lord, from the way towards the garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God; and should offer the firstlings of their flocks for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

23. "And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord. And Adam said unto him, I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

24. "And then the angel spake, saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth; wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest, in the name of the Son. And thou shalt repent, and call upon God, in the name of the Son for evermore. And in that day, the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son" (JST Gen 4:1, 4-9; see also Moses 5:1, 4-9).

25. This last quotation shows this important fact: even though our first parents were driven out of the garden of Eden and were separated from the presence of God by a veil, they still retained a knowledge of his existence, and that sufficiently to move them to call upon him. And further, no sooner was the plan of redemption revealed to man and he began to call upon God, than the Holy Spirit was given, bearing record of the Father and Son.

26. Moses also gives us an account of the transgression of Cain, of the righteousness of Abel, and of the revelations of God to them. He says, "In process of time. . . Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought, of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof; and the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering, but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect. Now Satan knew this, and it pleased him. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well thou shalt be accepted, and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door; and Satan desireth to have thee, and except thou shalt hearken unto my commandments, I will deliver thee up, and it shall be unto thee according to his desire.

27. "And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And Cain gloried in that which he had done, saying, I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands.

28. "And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel, thy brother? And he said, I know not, am I my brother's keeper? And the Lord said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground. And now, thou shalt be cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

29. "And Cain said unto the Lord, Satan tempted me, because of my brother's flock; and I was wroth also, for his offering thou didst accept, and not mine. My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the Lord, and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that he that

findeth me shall slay me, because of mine iniquities, for these things are not hid from the Lord. And I, the Lord, said unto him, Whosoever slayeth thee, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold; and I, the Lord, set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him" (JST Gen 5:6-9, 17-25; see also Moses 5:19-23, 32-40).

30. The object of the foregoing quotation is to show to this class that the way by which mankind were first made acquainted with the existence of a God was by a manifestation of God to man. Also after man's transgression God continued to manifest himself to him and to his posterity. And notwithstanding they were separated from his immediate presence so that they could not see his face, they continued to hear his voice.

31. Adam, thus being made acquainted with God, communicated the knowledge which he had unto his posterity. And it was through this means that the thought was first suggested to their minds that there was a God, which laid the foundation for the exercise of their faith, through which they could obtain a knowledge of his character and also of his glory.

32. Not only was there a manifestation made unto Adam of the existence of a God, but Moses informs us, as before quoted, that God also condescended to talk with Cain after his great transgression in slaying his brother. And Cain knew that it was the Lord who was talking with him, so when he was driven out from the presence of his brethren, he carried with him the knowledge of the existence of a God. And through this means, doubtless, his posterity became acquainted with the fact that such a being existed.

33. From this we can see that the whole human family in the early age of their existence and in all their different branches had this knowledge disseminated among them; so that the existence of God became an object of faith in the early age of the world. And the evidence which these men had of the existence of a God was the testimony of their fathers, in the first instance.

34. The reason we have been thus particular on this part of our subject is that this class may see by what means it was that God became an object of faith among men after the Fall, and also may see what it was that stirred up the faith of multitudes to feel after him, to search after a knowledge of his

character, perfections, and attributes, until they became extensively acquainted with him. Not only were they to commune with him and behold his glory, but they were also to be partakers of his power and stand in his presence.

35. Let this class mark particularly that the testimony which these men had of the existence of a God was the testimony of man. For previous to the time that any of Adam's posterity had obtained a manifestation of God to themselves, Adam, their common father, had testified unto them of the existence of God and of his eternal power and Godhead.

36. For instance, Abel, before he received the assurance from heaven that his offerings were acceptable unto God, had received the important information from his father that such a being who had created and who did uphold all things did exist. Neither can there be any doubt existing in the mind of any person but that Adam was the first who did communicate the knowledge of the existence of a God to his posterity. The whole faith of the world from that time down to the present is in a certain degree dependent on the knowledge first communicated to them by their common progenitor; and it has been handed down to the day and generation in which we live, as we shall show from the face of the sacred records.

37. First, Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born (Gen 5:3). And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were 800 years, making him 930 years old when he died (5:4-5). Seth was 105 when Enos was born (5:6); Enos was 90 when Cainan was born (5:9); Cainan was 70 when Mahalaleel was born (5:12); Mahalaleel was 65 when Jared was born (5:15); Jared was 162 when Enoch was born (5:18); Enoch was 65 when Methuselah was born (5:21); Methuselah was 187 when Lamech was born (5:25); Lamech was 182 when Noah was born (5:28).

38. From this account it appears that Lamech, the eighth 3 from Adam, and the father of Noah, was 56 years old when Adam died; Methuselah, 243; Enoch, 308; Jared, 470; Mahalaleel, 535; Cainan, 605; Enos, 695; and Seth, 800.

39. So Lamech the father of Noah, Methuselah, Enoch, Jared, Mahalaleel, Cainan, Enos, Seth, and Adam, were all living at the same time, and, beyond all controversy, were all preachers of righteousness.

40. Moses further informs us that Seth lived 807 years after he begat Enos, making him 912 years old at his death (Gen 5:7-8). And Enos lived 815 years after he begat Cainan, making him 905 years old when he died (5:10-11). And Cainan lived 840 years after he begat Mahalaleel, making him 910 years old at his death (5:13-14). And Mahalaleel lived 830 years after he begat Jared, making him 895 years old when he died (5:16-17). And Jared lived 800 years after he begat Enoch, making him 962 years old at his death (5:19-20). And Enoch walked with God 300 years after he begat Methuselah, making him 365 years old when he was translated (5:22-23). And Methuselah lived 782 years after he begat Lamech, making him 969 years old when he died (5:26-27). Lamech lived 595 years after he begat Noah, making him 777 years old when he died (5:30-31).

41. Agreeable to this account, Adam died in the 930th year of the world; Enoch was translated in the 987th; Seth died in the 1042nd; Enos in the 1140th; Cainan in the 1235th; Mahalaleel in the 1290th; Jared in the 1422nd; Lamech in the 1651st; and Methuselah in the 1656th, it being the same year in which the flood came.

42. So Noah was 84 years old when Enos died, 179 4 when Cainan died, 234 when Mahalaleel died, 366 when Jared died, 595 when Lamech died, and 600 when Methuselah died.

43. We can see from this that Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah, all lived on the earth at the same time, and that Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Methuselah, and Lamech, were all acquainted with both Adam and Noah.

44. From the foregoing, it is easy to see not only how the knowledge of God came into the world but also upon what principle it was preserved. From the time it was first communicated, it was retained in the minds of righteous men who taught not only their own posterity but also the world. So there was no need of a new revelation to man after Adam's creation to Noah to give them the first idea or notion of the existence of a God, and not only of a God, but the true and living God.

45. Having traced the chronology of the world from Adam to Noah, we will now trace it from Noah to Abraham. Noah was 502 years old when Shem was born; 98 years afterwards the flood came, being the

600th year of Noah's age (Gen 7:11). And Moses informs us that Noah lived 350 years after the flood, making him 950 years old when he died (Gen 9:28-29).

46. Shem was 100 years old when Arphaxad was born (Gen 11:10). Arphaxad was 35 when Salah was born (11:12); Salah was 30 when Eber was born (11:14); Eber was 34 when Peleg was born, in whose days the earth was divided (11:16); Peleg was 30 when Reu was born (11:18); Reu was 32 when Serug was born (11:20); Serug was 30 when Nahor was born (11:22); Nahor was 29 when Terah was born (11:24); Terah was 70 when Haran and Abraham were born (11:26).

47. There is some difficulty in the account given by Moses of Abraham's birth. Some have supposed that Abraham was not born until Terah was 130 years old. This conclusion is drawn from a variety of scriptures, but it is not our purpose at present to quote them. Neither is it a matter of any consequence to us whether Abraham was born when Terah was 70 years old or 130. But so there may be no doubt about the present chronology, we will date the birth of Abraham at the later period, that is, when Terah was 130 years old. It appears from this account that the time from the flood to the birth of Abraham was 352 years.

48. Moses informs us that Shem lived 500 years after he begat Arphaxad (Gen 11:11); this added to 100 years, which was his age when Arphaxad was born, makes him 600 years old when he died. Arphaxad lived 403 years after he begat Salah (11:13); this added to 35 years, which was his age when Salah was born, makes him 438 years old when he died. Salah lived 403 years after he begat Eber (11:15); this added to 30 years, which was his age when Eber was born, makes him 433 years old when he died. Eber lived 430 years after he begat Peleg (11:17); this added to 34 years, which was his age when Peleg was born, makes him 464 years old when he died. Peleg lived 209 years after he begat Reu (11:19); this added to 30 years, which was his age when Reu was born, makes him 239 years old when he died. Reu lived 207 years after he begat Serug (11:21); this added to 32 years, which was his age when Serug was born, makes him 239 years old when he died. Serug lived 200 years after he begat Nahor (11:23); this added to 30 years, which was his age when Nahor was born, makes him 230 years old when he died. Nahor lived 119 years after he begat Terah (11:25); this added

to 29 years, which was his age when Terah was born, makes him 148 years old when he died. Terah was 130 years old when Abraham was born, and is supposed to have lived 75 years after his birth, making him 205 years old when he died.

49. Agreeable to this last account, Peleg died in the 1996th year of the world, Nahor in the 1997th, and Noah in the 2006th. So that Peleg, in whose days the earth was divided, and Nahor, the grandfather of Abraham, both died before Noah: the former being 239 years old, and the latter 148. And who cannot but see that they must have had a long and intimate acquaintance with Noah?

50. Reu died in the 2026th year of the world, Serug in the 2049th, Terah in the 2083rd, Arphaxad in the 2096th, Salah in the 2126th, Shem in the 2158th, Abraham in the 2183rd, and Eber in the 2187th, which was four years after Abraham's death. And Eber was the fourth from Noah.

51. Nahor, Abraham's brother, was 58 years old when Noah died, Terah 128, Serug 187, Reu 219, Eber 283, Salah 313, Arphaxad 348, 5 and Shem 448.

52. It appears from this account that Nahor, brother of Abraham, Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu, Peleg, Eber, Salah, Arphaxad, Shem, and Noah, all lived on the earth at the same time. Abraham was 18 years old when Reu died, 41 when Serug and his brother Nahor died, 75 when Terah died, 88 when Arphaxad died, 118 when Salah died, 150 when Shem died, and that Eber lived four years after Abraham's death. Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, Eber, Reu, Serug, Terah, and Nahor, brother of Abraham, and Abraham, lived at the same time. Nahor, brother of Abraham, Terah, Serug, Reu, Eber, Salah, Arphaxad, and Shem, were all acquainted with both Noah and Abraham.

53. We have now traced the chronology of the world from Adam to Abraham agreeable to the account given in our present Bible, and have clearly determined beyond the power of controversy that there was no difficulty in preserving the knowledge of God in the world from the creation of Adam, and the manifestation made to his immediate descendants, as set forth in the former part of this lecture. So the students in this class need not have any doubt in their minds on this subject, for they can easily see that it is impossible for it to be otherwise, but that the knowledge of the existence

of a God must have continued from father to son, as a matter of tradition at least. For we cannot suppose that a knowledge of this important fact could have existed in the mind of any of the before-mentioned individuals without their having made it known to their posterity.

54. We have now shown how it was by reason of the manifestation which God first made to our father Adam, when he stood in his presence and conversed with him face to face at the time of his creation, that the first thought ever existed in the mind of any individual that there was such a being as a God who had created and did uphold all things.

55. Let us here observe that after any members of the human family are made acquainted with the important fact that there is a God who has created and does uphold all things, the extent of their knowledge respecting his character and glory will depend upon their diligence and faithfulness in seeking after him, until, like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, they shall obtain faith in God and power with him to behold him face to face.

56. We have now clearly set forth how it is, and how it was, that God became an object of faith for rational beings, and also, upon what foundation the testimony was based which excited the inquiry and diligent search of the ancient Saints to seek after and obtain a knowledge of the glory of God. We have also seen that it was human testimony, and human testimony only, that excited this inquiry in their minds in the first instance. It was the credence they gave to the testimony of their fathers, it having aroused their minds to inquire after the knowledge of God. That inquiry frequently terminated, indeed always terminated when rightly pursued, in the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainty.

A Discussion of Lecture 2

Chosen Vessels and the Order of the Priesthood

(Joseph Fielding McConkie, in *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, 179-197)

It is of God we speak and how one comes to know him. The subject commands attention. There is no knowledge of greater importance. Surely there is no salvation to be found in the worship of false gods. Certainly no benefit can accrue from spurious or delusive doctrine. Even that which is innocently ignorant is without the power to bless. Sincerity, however pure it may be, cannot remit sins, raise the dead, or create a celestial kingdom. Salvation is not the child of darkness, it is not the child of stern and heartless justice, nor is it the child of indulgent and intemperate mercy. Christ addressed the issue in his intercessory prayer: *"And this is life eternal,"* he said, *"that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"* (John 17:3; emphasis added). The bloodline must be pure— eternal life can only be the offspring of eternal truth.

Anciently it was said that all roads led to Rome. It was equally true that there was only one entrance to the Holy of Holies. This is true in spiritual matters as well. There is one path to exaltation. What is it? How then are we to approach the true and living God? What is the system that the heavens have ordained whereby we are to obtain a sure knowledge of the plan of salvation? Such are the questions to which the Prophet responds in the second lecture on faith.

My purpose here is to follow Joseph Smith's lead. Having become a perfect witness of God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, the Prophet proceeds to show us the way whereby we too can share that same knowledge. How fitting it is that Joseph Smith himself is the crowning example of the principle that he taught in the School of the Elders. He is God's witness, and it is through his testimony that we are encouraged to seek God's divine presence. Such is the system. We learn of God from those who know him (LF 2:35). If there were none who knew of God, if we had no testimonies of him, we would have little inclination to seek after him. It is because of the testimony of one who knows him that we seek to know him. Initially, we are all dependent on someone else's testimony. Thus, we grow spiritually as we do physically; both body and spirit are born dependant, both require careful nurturing, both are intended to grow to a state of maturity and independence, and then both are expected to assume a parenting role to others that the process may begin anew. All who obtain a knowledge of saving truths, a knowledge of God and his plan for the salvation of his children, have that knowledge

because of the goodness and grace of others and therefore assume the obligation to extend that blessing to as many as they properly can.

Adam: Earth's First Apostle

It was not intended that man dwell in darkness. Long before the first of our race was placed upon the earth the Lord had given the command: "Let there be light" (Gen 1:3). Nor was it intended that Adam wander in doubt or uncertainty relative to the nature and purpose of his creation or to whom he was answerable for his conduct. "God conversed with him face to face: in his presence he was permitted to stand, and from his own mouth he was permitted to receive instruction. He heard his voice, walked before him, and gazed upon his glory, while intelligence burst upon his understanding and enabled him to give names to the vast assemblage of his Maker's works" (LF 2:18).

Obviously Adam's transgression did not deprive him of the knowledge with which he had previously been endowed (LF 2:19). Upon hearing God's voice, Adam, knowing his shame, sought to hide himself. Nor did the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of the Divine Presence bring an end to communion with their Father (LF 2:20). Their circumstance in the lone and dreary world immediately evoked the desire for divine assistance. Nor did their prayers go unheeded, for we read,

and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, *Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord?* And Adam said unto him: *I know not, save the Lord commanded me.* And then the angel spake, saying, *This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent, and call upon God, in the*

name of the Son forevermore. And in that day, the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son (Moses 5:4-9).

The quotation clearly establishes two points: first, the Fall did not cause Adam and Eve to lose their knowledge of God; and second, "no sooner was the plan of redemption revealed to man and he began to call upon God, than the Holy Spirit was given, bearing record of the Father and Son" (LF 2:25). How then did the family of Adam obtain a knowledge of God? Adam and Eve communicated that knowledge to them (LF 2:31). How did Adam and Eve obtain that knowledge? God manifested himself to them in the Garden and he continued to speak to them after their transgression and expulsion from Eden (LF 2:30). Thus it was for Adam and Eve, as special witnesses, to plant the first seeds of testimony in the hearts of their children and their children's children for many generations. Thus man learned to have faith in God after the Fall.

Adam and Eve establish the pattern to be followed in all subsequent dispensations and in all generations. This pattern is that the posterity of Adam in all ages first learn of God or have the seeds of faith planted in their hearts by special witnesses chosen of God for that purpose. It is for one man to plant the seed in the heart of another. Most properly it is for parents to plant the seed in the hearts of their children, for previous to the time that any of "Adam's posterity had obtained a manifestation of God to themselves, Adam, their common father, had testified unto them of the existence of God and of his eternal power and Godhead" (LF 2:35).

Thus the whole human family partakes of the fruit of the tree of faith because father Adam planted the tree. Each dispensation in its turn has had its special witness or witnesses—its "Adams"—but in all cases it has been "human testimony, and human testimony only," that motivated man's initial investigation concerning God. It has been the belief exercised in "the testimony of their fathers," that aroused their minds to "inquire after the knowledge of God. That inquiry frequently terminated, indeed always terminated when rightly pursued, in the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainty" (LF 2:56).

Though one may plant the seed in the heart of another, each must nourish the seed for himself. The Prophet said

that after any members of the human family are made acquainted with the important fact that there is a God who has created and does uphold all things, the extent of their knowledge respecting his character and glory will depend upon their

diligence and faithfulness in seeking after him, until, like Enoch, the brother of Jared. and Moses, they shall obtain faith in God and power with him to behold him face to face (LF 2:55).

Chosen Vessels

"Thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Moses 5:58; see LF 2:24, 30). Adam and his posterity had no reason to be in doubt as to the nature of that being in whom they were to exercise faith or as to what God expected of them. It is recorded that "all things were confirmed unto Adam, by an holy ordinance, and the Gospel preached, and a decree sent forth, that it should be in the world, until the end thereof" (Moses 5:58-59; LF 2:33-36). Further, we are told that the "same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also" (Moses 6:7). Adam, then, is the pattern; his dispensation the example; and the order or system of heaven is everlastingly the same.

Mormon testified,

Wherefore, by the ministering of angels, and by every word which proceeded forth out of the mouth of God, men began to exercise faith in Christ; and thus by faith, they did lay hold upon every good thing; and thus it was until the coming of Christ. And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they became the sons of God (Moroni 7:25-26).

As to the matter of who it is the angels appear to, Mormon explained that they manifest themselves to "chosen vessels," teaching them the "word of Christ," so that those chosen ones can in turn bear testimony to all others.

And the office of their ministry is to call men to repentance...by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men (Moroni 7:31-32).

Lecture 2 shows how Adam taught his descendants and they taught theirs, all the way to Abraham (LF 2:37-53). Let us look at our dispensation to find a similar example. With the appearance of that God known to Adam in Eden and his Only Begotten Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to the youthful Joseph Smith, a dispensation was born.

Though only a boy fourteen years of age, Joseph Smith then knew more about God and the truths of salvation than any other man on earth. He was earth's most competent witness on the nature and purposes of God. No other man could bear the testimony he bore, for he alone had stood in the divine presence. He was the vessel chosen in heaven from which the truths of salvation were again to be poured out to the generality of mankind.

When we speak of dispensations, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained, we speak

of those designated portions of the earth's history when the Lord, through one man, gives his word to the whole world and makes all the prophets, and all the seers, and all the administrators, and all the apostles of that period subject to, and exponents of, what came through that individual....Every prophet is a witness of Christ; every dispensation head is a revealer of Christ for his day; and every other prophet or apostle who comes is a reflection and an echo and an exponent of the dispensation head. All such come to echo to the world and to expound and unfold what God has revealed through the man who was appointed for that era to give his eternal word to the world. Such is the dispensation concept ("This Generation" 4-5).

Thus when we find the Lord saying to Joseph Smith, "this generation shall have my word through you" (D&C 5:10), he means our dispensation,¹ the period from the First Vision to the Second Coming. "Shall" means "must"; it is mandatory, it is the bold assertion that there are no options. You accept Joseph Smith's testimony or you are damned. "My word" means the "gospel of salvation; the word is the plan of salvation; the word is the mind and will and purposes of the Lord as pertaining to his children on earth; the word is all the truths and rights and powers and doctrines and principles that are needed by men so they can take the souls they possess and transform them into the kind of souls that can go where God and Christ are" (McConkie, "This Generation" 3).

Revelation is in no way limited only to the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was called to stand as the dispensation head. Our faith embraces "all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal" and the promise that "He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (A of F #9). Classic illustrations include Joseph F. Smith's vision of the redemption of the dead (D&C 138) and Spencer W. Kimball's revelation extending the privilege of the priesthood and the temple to those of all races (OD #2). Yet, it was for Joseph Smith to lay

the theological foundations of the Restored Church. He was the chosen vessel to whom the angels appeared to restore every key and power and authority necessary for men to work out their salvation and obtain their eternal inheritance. The revelations that came after the ministry of Joseph Smith, came to other chosen vessels to amplify, to expound, and to expand upon that which he received. No such revelations are ever given to those who have rejected the testimony of the dispensation head.

In our day the faithful Latter-day Saint stands in fast and testimony meeting and testifies that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith is the great prophet of the Restoration, that whoever is presiding over the Church at the time is his lawful successor, and that this is the only true and living Church on the face of the whole earth. Had we attended a testimony meeting in the days of Adam, Enoch, Noah, or any of the other gospel dispensations, the nature of the testimonies would have been essentially the same. In Adam's day, for example, we might have listened to a testimony to this effect: "I know that God lives, that he will yet have a Son in the flesh who will work out an atoning sacrifice and thereby redeem us from the effects of the Fall. I know that Adam is the chosen vessel of the Lord, the one called and ordained to stand at the head of the Church in this dispensation and reveal to us the laws and ordinances necessary for our salvation."

The Order of the Priesthood

Although the words "Priesthood" and "order" are not used in Lecture 2, it is clear that the transmittal of the gospel message from Adam to later generations was patterned and orderly (LF 2:43-44, 52-53). The gospel, that is the revealed knowledge of God and his plan for the salvation of his children, by its very nature bespeaks system and order. There is no disorder in the kingdom of heaven. God does not get confused, he does not forget, he is not the author of contention, his ways are not capricious, he does not act with irregularity, his kingdom is not one of disunity, disarray, or dishevelment. He is a God of order. Indeed, we have been told that "he hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons; and their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets" (D&C 88:42-43). He has done all this that man might be taught the gospel. Are we then to suppose that God forgot to ordain a system whereby this would be done—a system that would allow all men in all ages equal opportunity to hear the message of salvation and lay claim to the blessings of heaven?

Surely the system whereby the message of salvation is to be declared must be worthy of the principles it espouses. It must be a system of order, consistency, and unity. It must be a system of God's ordination, not man's. Pure water cannot be housed in impure vessels. What then is the system that God has ordained by which his gospel is to be taught? The scriptures, as we shall see, respond with plainness.

In response to the question of how the gospel is to be taught, let me cite two classic scriptural texts—one from the Book of Mormon, the other from the Doctrine and Covenants. Alma, in the conclusion of a marvelous discourse on how we obtain salvation, testified: "I have spoken unto you plainly that ye cannot err, or have spoken according to the commandments of God" (Alma 5:43). In that which preceded this verse, Alma had indeed spoken with considerable plainness. That those carrying the gospel message are to be plain and straightforward is obviously part of their commission, for Alma continues, "For I am called to speak after this manner, according to the holy order of God, which is in Christ Jesus" (Alma 5:44).

Note particularly the language Alma uses to identify his commission to preach—ie, "the holy order of God." This is a phrase that we read frequently in the Book of Mormon. It is interchangeable with the phrase "the order of his Son," and has reference to the Melchizedek Priesthood. The same phrase is used in the revelations of our dispensation as the Lord describes the nature of the priesthood to us. We also find it in the Old Testament to the extent that the purity of that record has been retained. Section 84 in the Doctrine and Covenants describes the Melchizedek Priesthood as "the holiest order of God," and then states that this holy priesthood is to administer the gospel (see 84:18-19). In the JST Genesis we read that Melchizedek, the very man after whom the priesthood was named, was first "approved of God" and then he was

ordained an high priest after the *order* of the covenant which God made with Enoch, it being after the *order of the Son of God*; which *order* came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God; and it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name (14:27-29; emphasis added).

In Section 107:3-4, we learn that anciently the priesthood

was called *the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God*. But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church... called that priesthood after Melchizedek" (emphasis in original).

Melchizedek's name was used because he "was such a great high priest" (v 2).

Now the thrust of all this is that the doctrine of "order" is inseparable from the functioning of the priesthood and that priesthood is inseparable from the declaration of the gospel. This is why we have Joseph Smith saying, "Where there is a prophet, a priest, or a righteous man unto whom God gives His oracles, there is the kingdom of God; and where the oracles of God are not, there the kingdom of God is not" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 272; hereafter *TPJS*). Now he didn't say where one believer is, there is the kingdom of God also. It takes more than the conviction of one individual to comply with the heavenly ordained order whereby the gospel is to be taught. Thus the very name of the priesthood (ie, the Holy Order) stands as a refutation of the protestant concept of "priesthood of all believers," which is the idea that to accept Christ grants one the authority to act in his name.

Returning to our text in Alma, we read the prophet saying, "I am commanded to stand and testify unto this people the things which have been spoken by our fathers concerning the things which are to come" (5:44). His testimony is that he had been "called...according to the holy order of God" and that he was "commanded" to declare certain things—specifically that which had been spoken by the fathers, that is the things recorded in the scriptures. "And this is not all," he added.

Do ye not suppose that I know of these things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety? Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. Behold, I have fasted and prayed many days that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me. And moreover, I say unto you that it has thus been revealed unto me, that the words which have been spoken by our fathers are true, even so according to the spirit of prophecy which is in me, which is also by the manifestation of the Spirit of God. I say unto you, that I know of myself that

whatsoever I shall say unto you, concerning that which is to come, is true (Alma 5:45-48).

Alma then testifies about the coming of Christ:

And now I say unto you that this is the order after which I am called, yea, to preach unto my beloved brethren, yea, and every one that dwelleth in the land; yea, to preach unto all, both old and young, both bond and free; yea, I say unto you the aged, and also the middle aged, and the rising generation; yea, to cry unto them that they must repent and be born again (Alma 5:49).

In summary, Alma did not assume the right to preach; rather he was called and ordained to the "holy order." With that ordination came the commandment to preach with plainness. That which he preached was that which he learned from the testimony of the fathers—that is, the witness of the scriptures and that which had been revealed to him through his study of them. Thus he had been confirming revelation about what the fathers had taught and additional revelation that enabled him to expound and expand upon that which the chosen vessels of times past had recorded. In a subsequent chapter we read that Alma

began to declare the word of God...according to the revelation of the truth of the word which had been spoken by his fathers, and according to the spirit of prophecy which was in him, according to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God...and the holy order by which he was called" (Alma 6:8; see also 8:4, 24).

Our second example is a revelation directed to a young elder by the name of Orson Hyde. It is important to note that this revelation was given some three and half years before Elder Hyde was called to the Apostleship. It announced that he was "called by his ordination [to the priesthood] to proclaim the everlasting gospel, by the Spirit of the living God." It further stated that he was to reason with those to whom he preached, "expounding all scriptures unto them" (D&C 68:1). Elder Hyde was then told to be an "ensample" (v 2), meaning he was to be the pattern or model for all others who held the same priesthood.

And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the

power of God unto salvation. Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants (D&C 68:3-5).

The revelation then directs "all the faithful elders of [the] church" to be of good cheer, to preach without fear, and to testify of the Christ, and it states that the promises given therein are directed to them (vv 6-7).

This is what Alma called the holy order—that is, when men have been properly called to the priesthood and commissioned to go forth to teach, they are to do so from the scriptures (or as Alma said, the things spoken by the fathers). Then with the Holy Ghost, they will be granted the power to expand the written word and to add scripture to scripture. The principle is succinctly stated in a revelation instructing the early missionaries of this dispensation: "And let them journey from thence preaching the word by the way, saying none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith" (D&C 52:9).

A modern Apostle articulated this principle in this very instructive language:

Those who preach by the power of the Holy Ghost use the scriptures as their basic source of knowledge and doctrine. They begin with what the Lord has before revealed to other inspired men. But it is the practice of the Lord to give added knowledge to those upon whose hearts the true meaning and intents of the scriptures have been impressed. Many great doctrinal revelations come to those who preach from the scriptures. When they are in tune with the Infinite, the Lord lets them know, first, the full and complete meaning of the scriptures they are expounding, and then he oftentimes expands their views so that new truths flood in upon them, and they learn added things that those who do not follow such a course can never know (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* 515-16).

We must keep all the commandments of God. "But," as Joseph Smith observed, "we cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them, and we cannot expect to know all, or more than we now know unless we comply with or keep those we have already received" (*TPJS* 256). If we are to receive more and thus know more, we must master and live by what we have been given. We reduce the realm of the unknown, not by wandering in it, but rather by feasting on and expanding our knowledge of that which God has already revealed. Hence, we have

the commandment to teach from the scriptures with the attendant promise that by so doing we will be granted understanding that goes beyond the written word. This is the reason the canon of scripture can never be complete. To argue for a closed canon is to defeat the very purpose of scripture, it is to contend with the Spirit of truth, and offend the Holy Ghost.

The Book of Mormon has been criticized because its prophets quote so frequently from Bible texts. Well of course they do. It is the holy order of God. It is the manner after which their prophets were commanded to preach. Only if they didn't do so could it be argued that the Book of Mormon was not authentic scripture. Those prophets whose teachings are recorded for us in the scriptures are our patterns; chief among them is Christ himself. He commenced his mortal ministry with a quotation from Isaiah (Luke 4:16-21), constantly quoted the scriptures in his teaching (Matthew 19:4; Mark 12:10), challenged his detractors to search the scriptures (John 5:39), and even in his appearances as a resurrected being continued to expound "in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27, 44-45).

While he was among the Nephites, the glorified Christ not only quoted Old World scriptures, including the words of Moses, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Micah, and Malachi, but he "expounded all the scriptures unto them which they had received" (3 Nephi 23:6). That is, he expounded their own Nephite scripture, then "expounded all the scriptures [both the New World and the Old World scripture] in one." And then he commanded them to "teach the things which he had expounded unto them" (3 Nephi 23:14). Thus the inspired pronouncements of the fathers kindle the spirit of revelation in the resurrected Christ who speaks new scripture to the Nephites. They in turn were to teach the words Christ has spoken to them. By so doing they came to know the spirit of revelation and were able to amplify what he taught. Thus the gospel goes forth in ever widening circles until that glorious day when it will fill the whole earth as the waters do the seas. This is the pattern, Christ is the classic example, and the manner in which the scriptural prophets teach illustrates it. When Amulek, for instance, wanted to support Alma's teaching that "the word is in Christ unto salvation," he noted that Alma had quoted the prophets Zenos, Zenock, and Moses, and then he said, "And now, behold, I will testify unto you of myself that these things are true" (Alma 34:5-8). Thus in compliance with the holy order he taught those things which had been manifest to him by the spirit of revelation. In our day we have the Doctrine and Covenants as the perfect illustration of this principle. In literally hundreds of instances the Doctrine and Covenants picks up a phrase from the Old or New Testament and

amplifies on it. Many of these revelations grow out of Joseph Smith's work on the Bible, which we now call the Joseph Smith translation. That is, as he labored over the meaning and intent of the words of the biblical fathers, the spirit of revelation unfolded that meaning to him in the form of additional scripture for our dispensation. Such is and ever has been the system—the holy order of God. This is the way it was with Adam and those who followed in his family down to Abraham as outlined in Lecture 2:35-53.

A Word of Caution

As we emphasize the fact that the gospel is to be taught by chosen vessels, there is a tendency to say that only one chosen vessel, the president of the Church, can interpret and expound scripture. Some contend that no one but the head of the Church should declare or write doctrine. Let us briefly consider the implications of such a notion. If, for instance, we are to state that no one but the president of the Church can write scripture or can speak to the whole Church, what are we to do with the New Testament? Of its twenty-seven books, it can be argued that only those written by Peter and John were written by "the prophet"; and it is highly doubtful that the writings of John and Peter were all done while they presided over the Church. Be that as it may, certainly Matthew, Mark, and Luke never presided over the Church; yet, we have accepted their writings as scripture. Paul, of course, is the major contributor to the New Testament, generally credited with fourteen of its books. No one argues that Paul presided over the Church. The discussion as far as Paul is concerned is whether or not he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. It seems evident that he was, but there is no clear proof even of this. As to James and Jude, according to the standard suggested, they obviously had no business writing "general" epistles either. And be there no mistake about the fact that they intended their writings to go to all the world. James addressed his epistle "to the twelve tribes...scattered abroad" (1:1); Jude addressed himself to all who have been "called," and "sanctified" (1:1).

This is not to suggest that there was no discipline in the meridian Church relative to who could write and preach. Certainly there was. The house of God in every dispensation must be a house of order. The writings of both Paul and John indicate that all within the faith, both men and women, were entitled to the spirit of prophecy and revelation—indeed, they were expected to be prophets or prophetesses (See 1 Cor 14:29-32; Rev 19:10). The commonality of prophets among the congregations of the meridian Saints is seen in the frequent warnings

against false prophets that would arise among their number (see Matt 7:15; 24:11; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1). Though it was believed to be within the providence of all to prophesy, some were specifically identified as holding the office of a prophet in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Church (see 1 Cor 12:28-29; Eph 2:19-20; 4:11).

Paul's doctrine was that when Saints met together they were all to share the fruits of their spiritual gifts. One could come having written an inspired hymn, another with doctrinal understanding, another speaking in tongues, another to interpret, and still another with the spirit of revelation. "All things to be done unto edifying" (1 Cor 14:26). "For ye may all prophesy one by one," Paul declared, "that all may learn, and all may be comforted" (v 31) that "all may be edified of all" (D&C 84:110), or as another modern revelation states, "that every man may have an equal privilege" (D&C 88:122). "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," Paul said (1 Cor 14:32). That is, the doctrine espoused by any who truly have the spirit of prophecy will be in harmony with that doctrine revealed through those whose office it is to officially establish the doctrines of the kingdom. By way of illustration, Paul's epistle is regarded as scripture. His office and calling as an Apostle granted him the right to speak as one having authority, as a chosen vessel, to the Corinthian Saints. In turn all the members of the church in Corinth were entitled to that same spirit of prophecy that they might edify one another. In doing so they would teach no doctrines that were out of harmony with the inspired counsel or holy writ they had already received. Still they neither individually nor collectively had the authority to write an epistle of instruction to Paul or to some other branch of the Church. Thus their spirit of prophecy and revelation was subject to the prophets, the chosen vessels, who had been called of the Lord to preside over them. Concluding his thought, Paul said, "Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues [nor, it might be added, forbid the expression of any other spiritual gift]. Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor 14:39-40).

As to our own day, there are many revelations relative to proclaiming the gospel and teaching one another the doctrines of the kingdom. The revealed word tells us that the gospel and the priesthood were restored so "every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world" (D&C 1:20). As already quoted, whatever is spoken by any elder when moved upon by the Holy Ghost is scripture and is the mind and will and voice of the Lord. Joseph Smith said that God would not reveal anything to him that he would not reveal to the Twelve, and to the least and last Saint as soon as he was able to bear it (TPJS 149). He further declared that even those holding office in the Aaronic

Priesthood were "to preach, teach, expound, exhort," with the scriptures by the spirit of revelation (D&C 20:46; 42:14).

To join the Church is, in a sense, to join a School of the Elders. To receive the priesthood is to accept the responsibility to teach and testify of those truths revealed to that vessel chosen as the instrument of restoration in the particular dispensation in which one lives. To those of our dispensation the Lord has said: "You shall declare the things which have been revealed to my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun." (D&C 31:4). Thus it is for us to teach the message of the restoration and to do it from those scriptures the Lord has given us for that purpose. We are without the right or the authority to preach any other gospel than that restored to us. Our commission is to "declare the word with truth and soberness," that is to faithfully declare the gospel as it has been revealed, without distortion of any sort to please either the speaker or the listener (see Alma 42:31).

Now just what does it mean to declare doctrine? Are we speaking of adding to, augmenting, and changing doctrinal concepts? Or, do we mean preaching and interpreting the doctrines now found in the standard works? Is the President of the Church the only General Authority who can declare doctrine in the sense that he alone writes doctrinal books; or is his position unique in that he alone can announce new doctrine and stand as the final arbiter upon differing doctrinal views? Certainly there is a difference between writing by wisdom and writing by commandment, as illustrated by the divine command to Oliver Cowdery: "If thou art led at any time by the Comforter to speak or teach, or at all times by the way of commandment unto the church, thou mayest do it. But thou shalt not write by way of commandment, but by wisdom" (D&C 28:4-5).

Surely it is not intended that only ordained prophets write all the inspired books, poetry, plays, or music in the Church. Neither is it intended that they give all the patriarchal blessings, deliver all the inspired addresses, teach all of the classes, or lead all of the choirs. Indeed, it may never be their lot to paint the great paintings, sculpt with inspiration, or design chapels and temples. The kingdom of God is to be built as the tabernacle in the wilderness or the temple in Jerusalem were, that is, by the revelation of God as it manifests itself through a prophet, and also a nation of artists and craftsmen. All who labor to build the house of the Lord, be it temporal or spiritual, be it ancient or modern, are to do so with the spirit of revelation. And it goes without saying, that as the greatest of temples awaits building, so the best of books, music, art, and all things that testify of our God still await the day of their earthly creation.

Conclusion

How then have men learned of God and what they must do to please him? From the days of Adam to our own, the only answer that can satisfy is revelation (LF 2:13). Unless God chooses to reveal himself as he did to Adam and has to his other chosen vessels through the centuries, men are forever without a sure and certain knowledge of him. They would therefore be unable to exercise faith in him for they can hardly exercise faith in uncertainty. Thus God has chosen to manifest himself and his plan for the salvation of his children to certain chosen vessels who stand as witnesses of him in all the world.

All but Adam first learned of God by human testimony (LF 2:30-31). Thereafter it is the right of every living soul through faith and obedience to obtain a personal manifestation of the verity of that testimony communicated to them. Thus they stand independent and become the source of first testimony to others (LF 2:34).

For our day, Joseph Smith was the chosen vessel through whom the dispensation was established and the pure knowledge of God was again restored to the earth. Those who listen in faith to his testimony come to know by the manifestation of the spirit of prophecy and revelation that he is a competent and reliable witness and that the authority of heaven rests with him. Having obtained such a testimony, members then become witnesses themselves and aid in taking the message of the restored gospel to the ends of the earth. The spirit of this divinely ordained system—outlined in Lecture 2 and known to us in the scriptures as the order of the priesthood—is beautifully captured in Parley P. Pratt's poetic tribute to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

He has organized the kingdom of God—
We will extend its dominion.
He has restored the fulness of the Gospel.
We will spread it abroad.
He has laid the foundation of Nauvoo.
We will build it up.
He has laid the foundation of the Temple.
We will bring up the topstone with shouting.
He has kindled a fire.
We will fan the flame.
He has kindled up the dawn of a day of glory.
bring it to its meridian splendor.
He was a "little one," and became a thousand.
We are a small one, and will become a strong nation.

He quarried the stone from the mountain.
We will cause it to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth (151-52).

NOTES

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- . "This Generation Shall Have My Word Through You." *Hearken, O Ye People*. Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1984. 3-15.
- Pratt, Parley P. "Proclamation." *Millennial Star* (Mar 1845) 5:149-53. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Comp. Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976.

Footnotes

1. The word "generation" is used with a wide range of meanings in the scriptures. For instance, it is used to describe an indeterminate period or age, as in the declaration that the priesthood is found in the Church "in all generations" (D&C 84:17), or in the Savior's statement that it is a "wicked and adulterous generation [that] seeketh after a sign" (Matthew 16:4). Similarly, it is used as a synonym for a dispensation, as in the statement that the Book of Mormon is given to prove that God will call prophets in this "age and generation, as well as in generations of old" (D&C 20:11). By contrast it is also used to describe more limited periods, for instance, the time necessary for children to grow to maturity and have offspring of their own (see (D&C 98:28).

The question in the present text is how it can confidently be asserted that "generation" is being used as a synonym for "dispensation," when it is used with a different meaning in the previous verse. Such an interpretation conforms to a significant number of other texts. For instance, a revelation given on the day the Church was organized directed its members to "give heed" to all of Joseph Smith's words with the promise that the gates of hell will have no power over those who do so and cause the heavens to shake for their good (D&C 21:6-7). Indeed, we are told that we are to declare the things revealed to Joseph Smith for they are "glad tidings of great joy unto this generation" (D&C 31:3), obviously meaning dispensation.

These events, coupled with His glorious Resurrection, completed the final bridge of our trilogy: **The Bridge of Obedience, the Bridge of Service, the Bridge of Prayer.**

Jesus, the Bridge Builder, spanned that vast chasm we call death. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”¹⁷ He did for us what we could not do for ourselves; hence, mankind can cross the bridges He built—into life eternal.

I close by paraphrasing the poem “The Bridge Builder”:

*“You have crossed the chasm, deep
and wide—
Why build you the bridge at the
eventide?”*

*“There followeth after me today
A vast throng whose feet must pass
this way.
This chasm that has been naught
to me
To that great throng may a pitfall be.
They too must cross in the twilight
dim;
Good friend, I am building the
bridge for them.”*

That we may have the wisdom and determination to cross the bridges the Savior built for each of us is my sincere prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. In James Dalton Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse* (1948), 342.
2. Matthew 1:21.
3. Luke 2:40.
4. Acts 10:38.
5. Matthew 11:28–30.
6. Matthew 4:4.
7. Matthew 4:7.
8. Matthew 4:10.
9. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
10. Duke University commencement speech, 10 May 1987.
11. Matthew 25:34–40.
12. *Richard Evans' Quote Book* (1971), 51.
13. D&C 19:38.
14. Luke 22:39–44.
15. Luke 23:34.
16. John 19:30.
17. 1 Corinthians 15:22.

The Grandeur of God

ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

*In word and in deed Jesus was trying to reveal
and make personal to us the true nature of His Father,
our Father in Heaven.*



Of the many magnificent purposes served in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, one great aspect of that mission often goes uncelebrated. His followers did not understand it fully at the time, and many in modern Christianity do not grasp it now, but the Savior Himself spoke of it repeatedly and emphatically. It is the grand truth that in all that Jesus came to say and do, including and especially in His atoning suffering and sacrifice, He was showing us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and

in deed Jesus was trying to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven.

He did this at least in part because then and now all of us need to know God more fully in order to love Him more deeply and obey Him more completely. As both Old and New Testaments declare, “The first of all the commandments is . . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first [and great] commandment.”¹

Little wonder then that the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “It is the first principle of the gospel to know for a certainty the character of God.” “I want you all to know Him,” he said, “and to be familiar with Him.”² We must have “a *correct* idea of his . . . perfections, and attributes,” an admiration for “the excellency of [His] character.”³ Thus the first phrase we utter in the declaration of our faith is, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father.”⁴ So, emphatically, did Jesus. Even as He acknowledged His own singular role in the divine plan, the Savior nevertheless insisted on this prayerful preamble: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God.”⁵

After generations of prophets had



tried to teach the family of man the will and the way of the Father, usually with little success, God in His ultimate effort to have us know Him, sent to earth His Only Begotten and perfect Son, created in His very likeness and image, to live and serve among mortals in the everyday rigors of life.

To come to earth with such a responsibility, to stand in place of Elohim—speaking as He would speak, judging and serving, loving and warning, forbearing and forgiving as He would do—this is a duty of such staggering proportions that you and I cannot comprehend such a thing. But in the loyalty and determination that would be characteristic of a divine child, Jesus could comprehend it and He did it. Then, when the praise and honor began to come, He humbly directed all adulation to the Father.

“The Father . . . doeth the works,” He said in earnest. “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”⁶ On another occasion He said: “I speak that which I

have seen with my Father.” “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me.” “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”⁷

I make my own heartfelt declaration of God our Eternal Father this morning because some in the contemporary world suffer from a distressing misconception of Him. Among these there is a tendency to feel distant from the Father, even estranged from Him, if they believe in Him at all. And if they do believe, many moderns say they might feel comfortable in the arms of Jesus, but they are uneasy contemplating the stern encounter of God.⁸ Through a misreading (and surely, in some cases, a mistranslation) of the Bible, these see God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son as operating very differently, this in spite of the fact that in both the Old Testament and the New, the Son of God is one and the same, acting as He always does under the direction of the Father, who is Himself the same “yesterday, today, and forever.”⁹

In reflecting on these misconceptions we realize that one of the remarkable contributions of the Book of Mormon is its seamless, perfectly consistent view of divinity throughout that majestic book. Here there is no Malachi-to-Matthew gap, no pause while we shift theological gears, no misreading the God who is urgently, lovingly, faithfully at work on every page of that record from its Old Testament beginning to its New Testament end. Yes, in an effort to give the world back its Bible and a correct view of Deity with it, what we have in the Book of Mormon is a uniform view of God in all His glory and goodness, all His richness and complexity—including and especially as again demonstrated through a personal appearance of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

How grateful we are for *all* the scriptures, especially the scriptures of the Restoration, that teach us the majesty of each member of the Godhead. How we would thrill, for example, if all the world would receive and embrace the view of the



Father so movingly described in the Pearl of Great Price.

There, in the midst of a grand vision of humankind which heaven opened to his view, Enoch, observing both the blessings and challenges of mortality, turns his gaze toward the Father and is stunned to see Him weeping. He says in wonder and amazement to this most powerful Being in the universe: “How is it that thou canst weep? . . . Thou art just [and] merciful and kind forever; . . . Peace . . . is the habitation of thy throne; and mercy shall go before thy face and have no end; how is it thou canst weep?”

Looking out on the events of almost any day, God replies: “Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands. . . . I gave unto them . . . [a] commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood. . . . Wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer?”¹⁰

That single, riveting scene does

more to teach the true nature of God than any theological treatise could ever convey. It also helps us understand much more emphatically that vivid moment in the Book of Mormon allegory of the olive tree, when after digging and dunging, watering and weeding, trimming, pruning, transplanting, and grafting, the great Lord of the vineyard throws down his spade and his pruning shears and weeps, crying out to any who would listen, “What could I have done more for my vineyard?”¹¹

What an indelible image of God’s engagement in our lives! What anguish in a parent when His children do not choose Him nor “the gospel of God” He sent!¹² How easy to love someone who so singularly loves us!

Of course the centuries-long drift away from belief in such a perfect and caring Father hasn’t been helped any by the man-made creeds of erring generations which describe God variously as unknown and unknowable—formless, passionless, elusive, ethereal, simultaneously everywhere and

nowhere at all. Certainly that does not describe the Being we behold through the eyes of these prophets. Nor does it match the living, breathing, embodied Jesus of Nazareth who was and is in “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his [Father].”¹³

In that sense Jesus did not come to improve God’s view of man nearly so much as He came to improve man’s view of God and to plead with them to love their Heavenly Father as He has always and will always love them. The plan of God, the power of God, the holiness of God, yes, even the anger and the judgment of God they had occasion to understand. But the love of God, the profound depth of His devotion to His children, they still did not fully know—until Christ came.

So feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness.”¹⁴ In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, “This is *God’s* compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own.” In the perfect Son’s manifestation of the perfect Father’s care, in Their mutual suffering and shared sorrow for the sins and heartaches of the rest of us, we see ultimate meaning in the declaration: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”¹⁵

I bear personal witness this day of a personal, living God, who knows our names, hears and answers prayers, and cherishes us eternally as children of His spirit. I testify that amidst the wondrously complex tasks inherent in the universe, He seeks our individual happiness and safety above all other godly concerns. We are created in His very image and likeness,¹⁶ and Jesus of

Nazareth, His Only Begotten Son in the flesh, came to earth as the perfect mortal manifestation of His grandeur. In addition to the witness of the ancients we also have the modern miracle of Palmyra, the appearance of God the Father and His Beloved Son, the Savior of the world, to the boy prophet Joseph Smith. I testify of that appearance, and in the words of that prophet I, too, declare: “Our heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in His mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive. . . . God does not look on sin with [the least degree of] allowance, but . . . the nearer we get to our heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs.”¹⁷

I bear witness of a God who has such shoulders. And in the spirit of the holy apostleship, I say as did one who held this office anciently: “Herein [then] is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another”¹⁸—and to love Him forever, I pray. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Mark 12:29–30; see also Matthew 22:37–38; Deuteronomy 6:5.
2. *History of the Church*, 6:305.
3. *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 38, 42.
4. Articles of Faith 1:1.
5. John 17:3.
6. John 14:10; 5:19.
7. John 8:38, 28; 6:38.
8. See William Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus* (1961), especially the chapter “Looking at the Cross” for a discussion of this modern tendency.
9. For example, 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 27:23; Moroni 10:19; D&C 20:12.
10. Moses 7:29–33, 37.
11. Jacob 5:41; see also vv. 47, 49.
12. Romans 1:1.
13. Hebrews 1:3; see also 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15.
14. *Lectures on Faith*, 42.
15. John 3:16–17.
16. See Genesis 1:26–27; Moses 2:26–27.
17. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 257, 240–41.
18. 1 John 4:10–11.

The Message of the Restoration

ELDER CHARLES DIDIER

Of the Presidency of the Seventy

The message of the Restoration is [an] invitation to know why the gospel of Jesus Christ and His true Church have been restored by a prophet in modern times.



Words are part of a vocabulary that we use to share feelings, knowledge, or information between people. Among these words, one is used to find the cause or the reason of a thing. When expressed, it is to satisfy our curiosity, to discover the unknown, or to receive answers to vital questions related to our mortal life. If not used or ignored, the thinking process ceases and ignorance prevails. So what is this essential word? Did you guess it? It is comprised of three letters; it is the word *why*.

Why is among the first and favorite words pronounced early by children

and especially teenagers. A favorite *why* of one of my grandchildren: “Why do I need to eat vegetables?” Then, as children grow, the *whys* start the exploration of feelings: “Why did Grandmother die?” Then it is the search for knowledge or for confirmation of responsibilities: “Why do I need to go to church or serve a mission?” “Why are we commanded to share the gospel with others?”

This last question is challenging! Missionary work is also the responsibility of every member—to sound the warning voice to their neighbors, in mildness and in meekness (see D&C 38:41). *Why?* So that others may receive the saving ordinances in the Church of Jesus Christ by inviting them to come unto Christ (see Moroni 10:32). The message of the Restoration is this invitation to know why the gospel of Jesus Christ and His true Church have been restored by a prophet in modern times.

How can you extend such an invitation to someone?

First, by declaring that God our Father lives, loves us, and that He is a God of revelation. How is that known? By revelation and the witness of prophets.

The time line of religious history starts with the Bible. It is a record of

iniquity, and the Zion of God should be prepared for the coming of the bridegroom. We should humble ourselves before the Lord and be in a position to be filled with the spirit of our calling, with the Holy Ghost, and with the revelations of Jesus Christ, that we may know the mind and will of God concerning us, and be prepared to magnify our calling and bring to pass righteousness, and be valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ to the end. . . . There never was a time when the work of God required a more faithful testimony and labor from the Apostles and Elders than to-day” (“An Epistle,” *Deseret News*, 24 Nov. 1886, 712). Make of each of your quorums a great service organization for the benefit of all your quorum members.

Now this word of warning from the scriptures:

“Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.

“He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand” (D&C 107:99–100).

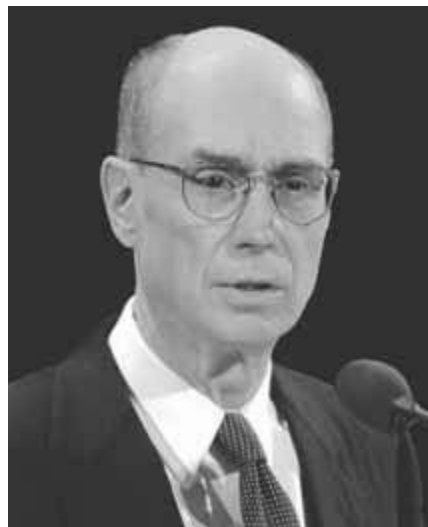
And so I say to you two Brethren who have joined us in our Quorum, and to all of you brethren who belong to the priesthood of God, may God bless each of us in our calls to serve. May our faith strengthen as we serve in righteousness, faithfully keeping the commandments. May our testimonies ever grow stronger as we seek to find the fountain of eternal truth. May the brotherhood that exists in our quorum be of comfort and strength and security as we pass through this mortal part of our existence. May the joy of gospel service ever abide in our hearts as we go forward to fulfill our duties and responsibilities as servants in our Father in Heaven’s kingdom, is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Faith and Keys

ELDER HENRY B. EYRING

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

We have to know by inspiration that the priesthood keys are held by those who lead and serve us. That requires the witness of the Spirit.



In a chapel far from Salt Lake City, in a place where a member of the Quorum of the Twelve rarely goes, a father approached me. He led his young son by the hand. As they reached me, he looked down at the boy, called him by name, and said, nodding his head towards me, “This is an Apostle.” I could tell by the sound of the father’s voice that he was hoping his son would feel more than that he was meeting a dignified visitor. He hoped that his son would feel a conviction that priesthood keys were on the earth in the Lord’s Church. His son will need that conviction again and again. He will need it when he opens a letter from some future prophet he has never seen calling him to a mission. He will need it when he buries a child or a wife or a parent. He

will need it for courage to follow direction to serve. He will need it for the comfort that comes from trusting a sealing power that binds forever.

Missionaries will invite investigators to meet a bishop or branch president today with the same intent. They hope that the investigators will feel far more than that they have met a nice man or even a great man. They will be praying that the investigators will feel a conviction that this apparently ordinary man holds priesthood keys in the Lord’s Church. The investigators will need that conviction when they go into the waters of baptism. They will need it when they pay tithing. They will need that conviction when the bishop is inspired to give them a calling. They will need it when they see him presiding in the sacrament meeting and when he nourishes them by teaching the gospel.

And so missionaries and fathers, and all of us who serve others in the true Church, want to help those we love gain a lasting testimony that the keys of the priesthood are held by the Lord’s servants in His Church. I speak today to encourage all who labor to instill and strengthen that testimony.

It will help to recognize some things. First, God is persistent and generous in offering the blessings of priesthood power to His children. Second, His children must choose for themselves to qualify for and receive those blessings. And third, Satan, the

enemy of righteousness, has from the beginning tried to undermine the faith necessary to receive the blessings made possible by priesthood power.

I learned about those realities from a wise teacher nearly 25 years ago. I spoke in an ancient theater in Ephesus. Bright sunlight flooded the ground where the Apostle Paul had stood to preach. My topic was Paul, the Apostle called of God.

The audience was hundreds of Latter-day Saints. They were arranged on the rows of stone benches the Ephesians sat upon more than a millennium before. Among them were two living Apostles, Elder Mark E. Petersen and Elder James E. Faust.

As you can imagine, I had prepared carefully. I had read the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, both those of Paul and his fellow Apostles. I had read and pondered Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians.

I tried my best to honor Paul and his office. After the talk, a number of people said kind things. Both of the living Apostles were generous in their comments. But later, Elder Faust took me aside and, with a smile and with softness in his voice, said, "That was a good talk. But you left out the most important thing you could have said."

I asked him what that was. Weeks later he consented to tell me. His answer has been teaching me ever since.

He said that I could have told the people that if the Saints who heard Paul had possessed a testimony of the value and the power of the keys he held, perhaps the Apostles would not have had to be taken from the earth.

That sent me back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. I could see that Paul wanted the people to feel the value of the chain of priesthood keys reaching from the Lord through His Apostles to them, the members of the Lord's Church. Paul was trying to build a testimony of those keys.



Paul testified to the Ephesians that Christ was at the head of His Church. And he taught that the Savior built His Church on a foundation of apostles and prophets who hold all the keys of the priesthood.

Despite the clarity and the power of his teaching and his example, Paul knew that an apostasy would come. He knew that apostles and prophets would be taken from the earth. And he knew that they would, in some great, future day, be restored. He wrote of that time to the Ephesians, speaking of what the Lord would do: "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather

together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him."¹

Paul looked forward to the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith, when the heavens would be opened again. It happened. John the Baptist came and conferred on mortals the priesthood of Aaron and the keys of the ministering of angels and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.

Ancient apostles and prophets returned and conferred upon Joseph the keys they held in mortality. Mortal men were ordained to the holy apostleship in February of 1835. Priesthood

keys were given to the Twelve Apostles in the latter part of March 1844.

The Prophet Joseph Smith knew that his death was imminent. He knew that the precious priesthood keys and the apostleship must not be and would not be lost again.

One of the Apostles, Wilford Woodruff, left us this account of what happened in Nauvoo as the Prophet spoke to the Twelve:

“On that occasion the Prophet Joseph rose up and said to us: ‘Brethren, I have desired to live to see this temple built. I shall never live to see it, but you will. I have sealed upon your heads all the keys of the kingdom of God. I have sealed upon you every key, power, principle that the God of heaven has revealed to me. Now, no matter where I may go or what I may do, the kingdom rests upon you.’”²

Every prophet that followed Joseph, from Brigham Young to President Hinckley, has held and exercised those keys and has held the sacred apostleship.

But just as in the time of Paul, the power of those priesthood keys for us requires our faith. We have to know by inspiration that the priesthood keys are held by those who lead and serve us. That requires the witness of the Spirit.

And that depends upon our testimony that Jesus is the Christ and that He lives and leads His Church. We must also know for ourselves that the Lord restored His Church and the priesthood keys through the Prophet Joseph Smith. And we must have an assurance through the Holy Ghost, refreshed often, that those keys have been passed without interruption to the living prophet and that the Lord blesses and directs His people through the line of priesthood keys which reaches down through presidents of stakes and of districts and through bishops and branch presidents to us, wherever we are and no

matter how far from the prophet and the apostles.

That is not easy today. It was not easy in the days of Paul. It has always been hard to recognize in fallible human beings the authorized servants of God. Paul must have seemed an ordinary man to many. Joseph Smith’s cheerful disposition was seen by some as not fitting their expectations for a prophet of God.

Satan will always work on the Saints of God to undermine their faith in priesthood keys. One way he does it is to point out the humanity of those who hold them. He can in that way weaken our testimony and so cut us loose from the line of keys by which the Lord ties us to Him and can take us and our families home to Him and to our Heavenly Father.

Satan succeeded in undermining the testimony of men who had, with Joseph Smith, seen the heavens opened and heard the voices of angels. The evidence of their physical eyes and ears was not enough when they no longer could feel the testimony that the priesthood keys were still in place with Joseph.

The warning for us is plain. If we look for human frailty in humans, we will always find it. When we focus on finding the frailties of those who hold priesthood keys, we run risks for ourselves. When we speak or write to others of such frailties, we put them at risk.

We live in a world where finding fault in others seems to be the favorite blood sport. It has long been the basis of political campaign strategy. It is the theme of much television programming across the world. It sells newspapers. Whenever we meet anyone, our first, almost unconscious reaction may be to look for imperfections.

To keep ourselves grounded in the Lord’s Church, we can and must train our eyes to recognize the power of the Lord in the service of those He

has called. We must be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. And we need to pray for the Holy Ghost to help us know that men who lead us hold this power. For me, such prayers are most often answered when I am fully engaged in the Lord’s service myself.

It happened in the aftermath of a disaster. A dam in Idaho broke on a June day. A wall of water struck the communities below it. Thousands of people, mostly Latter-day Saints, fled their homes to go to safety.

I was there as the people faced the terrible task of recovery. I saw the stake president gather his bishops to lead the people. We were cut off in those first days from any supervision from outside. I was in the meeting of local leaders when a director from the federal disaster agency arrived.

He tried to take over the meeting. With great force he began to list the things that he said needed to be done. As he read aloud each item, the stake president, who was sitting near him, said quietly, “We’ve already done that.” After that went on for five or ten minutes, the federal official grew silent and sat down. He listened quietly as the stake president took reports from the bishops and gave directions.

For the meeting the next day, the federal disaster official arrived early. He sat toward the back. The stake president began the meeting. He took more reports, and he gave instructions. After a few minutes, the federal official, who had come with all the authority and resources of his great agency, said, “President Ricks, what would you like us to do?”

He recognized power. I saw more. I recognized the evidence of keys and the faith that unlocks their power.

It happened again when a man and his wife arrived back in town just after the dam had broken. They didn’t go to their home. They went first to find their bishop. He was covered in mud,

leading his members in mucking out homes. They asked what he would have them do.

They went to work. Much later, they took a few minutes to check on their own house. It was gone. So they went back to work wherever their bishop asked them to help. They knew where to go to get the Lord's direction for service in His Church.

I learned then as I have since how the stakes of Zion become places of safety. They become like a great family, united, caring for each other. It comes by simple faith.

By faith they are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost. As they continue to keep the commandments, that gift becomes constant. They can recognize spiritual things. It becomes easier to see the power of God working through the common people God calls to serve and lead them. Hearts are softened. Strangers become fellow

citizens in the Lord's kingdom, united in loving bonds.

That happy condition will not last without a constant renewal of faith. The bishop we love will be released, as will the stake president. The Apostles we followed in faith will be taken home to the God who called them.

With those continual changes comes a great opportunity. We can act to qualify for the revelation that allows us to know that the keys are being passed by God from one person to another. We can seek to have that experience again and again. And we must, in order to receive the blessings God has for us and wants us to offer to others.

The answer to your prayer is not likely to be as dramatic as it was when some saw Brigham Young, as he spoke, take on the appearance of the martyred Prophet Joseph. But it can be as sure. And with that

spiritual assurance will come peace and power. You will know again that this is the Lord's true and living Church, that He leads it through His ordained servants, and that He cares about us.

If enough of us exercise that faith and receive those assurances, God will lift up those who lead us and so bless our lives and our families. We will become what Paul so wanted for those he served: "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."³

I testify, I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that He lives. I know that He is the rock upon which this, His true Church, stands. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Ephesians 1:10.
2. "The Keys of the Kingdom," *Liabona*, Apr. 2004, 42; *Ensign*, Apr. 2004, 30.
3. Ephesians 2:20.



Lecture 3

ON FAITH

1. In the second lecture we showed how the knowledge of the existence of God came into the world and by what means the first thoughts were suggested to the minds of men that such a being did actually exist. We also showed that it was by reason of the knowledge of his existence that there was a foundation laid for the exercise of faith in him as the only being in whom faith could center for life and salvation. For faith could not center in a being of whose existence we had no idea, because the idea of his existence, in the first instance, is essential to the exercise of faith in him. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (or one sent to tell them?) (Rom 10:14). So, then, faith comes by hearing the word of God.

2. Let us here observe that three things are necessary for any rational and intelligent being to exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

3. First, the idea that he actually exists;

4. Secondly, a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes;

5. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which one is pursuing is according to His will. For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive. But with this understanding, it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness unto the praise and glory of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

6. Having previously shown the way that both the idea and the fact of his existence came into the world, we shall proceed to examine his character, perfections, and attributes, so this class may see not only the just grounds which they have to exercise faith in him for life and salvation, but the reasons that all the world, also, may have to exercise faith in him, the Father of all living, as far as the idea of his existence extends.

7. As we are indebted for the idea of his existence to a revelation which God made of himself to his creatures, in the first instance, so in like manner we are indebted to the revelations which he has given to us for a correct understanding of his character, perfections, and attributes. Because without the revelations which he has given to us, no man by searching could find out God (see Job 11:7-9). "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart

12. From the foregoing testimonies, we learn the following things respecting the character of God:

of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor 2:9-11).

8. Having said so much, we proceed to examine the character which the revelations give of God.

9. Moses gives us the following account in Exodus: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex 34:6). "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy" (Ps 103:6-8). "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Ps 103:17-18). "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Ps 90:2). "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail" (Heb 1:10-12). "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal 3:6).

10. "For God doth not walk in crooked paths; neither doth he turn to the right hand nor the left; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said: therefore his paths are strait and his course is one eternal round" (Book of Commandments 2:1; D&C 3:2). "Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday and forever" (Book of Commandments 37:1; D&C 35:1).

11. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent" (Num 23:19). "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8). "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

13. First, he was God before the world was created, and the same God he was after it was created.

14. Secondly, he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, and he was so from everlasting, and will be to everlasting.

15. Thirdly, he does not change, neither does he vary; but he is the same from everlasting to everlasting, being the same yesterday, today, and forever; and his course is one eternal round, without variation.

16. Fourthly, he is a God of truth and cannot lie.

17. Fifthly, he is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him.

18. Sixthly, he is love.

19. An acquaintance with these attributes in the divine character is essential so the faith of any rational being can center in him for life and salvation. For if, in the first instance, he did not believe him to be God, that is, the creator and upholder of all things, he could not center his faith in him for life and salvation, for fear there should be a greater one than he who would thwart all his plans, and he, like the gods of the heathen, would be unable to fulfil his promises. But seeing he is God over all, from everlasting to everlasting, the creator and upholder of all things, no such fear can exist in the minds of those who put their trust in him, so that in this respect their faith can be unwavering.

20. But secondly, unless God was merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness, such is the weakness of human nature and so great the frailties and imperfections of men that unless they believed that these excellencies existed in the divine character, they could not have the faith necessary to salvation. For doubt would take the place of faith, and those who know their weakness and liability to sin would be in constant doubt of salvation if it were not for the idea which they have of the excellency of the character of God, that he is slow to anger, long-suffering, and of a forgiving disposition, and does forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin. Having an idea of these facts does away with doubt and makes faith exceedingly strong.

21. But in order to have faith in him, it is equally as necessary that men should have the idea that he is a God who does not change as it is to have the idea that he is gracious and long-suffering. For without the idea of unchangeableness in the character of the Deity, doubt would take the place of faith. But with the idea that he does not change, faith lays hold upon the excellencies in his character with unshaken confidence, believing he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that his course is one eternal round.

22. And again, the idea that he is a God of truth and cannot lie is equally as necessary to the exercise of faith in him as is the idea of his unchangeableness. For without the idea that he is a God of truth and cannot lie, men could not have the confidence in his word necessary to exercise faith in him. But having the idea that he is not a man who can lie gives power to the minds of men to exercise faith in him.

23. But it is also necessary that men should have an idea that God is no respecter of persons, for with the idea of all the other excellencies in his character, and this one wanting, men could not exercise faith in him. Because if he were a respecter of persons, they could not tell what their privileges were, nor how far they were authorized to exercise faith in him, or whether they were authorized to do it at all. All must be confusion. But no sooner are the minds of men made acquainted with the truth on this point, that he is no respecter of persons, than they see that they have authority by faith to lay hold on eternal life, the richest boon of heaven, because God is no respecter of persons, and every man in every nation has an equal privilege.

24. And lastly, but not less important to the exercise of faith in God, is the idea that he is love. For without this one characteristic to influence all the other excellencies in his character, they could not have such powerful dominion over the minds of men. But when the idea is planted in the mind that he is love, who cannot see the just ground that men of every nation, kindred, and tongue have to exercise faith in God so as to obtain eternal life?

25. From the above description of the character of the Deity which is given him in the revelations to men, there is a sure foundation for the exercise of faith in him among every people, nation, and kindred, from age to age, and from generation to generation.

26. Let us here observe that the foregoing is the character which is given of God in his revelations to the Former-day Saints, and it is also the character which is given of him in his revelations to the Latter-day Saints. So the Saints of former days and those of latter days are both alike in this respect: the Latter-day Saints have as good grounds to exercise faith in God as the Former-day Saints had, because the same character is given of him to both.

Lecture 4

ON FAITH

1. We showed in the third lecture that it is necessary to have correct ideas of the character of God to exercise faith in him unto life and salvation, and that without correct ideas of his character, the minds of men could not have sufficient power with God to exercise the faith necessary to enjoy eternal life. But having correct ideas of his character lays a foundation, as far as his character is concerned, for the exercise of faith so as to enjoy the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Jesus Christ, even that of eternal glory. We shall now proceed to show the connection between having correct ideas of the attributes of God and exercising faith in him unto eternal life.

2. Let us here observe that the real design which the God of heaven had in view in making the human family acquainted with his attributes was that they might be enabled to exercise faith in him through the idea of the existence of his attributes, and through exercising faith in him, might obtain eternal life. For without the idea of the existence of the attributes which belong to God, the minds of men could not have power to exercise faith in him so as to lay hold upon eternal life. The God of heaven, understanding most perfectly the constitution of human nature and the weakness of men, knew what was necessary to be revealed and what ideas needed to be planted in their minds to enable them to exercise faith in him unto eternal life.

3. Having said so much, we shall proceed to examine the attributes of God as set forth in his revelations to the human family and to show how necessary having correct ideas of his attributes is to enable men to exercise faith in him. For without these ideas being planted in the minds of men, it would be out of the power of any person or persons to exercise faith in God so as to obtain eternal life. Consequently, the divine communications made to men, in the first instance, were designed to establish in their minds the ideas necessary to enable them to exercise faith in God, and through this means to be partakers of his glory.

4. We have the following account of his attributes in the revelations which he has given to the human family:

5. First, knowledge. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa 46:9-10; emphasis in 1835).

6. Secondly, faith or power. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb 11:3). "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen 1:1). "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand. . . . For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (Isa 14:24, 27).

7. Thirdly, justice. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne" (Ps 89:14). "Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? . . . have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour" (Isa 45:21). "The just Lord is in the midst thereof" (Zeph 3:5). "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation" (Zech 9:9).

8. Fourthly, judgment. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne" (Ps 89:14). "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deut 32:4). "But the Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment" (Ps 9:7). "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth" (Ps 9:16).

9. Fifthly, mercy. "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Ps 89:14). "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious" (Ex 34:6). "But thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful" (Neh 9:17).

10. And sixthly, truth. "Mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Ps 89:14). "Longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex 34:6). "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just

and right is he" (Deut 32:4). "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth" (Ps 31:5).

11. A little reflection shows that the idea of the existence of these attributes in the Deity is necessary to enable any rational being to exercise faith in him. For without the idea of the existence of these attributes in the Deity, men could not exercise faith in him for life and salvation, seeing that without the knowledge of all things God would not be able to save any portion of his creatures. For it is the knowledge which he has of all things from the beginning to the end that enables him to give that understanding to his creatures by which they are made partakers of eternal life. And if it were not for the idea existing in the minds of men that God has all knowledge, it would be impossible for them to exercise faith in him.

12. And it is not less necessary that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute power in the Deity. For unless God had power over all things, and was able by his power to control all things and thereby deliver his creatures who put their trust in him from the power of all beings that might seek their destruction, whether in heaven, on earth, or in hell, men could not be saved. But with the idea of the existence of this attribute planted in the mind, men who put their trust in God feel as though they have nothing to fear, believing that he has power to save all who come to him to the very uttermost.

13. It is also necessary that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in God in order to exercise faith in him unto life and salvation. For without the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in the Deity, men could not have confidence sufficient to place themselves under his guidance and direction. For they would be filled with fear and doubt lest the Judge of all the earth would not do right, and thus fear or doubt existing in the mind would preclude the possibility of the exercise of faith in him for life and salvation. But when the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in the Deity is fairly planted in the mind, it leaves no room for doubt to get into the heart; and the mind is enabled to cast itself upon the Almighty without fear, and without doubt, and with the most unshaken confidence, believing that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

14. It is also of equal importance that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute judgment in God, so they may exercise faith in him for life and salvation. For without the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity, it would be impossible for men to exercise faith in him for life and salvation, seeing that it is through the exercise of this attribute that the faithful in Christ Jesus are delivered out of the hands of those who seek their destruction. For if God were not to come out in swift judgment against the workers of iniquity and the powers of darkness, his saints could not be saved; for it is by judgment that the Lord delivers his saints out of the hands of all their enemies and those who reject the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But no sooner is the idea of the existence of this attribute planted in the minds of men than it gives power to their minds for the exercise of faith and confidence in God. They are thus enabled by faith to lay hold on the promises which are set before them and to wade through all the tribulations and afflictions to which they are subjected by reason of the persecution from those who know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They believe that in due time the Lord will come out in swift judgment against their enemies, who shall be cut off from before him, and that in his own due time he will bear them off conquerors, and more than conquerors, in all things.

15. And again, it is equally important that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute mercy in the Deity in order to exercise faith in him for life and salvation. For without the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity, the spirits of the Saints would faint in the midst of the tribulations, afflictions, and persecutions which they have to endure for righteousness' sake. But when the idea of the existence of this attribute is once established in the mind, it gives life and energy to the spirit of the Saints, who believe then that the mercy of God will be poured out upon them in the midst of their afflictions, and that he will be compassionate to them in their sufferings, and that the mercy of God will lay hold of them and secure them in the arms of his love, so that they will receive a full reward for all their sufferings.

16. And lastly, but not less important to the exercise of faith in God, is the idea of the existence of the attribute truth in him. For without the idea of the existence of this attribute, the mind of man could have nothing upon which it could rest with

certainty: all would be confusion and doubt. But with the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity in the mind, all the teachings, instructions, promises, and blessings become realities. And the mind is enabled to lay hold of them with certainty and confidence, believing that these things and all that the Lord has said shall be fulfilled in their time, and that all the cursings, denunciations, and judgments pronounced upon the heads of the unrighteous will also be executed in the due time of the Lord. By reason of the truth and veracity of him, the mind beholds its deliverance and salvation as being certain.

17. Let the mind once reflect sincerely and candidly upon the ideas of the existence of the before-mentioned attributes in the Deity, and it will see that there is a sure foundation laid for the exercise of faith in him for life and salvation as far as his attributes are concerned. For inasmuch as God possesses the attribute knowledge, he can make all things known to his saints that are necessary for their salvation. And as he possesses the attribute power, he is able thereby to deliver them from the power of all enemies. Seeing, also, that justice is an attribute of the Deity, he will deal with them upon the principles of righteousness and equity, and will grant them a just reward for all their afflictions and sufferings for the truth's sake. And as judgment is an attribute of the Deity, also, his saints can have the most unshaken confidence that, in due time, they will obtain a perfect deliverance out of the hands of all their enemies and a complete victory over all those who have sought their hurt and destruction. And as mercy is also an attribute of the Deity, his saints can have confidence that it will be exercised towards them, and through the exercise of that attribute towards them comfort and consolation will be administered unto them abundantly, amid all their afflictions and tribulations. Lastly, realizing that truth is an attribute of the Deity, the mind is led to rejoice amid all its trials and temptations in hope of that glory which is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. It will do this in view of that crown which is to be placed upon the heads of the Saints in the day when the Lord shall distribute rewards unto them, and in prospect of that eternal weight of glory which the Lord has promised to bestow upon them when he shall bring them in the midst of his throne to dwell in his presence eternally.

18. In view, then, of the existence of these attributes, the faith of the Saints can become exceedingly strong, abounding in righteousness unto the praise and glory of God. And it can exert its mighty influence in searching after wisdom and understanding, until it has obtained a knowledge of all things that pertain to life and salvation.

19. Such, then, is the foundation which is laid for the exercise of faith in him for life and salvation through the revelation of the attributes of God. And seeing that these attributes of the Deity are unchangeable—being the same yesterday, today, and forever—gives to the minds of the Latter-day Saints the same power and authority to exercise faith in God which the Former-day Saints had. All the Saints, in this respect, have been, are, and will be alike until the end of time; for God never changes. Therefore, his attributes and character remain forever the same. And as it is through the revelation of these attributes that a foundation is laid for the exercise of faith in God unto life and salvation, the foundation for the exercise of faith, therefore, was, is, and ever will be, the same. Consequently all men have had and will have an equal privilege.

Faith and the Nature of God

(Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 171-184)

The Character of God

What is the nature and character of God? What kind and sort of being is he? What is his position, rank, and status, and as the Supreme Being, what qualities does he possess? His character as set forth in the revealed word is summarized by the Prophet under six headings:

1. *God is an eternal being.*

"He was God before the world was created, and the same God that he was after it was created." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:17.) "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Psalm 90:2.)

This attribute of the divine character is the basic foundation upon which faith rests, "for if [man] did not, in the first instance, believe him to be God, that is, the Creator and upholder of all things, he could not center his faith in him for life and salvation, for fear there should be greater than he who would thwart all his plans, and he, like the gods of the heathen, would be unable to fulfill his promises; but seeing he is God over all, from everlasting to everlasting, the Creator and upholder of all things, no such fear can exist in the minds of those who put their trust in him, so that in this respect their faith can be without wavering." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:19.)

2. *God is merciful and gracious.*

Joseph Smith taught: "He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness, and . . . he was so from everlasting, and will be to everlasting." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:14.) To Moses Deity said of himself: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and [page 172] truth." (Exodus 34:6.) In the Psalmic word we read: "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. . . . The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. . . . The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." (Psalm 103:6, 8, 17-18.)

The relationship of these elements in the character of Deity to faith and the salvation that flows therefrom is set forth in these words: "Unless he was merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness, such is the weakness of human nature, and so great the frailties and imperfections of men, that unless they believed that these excellencies existed in the divine character, the faith necessary to salvation could not exist; for doubt would take the place of faith, and those who know their weakness and liability to sin would be in constant doubt of salvation if it were not for the idea which they have of the excellency of the character of God, that he is slow to anger and long-suffering, and of a forgiving disposition, and does forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin. An idea of these facts does

away doubt, and makes faith exceedingly strong." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:20.)

3. *God is an unchangeable being.*

The teaching proclaimed in the School of the Prophets was: "He changes not, neither is there variableness with him; but . . . he is the same from everlasting to everlasting, being the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and . . . his course is one eternal round, without variation." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:15.) To this, the concurring voice of scripture attests: "God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round." (D&C 3:2.) The scriptures acclaim that he is a being "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17) and that his "course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and forever" (D&C 35:1).

From these basic gospel truisms, our prophet-prepared source material concludes: "It is equally as necessary that men should have the idea that he is a God who changes not, in [page 173] order to have faith in him, as it is to have the idea that he is gracious and long-suffering; for without the idea of unchangeableness in the character of the Deity, doubt would take the place of faith. But with the idea that he changes not, faith lays hold upon the excellencies in his character with unshaken confidence, believing he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, and that his course is one eternal round." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:21.)

4. *God is truthful.*

What a simple yet wondrous truth this is. "God is not a man, that he should lie." (Numbers 23:19.) "He is a God of truth and cannot lie." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:22.) God tells the truth! "Thy word," O God, "is truth." (John 17:17.) And from this basic verity comes this conclusion relative to faith: "The idea that he is a God of truth and cannot lie, is equally as necessary to the exercise of faith in him as the idea of his unchangeableness. For without the idea that he was a God of truth and could not lie, the confidence necessary to be placed in his word in order to the exercise of faith in him could not exist. But having the idea that he is not man, that he cannot lie, it gives power to the minds of men to exercise faith in him." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:22.)

5. *God is impartial.*

"He is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:17.) These words are but a restatement of what Peter said in the house of Cornelius. (Acts 10:34-35.) And Paul said simply: "There is no respect of persons with God." (Romans 2:11.)

As to gaining faith in God, the conclusion is: In addition to all other aspects of his character, "it is also necessary that men should have an idea that he is no respecter of persons, for with the idea of all the other excellencies in his character, and this one wanting, men could not exercise faith in him; because if he were a respecter of

persons, they could not tell what their privileges were, nor how far they were authorized to exercise faith in him, or whether they were authorized to do it at all, but all must be confusion; but no sooner are the minds of men made acquainted with the truth on this point, that he is no respecter of persons, than they see that they have authority by [page 174] faith to lay hold on eternal life, the richest boon of heaven, because God is no respecter of persons, and that every man in every nation has an equal privilege." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:23.)

6. *God is a loving being.*

"He is love." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:18.) As to this attribute in his character, John says: "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John 4:8.)

And in setting forth the relationship between this element of his character and the acquiring of faith in Deity, the Prophet taught: "Not less important to the exercise of faith in God," than all the other attributes in his character, "is the idea that he is love; for with all the other excellencies in his character, without this one to influence them, they could not have such powerful dominion over the minds of men; but when the idea is planted in the mind that he is love, who cannot see the just ground that men of every nation, kindred, and tongue have to exercise faith in God so as to obtain eternal life?" (*Lectures on Faith* 3:24.)

Having thus summarized the teachings of God's greatest latter-day prophet relative to the character of God, we need only set forth his general conclusion with reference thereto. It is: "An acquaintance with these attributes in the divine character, is essentially necessary, in order that the faith of any rational being can center in him for life and salvation." And further: A knowledge "of the character of the Deity," as thus set forth, "is a sure foundation for the exercise of faith in him among every people, nation, and kindred, from age to age, and from generation to generation." (*Lectures on Faith* 3:19, 25.)

The Attributes of God

The character of God and his attributes are all interwoven to form one grand tapestry. His attributes are the qualities of his character. They are the elements of character that are attributed or ascribed to him in the revealed word; they are the elements that are inherent in his person, as, for instance, that he is merciful.

After teaching the true doctrine as to the character of God, and by way of introduction to his teachings about the attributes of Deity, the Prophet Joseph Smith laid this foundation: "Having shown . . . that correct ideas of the character of God [page 175] are necessary in order to the exercise of faith in him unto life and salvation," he said, "and that without correct ideas of his character the minds of men could not have sufficient power with God to the exercise of faith necessary to the enjoyment of eternal life; and that correct ideas of his character lay a foundation, as far as his character is concerned, for the exercise of faith, so as to enjoy the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Jesus Christ, even that of eternal glory; we shall now proceed to show the

connection there is between correct ideas of the attributes of God, and the exercise of faith in him unto eternal life."

A correct understanding of the attributes of God—how eternally important this is to the gaining of faith and salvation! "Let us here observe," the powerful word continues, "that the real design which the God of heaven had in view in making the human family acquainted with his attributes, was, that they, through the ideas of the existence of his attributes, might be enabled to exercise faith in him, and, through the exercise of faith in him, might obtain eternal life; for without the idea of the existence of the attributes which belong to God the minds of men could not have power to exercise faith on him so as to lay hold upon eternal life."

Such wondrous gifts as faith and eternal life are not bestowed upon unworthy recipients. Man must prepare and qualify himself to receive them. "The God of heaven, understanding most perfectly the constitution of human nature, and the weakness of man, knew what was necessary to be revealed, and what ideas must be planted in their minds in order that they might be enabled to exercise faith in him unto eternal life. Having said so much, we shall proceed to examine the attributes of God, as set forth in his revelations to the human family," the Prophet continues, "and to show how necessary correct ideas of his attributes are to enable men to exercise faith in him; for without these ideas being planted in the minds of men it would be out of the power of any person or persons to exercise faith in God so as to obtain eternal life. So that the divine communications made to men in the first instance were designed to establish in their minds the ideas necessary to enable them to exercise faith in God, and through this means to be partakers of his glory." (*Lectures on Faith* 4:1-3.) [page 176]

The chief attributes of God are many; they include every godly and uplifting quality. The Prophet Joseph Smith chose the six chief ones to show the relationship between faith and a knowledge of the attributes of God. We shall name these six and show how and why a correct understanding of each one must be gained in order to have faith unto life and salvation. They are:

1. *Knowledge.*

Does God know all things? He does. Is there anything he does not know? There is not. Is he progressing in knowledge and learning new truths? He is not. He is not a student God. His knowledge and Supremacy are *not* limited to a sphere or realm beyond which there are higher spheres and greater realms. He is an Eternal God, an infinite being, an omniscient man, one in whose person all knowledge, all power, and all truth center.

Be it remembered: He created the universe; the sidereal heavens are the works of his hands; all things, animate and inanimate, life in all its forms and varieties, life on all worlds, all things exist and are governed by him. Envision worlds without number; think of earths more numerous than the particles of dust on this planet and on millions of other like spheres: all this is but a beginning to the number of his creations. And he has given a law unto all

things. Need anyone be foolish enough to suppose that such a being does not know all things and have all power?

A belief that there is or might be another being greater and more powerful than God of itself precludes the exercise of full faith in him. And so Joseph Smith taught: "Without the knowledge of all things God would not be able to save any portion of his creatures; for it is by reason of the knowledge which he has of all things, from the beginning to the end, that enables him to give that understanding to his creatures by which they are made partakers of eternal life; and if it were not for the idea existing in the minds of men that God had all knowledge it would be impossible for them to exercise faith in him." (*Lectures on Faith* 4:11.)

2. Faith or power.

It is with faith or power as it is with knowledge. God himself is the very embodiment of this attribute. His infinite knowledge gives him infinite power. None can stay his hand. [page 177]

There is nothing greater to create than one universe upon another with all the forms of life found in them. What laws require more power than those that govern worlds and spheres and all forms of life? God himself is the Author of it all. Unless men know that God has all power (which power is itself faith), it is not possible for them to exercise faith in him unto life and salvation. The reasoning is as follows: "Unless God had power over all things, and was able by his power to control all things, and thereby deliver his creatures who put their trust in him from the power of all beings that might seek their destruction, whether in heaven, on earth, or in hell, men could not be saved." Salvation comes by power; it is the power of God that brings to pass the immortality and eternal life of man, and the very gospel of salvation is defined as the power of God unto salvation. "But with the idea of the existence of this attribute [power or faith] planted in the mind, men feel as though they had nothing to fear who put their trust in God, believing that he has power to save all who come to him to the very uttermost." (*Lectures on Faith* 4:12.)

3. Justice.

"It is also necessary, in order to the exercise of faith in God unto life and salvation, that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in him." That which is just is right and proper. It is true; it conforms to spiritual law; it is righteous before God. Justice is the administration and the maintenance of that which is just and right. Justice, therefore, deals with the unbending, invariable results that always and ever flow from the same causes. Fairness, impartiality, perfect rectitude, complete integrity, righteousness itself—all of these are inherent in justice. The whole tenor of the scriptures is that God is just and that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

And "without the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in the Deity men could not have confidence sufficient to place themselves under his guidance and direction; for they would be filled with fear and doubt lest the judge of all the earth would not do right, and thus fear or

doubt, existing in the mind, would preclude the possibility of the exercise of faith in him for life and salvation. But when the idea of the existence of the attribute justice in the Deity is fairly planted in [page 178] the mind, it leaves no room for doubt to get into the heart, and the mind is enabled to cast itself upon the Almighty without fear and without doubt, and with most unshaken confidence, believing that the Judge of all the earth will do right." (*Lectures on Faith* 4:13.)

4. Judgment.

"It is also of equal importance that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute of judgment in God, in order that they may exercise faith in him for life and salvation." As with justice, so with judgment, the whole tone and tenor of holy writ attests that "the Lord is a God of judgment." (Isaiah 30:18.) Judgment consists in the power to arrive at a wise and righteous decision and in the execution of that decision, to the blessing of the righteous and the condemnation of the wicked. In its perfect form, judgment is the very decree and mandate and sentence of that God who is judge of all.

And "without the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity, it would be impossible for men to exercise faith in him for life and salvation, seeing that it is through the exercise of this attribute that the faithful in Christ Jesus are delivered out of the hands of those who seek their destruction; for if God were not to come out in swift judgment against the workers of iniquity and the powers of darkness, his saints could not be saved; for it is by judgment that the Lord delivers his saints out of the hands of all their enemies, and those who reject the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." How perfect the Prophet's reasoning is!

What effect does it have on the minds and acts of men when they come to know that judgment is an attribute of God? "No sooner is the idea of the existence of this attribute planted in the minds of men," the reasoning continues, "than it gives power to the mind for the exercise of faith and confidence in God, and they are enabled by faith to lay hold on the promises which are set before them, and wade through all the tribulations and afflictions to which they are subjected by reason of the persecution from those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, believing that in due time the Lord will come out in swift judgment against their enemies, and they shall be cut off from before him, and that in his own [page 179] due time he will bear them off conquerors, and more than conquerors, in all things." (*Lectures on Faith* 4:14.)

5. Mercy.

Along with the other attributes of his character, "it is equally important that men should have the idea of the existence of the attribute mercy in the Deity, in order to exercise faith in him for life and salvation." God is merciful. "His mercy endureth for ever." (Psalm 106:1.) He is compassionate. His compassion knows no bounds. His mercy is manifest in a divine forbearance, on certain specified conditions, from imposing punishments that, except for his goodness and grace, would be the just reward of man.

All men have sinned; all must pay the penalty for their sins. Punishment always follows sin; otherwise there would be no sin. Thus, all men are subject to justice, and all must pay the price for their wayward works. That is, all men would pay the penalty for their own sins, all would suffer a just punishment for their transgressions, all would be subject to the law of justice, if it were not for the law of mercy.

Mercy is a gift of God bestowed bounteously upon the penitent. It is reserved for those who repent. In their case, mercy appeases the demands of justice; it frees men from the penalty of sin. Thus saith the Lord: "If ye will repent, and harden not your hearts, then will I have mercy upon you, through mine Only Begotten Son; therefore, whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins; and these shall enter into my rest." (Alma 12:33-34.) Thus the great and eternal plan of redemption operates in the lives of men, on conditions of repentance and because of the mercy of God.

And thus, the prophet reasons: "Without the idea of the existence of this attribute [mercy!] in the Deity, the spirits of the saints would faint in the midst of the tribulations, afflictions, and persecutions which they have to endure for righteousness' sake. But when the idea of the existence of this attribute is once established in the mind it gives life and energy to the spirits of the saints, believing that the mercy of God will be poured out upon them in the midst of their afflictions, and that he will compassionate them in their sufferings, and that [page 180] the mercy of God will lay hold of them and secure them in the arms of his love, so that they will receive a full reward for all their sufferings." (Lectures on Faith 4:15.)

6. Truth.

We have heretofore set forth the great and eternal verity that faith is a hope in that which is not seen which is true; that faith is founded and grounded on the bedrock of truth, and upon nothing else; and that men must come to a knowledge of the truth about God and his laws before they can have faith in him. Now we shall see that men must believe that truth is an attribute of God before they can have faith in him. "Not less important to the exercise of faith in God," than all the other attributes we have considered, "is the idea of the existence of the attribute truth in him," our account recites.

The Lord is a God of truth. He is the "Lord God of truth." (Psalm 31:5.) His law, his commandments, his word, his scriptures—all are truth. Truth is that which really is. It includes a knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they shall be; it is absolute and eternal; it endures forever. It is not relative; it does not vary; it never changes. What is true in one eternity is true in the next. All progress, all enlightenment, all salvation—everything that is good and right grows out of and comes because of truth. If there were no invariable truths, if truth changed from age to age, or from world to world, or from universe to universe, all would be confusion and chaos and disorganization. Life and matter

themselves would be without form and void, and God, no longer controlling all things, would cease to be God.

"For without the idea of the existence of this attribute [in God] the mind of man could have nothing upon which it could rest with certainty—all would be confusion and doubt. But with the idea of the existence of this attribute in the Deity in the mind, all the teachings, instructions, promises, and blessings, become realities, and the mind is enabled to lay hold of them with certainty and confidence, believing that these things, and all that the Lord has said, shall be fulfilled in their time; and that all the cursings, denunciations, and judgments, pronounced upon the heads of the unrighteous, will also be executed in the due time of the Lord; and, by reason of the truth and veracity of him, the mind beholds its deliverance and salvation as being certain." (Lectures on Faith 4:16.) [page 181]

The Perfections of God

The perfections of God—what are they? And what must we know relative to them in order to have faith unto life and salvation? Our exposition as to the nature and kind of being in whom our faith centers has already shown that God is the only supreme governor and independent being, in whom all fulness and perfection dwell; that he is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; and that in him every good gift and every good principle dwell independently. Having set forth the character and attributes of God, the inspired account we are now studying says: "What we mean by perfections is, the perfections which belong to all the attributes of [God]." (Lectures on Faith 5:1.)

Thus, by the perfections of God is meant that He is the embodiment—totally, completely, and perfectly—of every good thing. He is the possessor of every good gift, of all uplifting attributes, of all edifying graces, all in their eternal fulness. We speak thus in the infinite and unlimited sense. All of the attributes of godliness are resident in the person of Deity in their entirety, in their transcendence, in their holiness. His is the totality, the wholeness, the completeness of every attribute. God does not fall short and is not wanting in anything.

After setting forth the six chief attributes of God, as we have listed them, the Prophet Joseph Smith counseled: "Let the mind once reflect sincerely and candidly upon the ideas of the existence of the before-mentioned attributes in the Deity, and it will be seen that, as far as his attributes are concerned, there is a sure foundation laid for the exercise of faith in him for life and salvation." By way of summary and recapitulation, he continues:

I. As to knowledge:

"For inasmuch as God possesses the attribute knowledge, he can make all things known to his saints necessary for their salvation." But be it known, the attribute of knowledge must exist in Deity in perfection, and he must be recognized as knowing all things. Unless men conceive of God as knowing all things, they cannot have faith in him to a sufficient degree to gain eternal life.

2. As to power:

"And as he possesses the attribute power, he is able [page 182] thereby to deliver them from the power of all enemies." The power is omnipotence; it is the power that made man and all things, and that upholds, preserves, and maintains the endless worlds and all that in them are. How could man have infinite faith in anything less than an infinite being? God's perfection in this field consists in having all power, all might, and all dominion.

3. As to justice:

"And seeing, also, that justice is an attribute of the Deity, he will deal with them upon the principles of righteousness and equity, and a just reward will be granted unto them for all their afflictions and sufferings for the truth's sake." Again the issue is whether Deity enjoys the named attribute in all its glory and perfection. Does he fall short with reference to charity, love, honesty, integrity, benevolence, or any good thing? Is there some degree of any of these that he has not yet obtained? Who will contend that the Judge of all the earth falls short in the field of justice? Will the Almighty act capriciously by dealing justly with his saints in one age and failing to reward others in another age for like sufferings and afflictions? The answers are self-evident.

4. As to judgment:

"And as judgment is an attribute of the Deity also, his saints can have the most unshaken confidence that they will, in due time, obtain a perfect deliverance out of the hands of all their enemies, and a complete victory over all those who have sought their hurt and destruction." To question the righteousness and rectitude of the judgments of God is to deny his divinity. If he were deficient in judgment, if his judgments were less than perfect, if he dealt capriciously and without sense and reason—how could he be a divine being? God is God because of the perfections existing in all of the attributes of his nature.

5. As to mercy:

"And as mercy is also an attribute of the Deity, his saints can have confidence that it will be exercised towards them, and through the exercise of that attribute towards them comfort and consolation will be administered unto them abundantly, amid all their afflictions and tribulations." Salvation is the child of mercy. It is because of the great plan of mercy that sinful men become clean and are fit candidates to [page 183] go where God and Christ are. Mercy tempers justice to claim penitent persons; if it were not so, all men would be lost, for all have sinned. Suppose God did not possess all mercy, or that men did not know he was a merciful being; would they then turn to him for remission of their sins, relying wholly on the merits of Him who is mighty to save? Truly, unless men know that mercy is in God in all its glory, fulness, and perfection, they would not and could not exercise faith in him unto life and salvation.

6. As to truth:

"And, lastly, realizing that truth is an attribute of the Deity, the mind is led to rejoice amid all its trials and temptations, in hope of that glory which is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ, and in view of that crown which is to be placed upon the heads of the saints in the day when the Lord shall distribute rewards unto them, and in prospect of that eternal weight of glory which the Lord has promised to bestow upon them, when he shall bring them into the midst of his throne to dwell in his presence eternally." Truth, glorious, pure, diamond truth; truth, the eternal foundation upon which all things rest; truth, the eternal verity that controls and governs in time and in eternity—take truth away and what would remain? All would be chaos; anarchy would rule; chance and happenstance would replace the Father and the Son. And unless fallen man can turn to a God in whom all fulness and perfection dwell and who is the possessor of all truth, how can he be expected to have faith? If Deity does not possess all truth, how long will it be before he learns a new truth that will lead to the death of all life and the end of an organized universe?

"In view, then, of the existence of these attributes"—*they being present in their eternal fulness and perfection*—"the faith of the saints can become exceedingly strong, abounding in righteousness unto the praise and glory of God. Such faith, faith like that possessed by the ancients, "can exert its mighty influence in searching after wisdom and understanding, until it has obtained a knowledge of all things that pertain to life and salvation."

Can man gain faith unto life and salvation without an understanding of the character, perfections, and attributes of God? The answer is, No. Such knowledge "is the foundation [page 184] which is laid, through the revelation of the attributes of God, for the exercise of faith in him for life and salvation; and seeing that these are the attributes of the Deity, they are unchangeable—being the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—which gives to the minds of the Latter-day Saints the same power and authority to exercise faith in God which the Former-day saints had; so that all the saints, in this respect, have been, are, and will be, alike until the end of time; for God never changes, therefore his attributes and character remain forever the same. And as it is through the revelation of these that a foundation is laid for the exercise of faith in God unto life and salvation, the foundation, therefore, for the exercise of faith was, is, and ever will be, the same; so that all men have had, and will have, an equal privilege." (*Lectures on Faith* 4:17-19.)

"THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST"

**Brigham Young University-Idaho Religion
Symposium
January 25, 2003
Elder David A. Bednar**

Good morning, brothers and sisters. I am delighted to be here with you. I pray for and invite the Holy Ghost to be with me and with you as together we discuss an important aspect of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last September I participated in an area training meeting in Twin Falls, Idaho. Elder Neal A. Maxwell presided at the training session, and on a Friday night and a Saturday morning he, the Idaho Area Presidency, and other general church officers instructed a group of approximately one hundred stake presidents. It was a meaningful and memorable time of spiritual enrichment, learning, and edification.

During the course of his teaching and testifying, Elder Maxwell made a statement that impressed me deeply and has been the recent focus for much of my studying, reflecting, and pondering. He said, "There would have been no Atonement except for the character of Christ." Since hearing this straightforward and penetrating statement, I have tried to learn more about and better understand the word "character." I have also pondered the relationship between Christ's character and the Atonement--and the implications of that relationship for each of us as disciples. This morning I hope to share with you just a few of the learnings that have come to my mind and heart as I have attempted to more fully appreciate this teaching by Elder Maxwell.

What is Character?

After returning home from the area training meeting in Twin Falls, the first question I attempted to answer was "What is character?" The Oxford English Dictionary indicates that many of the uses of the word character relate to graphic symbols, printing, engraving, and writing. The usages I found most relevant, however, relate to ". . . the sum of the moral and mental qualities which distinguish an individual or a race; mental or moral constitution; moral qualities strongly developed or strikingly

displayed" (Oxford English Dictionary Online, University Press 2003, Second Edition, 1989). Interestingly, when we look up the word "character" in the topical guide of our scriptures, we discover that it is cross-referenced to the topics of honesty, honor, and integrity.

Brigham Young emphasized the significance of the Savior's character as he taught and testified about the truthfulness of the Holy Bible:

. . . the Bible is true. It may not all have been translated aright, and many precious things may have been rejected in the compilation and translation of the Bible; but we understand, from the writings of one of the Apostles, that if all the sayings and doings of the Savior had been written, the world could not contain them. I will say that the world could not understand them. They do not understand what we have on record, **nor the character of the Savior**, as delineated in the Scriptures; and yet it is one of the simplest things in the world, and the Bible, when it is understood, is one of the simplest books in the world, for, as far as it is translated correctly, it is nothing but truth, and in truth there is no mystery save to the ignorant. The revelations of the Lord to his creatures are adapted to the lowest capacity, and they bring life and salvation to all who are willing to receive them. (Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 124, emphasis added)

Brigham Young further taught that faith must be focused upon Jesus' character, in His Atonement, and in the Father's plan of salvation:

. . . I will take the liberty of saying to every man and woman who wishes to obtain salvation through him (the Savior) that *looking* to him, only, is not enough: **they must have faith in his name, character and atonement**; and they must have faith in his father and in the plan of salvation devised and wrought out by the Father and the Son. What will this faith lead to? It will lead to obedience to the requirements of the Gospel; and the few words that I may deliver to my brethren and sisters and friends this afternoon will be with the direct view of leading them to God. (Journal of Discourses, Vol.13, p. 56, Brigham Young, July 18, 1869, emphasis added)

The Character of the Lord Jesus Christ

In a message entitled "O How Great the Plan of Our God" delivered to CES religious educators in February of 1995 (p. 5), Elder Maxwell specifically linked Christ's character to the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice:

Jesus' character necessarily underwrote His remarkable atonement. Without Jesus' sublime character there could have been no sublime atonement! His character is such that He "[suffered] temptations of every kind" (Alma 7:11), yet He gave temptations "no heed" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:22).

Someone has said only those who resist temptation really understand the power of temptation. Because Jesus resisted it perfectly, He understood temptation perfectly, hence He can help us. The fact that He was dismissive of temptation and gave it "no heed," reveals His marvelous character, which we are to emulate (see Doctrine and Covenants 20:22; 3 Nephi 12:48; 27:27).

Perhaps the greatest indicator of character is the capacity to recognize and appropriately respond to other people who are experiencing the very challenge or adversity that is most immediately and forcefully pressing upon us. Character is revealed, for example, in the power to discern the suffering of other people when we ourselves are suffering; in the ability to detect the hunger of others when we are hungry; and in the power to reach out and extend compassion for the spiritual agony of others when we are in the midst of our own spiritual distress. Thus, character is demonstrated by looking and reaching outward when the natural and instinctive response is to be self-absorbed and turn inward. If such a capacity is indeed the ultimate criterion of moral character, then the Savior of the world is the perfect example of such a consistent and charitable character.

Examples of Christ's Character in the New Testament

The New Testament is replete with "strikingly displayed" examples of the Savior's character. We are all well aware that following His baptism by

John the Baptist and as a preparation for His public ministry, the Savior fasted for forty days. He also was tempted by the adversary to inappropriately use His supernal power to satisfy physical desires by commanding that stones be made bread, to gain recognition by casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and to obtain wealth and power and prestige in exchange for falling down and worshiping the tempter (see Matthew 4:1-9). It is interesting to note that the overarching and fundamental challenge to the Savior in each of these three temptations is contained in the taunting statement, "*If thou be the Son of God.*" Satan's strategy, in essence, was to dare the Son of God to improperly demonstrate His God-given powers, to sacrifice meekness and modesty, and, thereby, betray who He was. Thus, Satan attempted repeatedly to attack Jesus' understanding of who He was and of His relationship with His Father. Jesus was victorious in meeting and overcoming the strategy of Satan.

I suspect the Savior may have been at least partially spent physically after forty days of fasting--and somewhat spiritually drained after His encounter with the adversary. With this background information in mind, please turn with me now to Matthew 4, and together we will read verse 11: "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

This verse in the King James version of the New Testament clearly indicates that angels came and ministered to the Savior after the devil had departed. And, undoubtedly, Jesus would have benefitted from and been blessed by such a heavenly ministration in a time of physical and spiritual need.

However, the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 4:11 provides a remarkable insight into the character of Christ. Please note the important differences in verse 11 between the King James version and the Joseph Smith Translation: "Then the devil leaveth him, and, now Jesus knew that John was cast into prison, and he sent angels, and, behold, they came and ministered unto him (John)."

Interestingly, the additions found in the JST completely change our understanding of this event. Angels did not come and minister to the Savior; rather, the Savior, in His own state of spiritual,

mental, and physical distress, sent angels to minister to John. Brothers and sisters, it is important for us to recognize that Jesus in the midst of His own challenge recognized and appropriately responded to John--who was experiencing a similar but lesser challenge than that of the Savior's. Thus, the character of Christ is manifested as He reached outward and ministered to one who was suffering--even as He himself was experiencing anguish and torment.

In the upper room on the night of the last supper, the very night during which He would experience the greatest suffering that ever took place in all of the worlds created by Him, Christ spoke about the Comforter and peace:

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:25-27)

Once again the fundamental character of Christ is revealed magnificently in this tender incident. Recognizing that He himself was about to intensely and personally experience the absence of both comfort and peace, and in a moment when His heart was perhaps troubled and afraid, the Master reached outward and offered to others the very blessings that could and would have strengthened Him.

In the great intercessory prayer, offered immediately before Jesus went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron to the Garden of Gethsemane, the Master prayed for His disciples and for all:

... which shall believe on me through their word;

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me .

..

... that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:20, 21, 23, 26)

I find myself repeatedly asking the following questions as I ponder this and other events that took place so close to the Savior's suffering in the garden and His betrayal: How could He pray for the well-being and unity of others immediately before His own anguish? What enabled Him to seek comfort and peace for those whose need was so much less than His? As the fallen nature of the world He created pressed in upon Him, how could He focus so totally and so exclusively upon the conditions and concerns of others? How was the Master able to reach outward when a lesser being would have turned inward? The statement I quoted earlier from Elder Maxwell provides the answer to each of these powerful questions:

Jesus' character necessarily underwrote His remarkable atonement. Without Jesus' sublime character there could have been no sublime atonement! His character is such that He "[suffered] temptations of every kind" (Alma 7:11), yet He gave temptations "no heed" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:22). ("O How Great the Plan of Our God," message delivered to CES religious educators in February of 1995, p. 5)

Jesus, who suffered the most, has the most compassion for all of us who suffer so much less. Indeed, the depth of suffering and compassion is intimately linked to the depth of love felt by the ministering one. Consider the scene as Jesus emerged from His awful suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. Having just sweat great drops of blood from every pore as part of the infinite and eternal Atonement, the Redeemer encountered a multitude:

And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew unto Jesus to kiss him.

But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?

And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. (Luke 22:47-50)

Given the magnitude and intensity of Jesus' agony, it perhaps would have been understandable if He had not noticed and attended to the guard's severed ear. But the Savior's character activated a compassion that was perfect. Note His response to the guard as described in verse 51: "And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him (Luke 22:51).

As individually impressive as is each of the preceding events, I believe it is the consistency of the Lord's character across multiple episodes that is ultimately the most instructive and inspiring. In addition to the incidents we have thus far reviewed, recall how the Savior, while suffering such agony on the cross, instructed the Apostle John about caring for Jesus' mother, Mary (John 19:26-27). Consider how, as the Lord was taken to Calvary and the awful agony of the crucifixion was commenced, He pleaded with the Father in behalf of the soldiers to ". . . forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Remember also that in the midst of excruciating spiritual and physical pain, the Savior offered hope and reassurance to one of the thieves on the cross, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Throughout His mortal ministry, and especially during the events leading up to and including the atoning sacrifice, the Savior of the world turned outward--when the natural man or woman in any of us would have been self-centered and focused inward.

Developing a Christlike Character

We can in mortality seek to be blessed with and develop essential elements of a Christlike character. Indeed, it is possible for us as mortals to strive in righteousness to receive the spiritual gifts associated with the capacity to reach outward and appropriately respond to other people who are experiencing the very challenge or adversity that is most immediately and forcefully pressing upon us. We cannot obtain such a capacity through sheer willpower or personal determination. Rather, we are dependent upon and in need of "the merits, mercy,

and grace of the Holy Messiah" (2 Nephi 2:8). But "line upon line, precept upon precept" (2 Nephi 28:30) and "in [the] process of time" (Moses 7:21), we are enabled to reach outward when the natural tendency is for us to turn inward.

It is interesting to me that one of the central elements of the word *character* is created by the letters A, C, and T. As we already have seen in the examples of Christ's character from the New Testament, the nature and consistency of how one **acts** reveals in a powerful way his or her true **character**. In the case of Christ, he is described as one ". . . who went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Let me now briefly share with you two memorable experiences from my service as a stake president that highlight the relationship between our **actions** and a Christlike **character**.

Early one summer morning I was showering. My wife called to me in the middle of my shower and indicated that I was needed immediately on the telephone. (This was before the day of cell and cordless phones). I quickly put on my robe and hurried to the phone. I next heard the voice of a dear sister and friend informing me of a tragic automobile accident that had just occurred in a remote area involving three teenage young women from our stake. Our friend indicated one of the young women had already been pronounced dead at the scene of the accident and that the two other young women were badly injured and presently were being transported to the regional medical center in Fayetteville. She further reported that the identity of the deceased young woman was not yet known. There was urgency in her voice, but there was no panic or excessive alarm. She then asked if I could go to the hospital, meet the ambulance when it arrived, and assist in identifying the young women. I answered that I would leave immediately.

During the course of our telephone conversation and as I listened to both the information being conveyed and the voice of our friend, I gradually became aware of two important things. First, this friend's daughter was one of the young women involved in the accident. Our friend lived approximately 35 miles from the hospital and therefore needed the assistance of someone who lived closer to the city. Second, I detected that the mother simultaneously was using two telephone handsets--with one in each hand pressed to each of

her ears. I became aware that as she was talking with me, she was also talking with a nurse at a small rural hospital who had initially attended to the three accident victims. Our friend was receiving updated information about the condition of the young women in the very moment she was informing me about the accident and requesting my help. I then heard one of the most remarkable things I have ever heard in my life.

I faintly heard the nurse telling this faithful mother and friend that the young woman pronounced dead at the scene of the accident had been positively identified as her daughter. I could not believe what I was hearing. I was listening to this good woman in the very moment that she learned of the death of her precious daughter. Without hesitation, and with a calm and most deliberate voice, our friend next said, "President Bednar, we must get in contact with the two other mothers. We must let them know as much as we can about the condition of their daughters and that they will soon be in the hospital in Fayetteville." There was no self-pity; there was no self-absorption; there was no turning inward. The Christlike character of this devoted woman was manifested in her immediate and almost instinctive turning outward to attend to the needs of other suffering mothers. It was a moment and a lesson that I have never forgotten. In a moment of ultimate grief, this dear friend reached outward when I likely would have turned inward.

I then drove to the hospital with a concern in my heart for the well-being of the two other beautiful young women who had been involved in the accident. Little did I realize that the lessons I would learn about Christlike character--lessons taught by seemingly ordinary disciples--were just beginning.

I arrived at the hospital and proceeded to the emergency room. After properly establishing who I was and my relationship to the victims, I was invited into two different treatment areas to identify the injured young women. It was obvious that their respective wounds were serious and life threatening. And the lovely countenances and physical features of these young women had been badly marred. Within a relatively short period of time, the two remaining young women died. All three of these virtuous, lovely, and engaging young women--who seemed to have so much of life in front of them--suddenly had gone home to their Eternal Father. My

attention and the attention of the respective families now shifted to funeral arrangements and logistics.

A day or so later, in the midst of program planning and detail arranging for the three funerals, I received a phone call from the Relief Society president of my home ward. Her daughter had been one of the victims in the accident, and she and I had talked several times about her desires for the funeral program. This faithful woman was a single mother rearing her only child--her teenage daughter. I was especially close to this woman and her daughter having served as both their bishop and stake president. After reviewing and finalizing several details for the funeral of her daughter, this good sister said to me, "President, I am sure it was difficult for you to see my daughter in the emergency room the other day. She was severely injured and disfigured. As you know, we will have a closed casket at the funeral. I have just returned from the funeral home, and they have helped my daughter to look so lovely again. I was just wondering . . . why don't we arrange a time when we can meet at the mortuary and you can have one last look at her before she is buried. Then your final memories of my daughter will not be the images you saw in the emergency room the other day." I listened and marveled at the compassion and thoughtfulness this sister had for me. Her only daughter had just been tragically killed, but she was concerned about the potentially troublesome memories I might have given my experience in the emergency room. In this good woman I detected no self-pity and no turning inward. Sorrow, certainly. Sadness, absolutely. Nevertheless, she reached outward when many or perhaps most of us would have turned inward with sorrow and grief.

Let me describe one final episode related to these three tragic deaths. On the day of her daughter's funeral, this Relief Society president from my home ward received a phone call from an irritated sister in our ward. The complaining sister had a cold and did not feel well, and she basically chewed out the Relief Society president for not being thoughtful or compassionate enough to arrange for meals to be delivered to her home. Just hours before the funeral of her only child, this remarkable Relief Society president prepared and delivered a meal to the murmuring sister.

We appropriately and rightly speak with reverence and awe of young men who sacrificed their lives to rescue stranded handcart pioneers and of other mighty men and women who repeatedly gave their all to establish the Church in the early days of the Restoration. I speak with equal reverence and awe of these two women--women of faith and character and conversion--who taught me so much and instinctively reached outward when most of us would have turned inward. Oh how I appreciate their quiet and powerful examples.

I noted earlier in my remarks that the letters A, C, and T form a central component in the word **character**. Also noteworthy is the similarity between the words **character** and **charity**--as both words contain the letters C, H, A, and R. Etymologically there is no relationship between these two words. Nevertheless, I believe there are several conceptual connections that are important for us to consider and ponder.

Let me suggest that you and I must be praying and yearning and striving and working to cultivate a Christlike **character** if we hope to receive the spiritual gift of **charity**--the pure love of Christ. Charity is not a trait or characteristic we acquire exclusively through our own purposive persistence and determination. Indeed we must honor our covenants and live worthily and do all that we can do to qualify for the gift; but ultimately the gift of charity possesses us--we do not possess it (see Moroni 7:47). The Lord determines if and when we receive all spiritual gifts, but we must do all in our power to desire and yearn and invite and qualify for such gifts. As we increasingly **act** in a manner congruent with the **character** of Christ, then perhaps we are indicating to heaven in a most powerful manner our desire for the supernal spiritual gift of **charity**. And clearly we are being blessed with this marvelous gift as we increasingly reach outward when the natural man or woman in us would typically turn inward.

I conclude now by returning to where I began--the statement by Elder Maxwell in that special training session last September: "There would have been no Atonement except for the character of Christ." It was the Prophet Joseph Smith who stated that "it is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 345). The New Testament

is a rich resource for learning about and increasing our appreciation for the character and life and example of the Savior. My prayer for each of us is that through our study of this sacred volume of scripture we will more fully come unto Him; more completely become like Him; and more fervently worship, reverence, and adore Him.

As a witness, I declare my witness. I know and testify and witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father. I know that He lives. And I testify that His character made possible for us the opportunities for both immortality and eternal life. May we reach outward when the natural tendency for us is to turn inward, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Nature and Character of God

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Several years ago, during a challenging and hectic period in my life, I read a statement by President Brigham Young that has meant a great deal to me ever since. He said:

When you . . . see our Father, you will see a being with whom you have long been acquainted, and He will receive you into His arms, and you will be ready to fall into His embrace and kiss Him. . . . You will be so glad and joyful. . . . When you are qualified and purified, . . . you can endure the glory of eternity. [JD 4:54–55]

How blessed we are to know what President Young taught us about our Heavenly Father—what kind of a being He is, what He is really like. How many people over the space of thousands of years have not even known that there is a Father in Heaven? How many individuals' lives might have been different if they could only have known about our loving, merciful, and caring Heavenly Father? Indeed, how blessed we are to have such teachings that center on the nature of our Father in Heaven. It is about God, our Eternal Father, that I wish to speak today.

The first article or principle in our declaration of faith as Latter-day Saints states, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father” (Articles of Faith 1:1). I do not think it is accidental or coincidental that this statement comes first in our 13 Articles of Faith.

The Prophet Joseph Smith said: “It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God” (*Teachings*, 345). In other words, one of the foundation stones of the restored gospel is a knowledge of what kind of being God actually is. But not only do we need to *understand* what kind of being God is, we must come to *know* God. In the same sermon from which we just quoted, the Prophet Joseph further stated, “If any man does not know God, . . . he will realize that he has not eternal life; for there can be eternal life on no other principle” (*Teachings*, 344). In His great high-priestly or Intercessory Prayer, the Savior

confirmed that life eternal was to “know . . . the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [the Father] hast sent” (John 17:3).

Thus everything of sacred significance connected with our future rests on both our coming to know *about* God the Eternal Father and, ultimately, our coming to *know* Him. “If men do not comprehend the character of God,” said Joseph Smith, “they do not comprehend themselves” (*Teachings*, 343). God and men are of the same divine, eternal species, and if we do not comprehend the nature of God, we cannot appreciate our divine parentage nor the very real potential we possess to become like our heavenly parents.

God Must Be Revealed

Coming to know God is not for the spiritually lazy. He can only be known through revelation. And powerful personal revelation, as many of you know, is predicated upon righteous living and spiritual discipline. Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve provided this insight:

God is known only by revelation; he stands revealed or remains forever unknown. He cannot be discovered in the laboratory, or by viewing all immensity through giant telescopes, or by cataloging all the laws of nature that do or have existed. A knowledge of his powers and the laws of nature which he has ordained does not reveal his personality and attributes to men in the true gospel sense. Certainly a knowledge of these laws and powers enables man to learn truths which are faith promoting and which help him to understand more about Deity; but saving knowledge of God comes only by revelation from the Holy Ghost as a consequence of obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

Man's purpose in life is to learn the nature and kind of being that God is, and then, by conformity to his laws and ordinances, to progress to that high state of exaltation wherein man becomes perfect as the Father is perfect. [MD, s.v. “God,” 318]

It was Jesus Christ who commanded His disciples to be perfect even as our Father in Heaven is perfect. It was Jesus Christ who restored in His own day a knowledge of God the Father to the people of Israel—a people who for the previous 1,200 or 1,400 years had lost, to a greater or lesser

degree, an understanding of the Supreme Parent of the universe.

It will be remembered that when Israel rebelled against God during the golden calf episode at Mount Sinai, God took the Melchizedek Priesthood out of their midst, as well as the higher law and the higher ordinances of His holy order. This was a devastating loss, for the Melchizedek Priesthood “holdeth . . . the key of the knowledge of God” (D&C 84:19). For the next 1,200 or 1,400 years, until the time of Christ, Israel lived without the higher law, and their knowledge of God the Father grew dim. They interacted with Jehovah, who was the premortal Jesus of Nazareth.

Of course all the prophets in ancient Israel held the Melchizedek Priesthood during this period (see *Teachings*, 181). But the people as a whole did not. In fact, among the people of Israel generally, only the tribe of Levi (one-twelfth of the male population) was privileged to hold any priesthood at all—and that was the lesser priesthood.

When Jesus inaugurated a new dispensation of the gospel through His earthly ministry, He began to restore knowledge, doctrines, ordinances, and powers long withheld from the children of men. He was the Elias who came to restore all things in His day—as John the Baptist testified and as is now recorded for us in the Joseph Smith Translation of John 1:24–28.

As the great Restorer, Jesus spoke much about His “Father in Heaven.” Jesus wanted all men and women to come to *know* His true Father, who was also *their* Father. The phrase “Father in Heaven” is characteristic of Matthew’s Gospel as a whole and is found throughout the Sermon on the Mount, the discourse in which Jesus commanded His disciples to be perfect as their Father in Heaven is perfect (see Matthew 5:48).

Jesus’ desire to have His disciples understand and know God the Father is clearly demonstrated in such teachings as His exhortation to His disciples to live so righteously and present such fine examples that others would see their good works and glorify their Father in Heaven (see Matthew 5:16).

Practically speaking, I think the Savior is telling us here that each of us has the obligation *and* the opportunity to live in such a manner that our friends and family members can more fully understand what our Heavenly Father is actually like because they see something of His divine

nature in us and the Holy Spirit is able to confirm that such examples are authentic.

I have had the great blessing in my life of coming to know, in part, what our Heavenly Father is like by observing some of His characteristics and personality traits in the lives of dear friends, colleagues, and students here at the university, file leaders, apostles and prophets, *and* members of my own family. Brothers and sisters, can we who are parents or potential parents not see that our behavior makes it easier or harder for others to come to know—or even desire to know—our Father in Heaven? There is a great compelling power about those who the Spirit tells us are like our Heavenly Father.

In another statement Jesus commanded His disciples to love their enemies, to bless those who hurled curses at them, and to pray for those who spitefully used them. The reason is given in Matthew 5:45: “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.”

The original Greek wording of Matthew 5:45 connotes a rebirth, “so that ye may be born (*genesthe*) the sons [children] of your Father in heaven.” This idea parallels the doctrine of being spiritually born of God and receiving His image in our countenances, as taught in Alma 5:14. Disciples must reflect in their lives—in their behaviors and in their countenances—the distinguishing traits of the Great Parent of the universe in order to truly become His children and His heirs in every way. As Jesus taught, patient love and tolerant restraint are great hallmarks of our Heavenly Father’s character and personality. “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good” (Matthew 5:45), meaning that righteousness and wickedness are not—cannot be—immediately and constantly rewarded or punished. Such constant interference in the lives of men and women would thwart the plan of salvation and the purposes for which earth life was designed: to allow individuals to exercise patience, walk by faith, and be tested.

Thus one of the distinguishing features of Jesus’ earthly ministry was His restoration of the knowledge of the nature and personality of His Father in Heaven—the Father of us all. But, alas, this restored knowledge was not to last. Soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus, another rebellion set in, and an even greater apostasy ensued than the one that existed from the time of Moses to the time of John the Baptist. This so-called Great Apostasy lasted for some 1,800 years. During this

time a true and clear understanding of the nature and personality of God the Father was distorted and, at times, all but lost. Misunderstandings and distortions about the Godhead usually came as a result of debate without the confirming witness of the Holy Ghost. Pronouncements of theological councils defined the nature of God. Errors became entrenched.

Another Restoration

However, good news has again come to earth. In these latter days, beginning in 1820, our Heavenly Father, through His Son and His prophets, has rerevealed many divine truths about His nature and personality so that each of us can again come to know Him as the meridian disciples knew him and as we knew Him in our premortal existence.

Joseph Smith's First Vision in 1820 immediately clarified misunderstandings about the nature of the Godhead as well as the person of God the Father:

- God the Father is a distinct personage, separate from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- God the Father looks like a man, as does His Son—who is our Savior.
- God the Father can speak and move.
- God the Father knows individuals by name.
- God the Father hears and answers prayers.
- God the Father bears witness of His Son.
- Satan and his power are real, but God's power is greater.

It is easy to see why President Ezra Taft Benson said:

The appearance of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ to the boy prophet [Joseph Smith] is the greatest event that has occurred in this world since the resurrection of the Master. [Ezra Taft Benson, "Life Is Eternal," *Ensign*, June 1971, 34]

Other revelations about the nature and person of God the Father followed the First Vision, and Joseph Smith taught these truths to all who would listen. But these were radical doctrines indeed.

Though we take it for granted, section 130 of the Doctrine and Covenants teaches an incredibly profound truth:

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us. [D&C 130:22]

In the King Follett Sermon, a year after section 130 was recorded in 1843, Joseph astounded the theological world with this further instruction about the physical person of God:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . .

These are incomprehensible ideas to some, but they are simple. It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another. [Teachings, 345]

However, here a caution needs to be emphasized. We must always remember that God is exalted—we are not! He is perfect—we are not! He must never be treated casually. He possesses almighty power. His "brightness and glory defy all description" (JS—H 1:17).

In another way of explaining this, Joseph Smith further declared:

God Almighty Himself dwells in eternal fire; flesh and blood cannot go there, for all corruption is devoured by the fire. "Our God is a consuming fire." . . .

. . . Immortality dwells in everlasting burnings. [Teachings, 367]

President Joseph Fielding Smith put it this way:

God is full of energy, and should we mortals stand in his presence, unless his spirit was upon us to protect us we would be consumed. That is how much energy there is in a celestial body. [Joseph Fielding Smith, *Seek Ye Earnestly* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 275]

It should come as no surprise that the Prophet Joseph and his associates described a god whose character and personality were made up of all characteristics possessed by His Divine Son. The traits of one are the traits of the other (see "Lecture Third" in *Lectures on Faith*):

- He "is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).
- He is "merciful and gracious" (Exodus 34:6; see also Psalm 103:8; 2 Nephi 2:6).
- He is "slow to anger," "abundant in goodness," and will be so forever (Nehemiah 9:17; Exodus 34:6; see also Moroni 7:12).
- He is generous (see 2 Nephi 26:24).
- "He changes not, neither is there variableness with him; but that he is the same . . . yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (*Lectures on Faith* 3:15; see also Mormon 9:9; Moroni 8:18).

- He is just (see Mosiah 29:12).
- He is “a God of truth, and canst not lie” (Ether 3:12).
- He possesses independent faith. That is to say, He is the only being who has faith in Himself and is not dependent on any other being or any other power to accomplish His purposes and bring about His desires. If this were not so, we could not exercise faith in Him. We “would be as the heathen, not knowing but there might be a being greater and more powerful than [God], and thereby be prevented from fulfilling his promises” (*Lectures on Faith*, Q&A 3:19).

- God is the author of law. It originates with Him (see D&C 88:41–42).

- God possesses all power and all knowledge (see 1 Nephi 9:6; Mosiah 4:9; Isaiah 46:9–10).

- “God is love” (1 John 4:16). That is to say, this characteristic or attribute of love shapes, mediates, and influences all of God’s other attributes. “With all the other excellencies” of our Heavenly Father’s character, without love “to influence them, they could not have such powerful dominion over the minds of men” (*Lectures on Faith*, 3:24).

I am convinced that God’s love is both corporate—“He doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world” (2 Nephi 26:24)—and individual. I am also convinced that His love is proactive. To me one of the greatest examples of this personal and searching love is the parable of the prodigal son. I believe this parable is nothing less than a thinly veiled reflection of our Heavenly Father’s personality—a personality dominated by love for us—and that Jesus presented the parable because He wanted us to know what He knew: what Heavenly Father is really like.

Like the father in the story of the prodigal son, our Father in Heaven is anxious to come to *us*, to meet us “a great way off,” as the parable says (Luke 15:20). He is desperate to get us back in His presence.

The parable of the prodigal son teaches that our Father in Heaven cares about the feelings of *all* of His children at the same time, even though it may appear that only certain ones are being blessed. For example, in the parable, the father’s patient tutoring of the older son—the “righteous” son who was put out over his father’s generous treatment of the profligate younger brother—is a reflection of our Heavenly Father’s personality:

And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found. [Luke 15:29–32]

Our Father in Heaven loves me, and He loves you. His love is not a zero-sum exercise. He does not love me less and you more because there is only so much love to go around. His love is infinite. He loves me when I think or act a little like the prodigal son, and He is patient with me when I think or act a little like the jealous older son. In truth, during our years of mortality, are we not all, even just a little bit, like both the prodigal son and the steady but jealous older brother? Does our Father in Heaven cease to be interested in our welfare when we are sinful and we need to come to ourselves? Does He turn off His care and concern for us when we are bad and turn it on again when we are good? I do not think so. The Father’s love is as broad, deep, and lasting as eternity. It encompasses all.

Of course, God’s love does not mean that all of us will receive the same blessings and opportunities. God cannot and will not do as much for the rebellious as He can and will do for the valiant. The disobedient cannot take full advantage of the Father’s love, which love is manifested fully in the gift of His Son.

This, I think, is the meaning of Nephi’s declaration: “Behold, the Lord esteemeth all flesh in one; [but] he that is righteous is favored of God” (1 Nephi 17:35).

I testify that our Father in Heaven cares about each of us, individually and personally. There are many examples of this doctrine that I could share, but my son Mark recently reminded me of one. Mark served a mission to Mongolia. He served with and developed a deep love for a senior missionary couple from Idaho. They used an interpreter their entire 18-month mission. Their interpreter—a Mongolian sister—had an important story to tell. She grew up in Mongolia. The missionaries found her and baptized her. When she

joined the Church, she started saving money for a full-time mission. She received a call to one of the missions in the United States, but at that time she spoke almost no English. She got on a plane in Mongolia to come to the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah, knowing only three sentences in English:

“I am from Mongolia.”

“I am a missionary.”

“Please help me.”

When she got on the plane, no one had explained to her that she needed to change planes to complete the flight to Utah. She landed in Chicago, but, naturally, there was no one there to meet her and she didn't know the language. She found a chair, sat down, and prayed to Heavenly Father to know what to do. She then got up to try to find help. As she was attempting to explain her predicament to a ticket agent (using her three English sentences), a man tapped her on the shoulder, pulled out his temple recommend, and showed it to her. She recognized the temple recommend because she had been given one before she left, so she knew this man at her side was a member of the Church. He motioned for her to wait. Ten minutes later he handed her his cell phone, and on the other end of the line was the missionary who had taught her the gospel in Mongolia. The missionary told her to follow the man to the plane to Salt Lake City and get on board. He told her there would be people to meet her in Salt Lake City—and there were!

Our Father in Heaven truly watches out for His children—very often through others. But that's not the end of the story. The man in the Chicago airport was a businessman who has flown all over the world. He was upset that day because it was the first time he had missed his connecting flight to Salt Lake City. But because he was there at the Chicago airport, he overheard this Mongolian sister trying to get help, and he knew he could help her.

I testify, as others have, that our Father in Heaven not only answers prayers but at times chooses to micromanage the details of His kingdom. This, too, is part of His divine nature. But herein lies an important lesson. It is our Heavenly Father who chooses; we do not dictate to Him time, place, or circumstance. Still, we may rest assured that our Father knows all things and He does *all* that He does out of love. And He does what is best for us from an eternal perspective. He asks of us our loyalty, our willingness to help others, and our

repentance—for which He will reward us with the riches of eternity.

As we near the end of another semester and another school year, it seems good to come back full circle to beginnings, to foundations and first principles. Therefore I return to where I began this morning—with President Brigham Young's statement:

When you . . . see our Father, you will see a being with whom you have long been acquainted, and He will receive you into His arms, and you will be ready to fall into His embrace and kiss Him. . . . You will be so glad and joyful. . . . When you are qualified and purified, . . . you can endure the glory of eternity. [JD 4:54–55]

May President Young's vision become reality for each of us, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Lecture 5

ON FAITH

1. In our former lectures we treated the being, character, perfections, and attributes of God. What we mean by perfections is the perfections which belong to all the attributes of his nature. We shall, in this lecture, speak of the Godhead: we mean the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made, whether visible or invisible, whether in heaven, on earth, in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space. They are the Father and the Son: the Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power, possessing all perfection and fulness. The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, is a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man, being in the form and likeness of man, or rather man was formed after his likeness and in his image. He is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father, possessing all the fulness of the Father, or the same fulness with the Father; being begotten of him, and ordained from before the foundation of the world to be a propitiation for the sins of all those who should believe on his name. He is called the Son because of the flesh. And he descended in suffering below that which man can suffer; or, in other words, he suffered greater sufferings and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be. But notwithstanding all this, he kept the law of God and remained without sin, showing thereby that it is in the power of man to keep the law and remain also without sin. And also that by him a righteous judgment might come upon all flesh, that all who walk not in the law of God may justly be condemned by the law and have no excuse for their sins. He, being the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fulness of the glory of the Father, possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit that bears record of the Father and the Son. These three are one; or, in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made. And these three constitute the Godhead and are one. The Father and the Son possess the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power, and fulness—filling all in all. The Son, being filled with

the fulness of the mind, glory, and power, or in other words, the spirit, glory, and power, of the Father, possesses all knowledge and glory and the same kingdom, and sits at the right hand of power in the express image and likeness of the Father. He is a mediator for man, being filled with the fulness of the mind of the Father, or, in other words, the Spirit of the Father, which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe on his name and keep his commandments. And all those who keep his commandments shall grow from grace to grace and become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. They will possess the same mind, being transformed into the same image or likeness, even the express image of him who fills all in all, being filled with the fulness of his glory and becoming one in him, even as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one.

3. From the foregoing account of the Godhead, which is given in his revelations, the Saints have a sure foundation laid for the exercise of faith unto life and salvation through the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ. By his blood they have a forgiveness of sins and also a sure reward laid up for them in heaven, even that of partaking of the fulness of the Father and the Son through the Spirit. As the Son partakes of the fulness of the Father through the Spirit, so the Saints are, by the same Spirit, to be partakers of the same fulness, to enjoy the same glory. For as the Father and the Son are one, so, in like manner, the Saints are to be one in them, through the love of the Father, the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

The Father & the Son

*A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency
and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

In the early 1900s, some discussion arose among Church members about the roles of God the Father and Jesus Christ. The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued the following in 1916 to clarify the meaning of certain scriptures where Jesus Christ, or Jehovah, is designated as the Father. It is thought that a printing of this statement will be helpful to members as they study the Old Testament this year.



The scriptures plainly and repeatedly affirm that God is the Creator of the earth and the heavens and all things that in them are. In the sense so expressed, the Creator is an Organizer. God created the earth as an organized sphere; but He certainly did not create, in the sense of bringing into primal existence, the ultimate elements of the materials of which the earth consists, for “the elements are eternal” (D&C 93:33).

So also life is eternal, and not created; but life, or the vital force, may be infused into organized matter, though the details of the process have not been revealed unto man. (For illustrative instances see Gen. 2:7; Moses 3:7; Abr. 5:7.) Each of these scriptures states that God breathed into the

body of man the breath of life. See further Moses 3:19 for the statement that God breathed the breath of life into the bodies of the beasts and birds. God showed unto Abraham “the intelligences that were organized before the world was”; and by “intelligences” we are to understand personal “spirits” (see Abr. 3:22–23); nevertheless, we are expressly told that “Intelligence,” that is, “the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29).

The term “Father” as applied to Deity occurs in sacred writ with plainly different meanings. Each of the four significations specified in the following treatment should be carefully segregated.

1. "FATHER" AS LITERAL PARENT

Scriptures embodying the ordinary signification—literally that of Parent—are too numerous and specific to require citation. The purport of these scriptures is to the effect that God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title "Elohim," is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of the spirits of the human race. Elohim is the Father in every sense in which Jesus Christ is so designated, and distinctively He is the Father of spirits. Thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (Heb. 12:9). In view of this fact we are taught by Jesus Christ to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name" (Matt. 6:9).

Jesus Christ applies to Himself both titles, "Son" and "Father." Indeed, He specifically said to the brother of Jared: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son" (Ether 3:14). Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim both as spiritual and bodily offspring; that is to say, Elohim is literally the Father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and also the body in which Jesus Christ performed His mission in the flesh, and which body died on the cross and was afterward taken up by the process of resurrection, and is now the immortalized tabernacle of the eternal spirit of our Lord and Savior. No extended explanation of the title "Son of God" as applied to Jesus Christ appears necessary.

2. "FATHER" AS CREATOR

A second scriptural meaning of "Father" is that of Creator; e.g., in passages referring to any one of the Godhead as "the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are" (Ether 4:7; see also Alma 11:38–39; Mosiah 15:4).

God is not the Father of the earth as one of the worlds in space, nor of the heavenly bodies in whole or in part, not of the inanimate objects and the plants and the animals upon the earth, in the literal sense in which He is the Father of the spirits of mankind. Therefore, scriptures that refer to God in any way as the Father of the heavens and the earth are to be understood as signifying that God is the Maker, the Organizer, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.



Jesus Christ, whom we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation.

With this meaning, as the context shows in every case, Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ the Son of Elohim, is called "the Father," and even "the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth" (see passages before cited and also Mosiah 16:15). With analogous meaning Jesus Christ is called "The Everlasting Father" (Isa. 9:6; compare 2 Ne. 19:6). The descriptive titles "Everlasting" and "Eternal" in the foregoing texts are synonymous.

That Jesus Christ, whom we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation is set forth in the book *Jesus the Christ*, chapter 4 [by James E. Talmage]. Jesus Christ, being the Creator, is consistently called the Father of heaven and earth in the sense explained above; and since His creations are of eternal quality He is very properly called the Eternal Father of heaven and earth.

3. JESUS CHRIST THE "FATHER" OF THOSE WHO ABIDE IN HIS GOSPEL

A third sense in which Jesus Christ is regarded as the "Father" has reference to the relationship between Him and those who accept His gospel and thereby become heirs of eternal life. Following are a few of the scriptures illustrating this meaning.

In fervent prayer offered just prior to His entrance into Gethsemane, Jesus Christ supplicated His Father in behalf of those whom the Father had given unto Him, specifically the Apostles, and, more generally, all who would accept and abide in the gospel through the ministry of the Apostles. Read in our Lord's own words the solemn affirmation that those for whom

He particularly prayed were His own, and that His Father had given them unto Him:

"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

"Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

"And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:6–12).

And further:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

"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.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:20–24).

To His faithful servants in the present dispensation the Lord has said, "Fear not, little children, for you are mine, and I have overcome the world, and you are of them that my Father hath given me" (D&C 50:41).

Salvation is attainable only through compliance with the laws and ordinances of the gospel; and all who are thus saved become sons and daughters unto God in a distinctive sense. In a revelation given through Joseph the Prophet to Emma Smith, the Lord

Jesus addressed the woman as "my daughter" and said, "For verily I say unto you, all those who receive my gospel are sons and daughters in my kingdom" (D&C 25:1). In many instances the Lord had addressed men as His sons (e.g., D&C 9:1; 34:3; 121:7).

That by obedience to the gospel men may become sons of God, both as sons of Jesus Christ, and, through Him, as sons of His Father, is set forth in many revelations given in the current dispensation. Thus we read in an utterance of the Lord Jesus Christ to Hyrum Smith in 1829:

"Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I am the life and the light of the world.

"I am the same who came unto mine own and mine own received me not;

"But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name. Amen" (D&C 11:28–30).

To Orson Pratt the Lord spoke through Joseph the seer, in 1830:

"My son Orson, hearken and hear and behold what I, the Lord God, shall say unto you, even Jesus Christ your Redeemer;

"The light and the life of the world, a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not;

"Who so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons of God. Wherefore you are my

son" (D&C 34:1–3).

In 1830 the Lord thus addressed Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon:

"Listen to the voice of the Lord your God, even Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, whose course is one eternal round, the same today as yesterday, and forever.

"I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one" (D&C 35:1–2).

Consider also the following given in 1831:

"Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I Am, even Jesus Christ—

"The light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not;

"The same which came in the meridian of time unto mine own, and mine own received me not;



By the new birth—that of water and the Spirit—mankind may become children of Jesus Christ.

"But to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons; and even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons" (D&C 39:1–4).

In a revelation given through Joseph Smith in March 1831 we read:

"For verily I say unto you that I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the light and the life of the world—a light that shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

"I came unto mine own, and mine own received me not; but unto as many as received me gave I power to do many miracles, and to become the sons of God; and even unto them that believed on my name gave I power to obtain eternal life" (D&C 45:7–8).

A forceful exposition of this relationship between Jesus Christ as the Father and those who comply with the requirements of the gospel as His children was given by Abinadi, centuries before our Lord's birth in the flesh:

"And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?

"Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

"For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?

"Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed" (Mosiah 15:10–13).

In tragic contrast with the blessed state of those who become children of God through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ is that of the unregenerate, who are specifically called the children of the devil. Note the words of Christ, while in the flesh, to certain wicked Jews who boasted of their Abrahamic lineage: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. . . . Ye do the deeds of your father. . . . If God were your Father, ye would love

me. . . . Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:39, 41–42, 44). Thus Satan is designated as the father of the wicked, though we cannot assume any personal relationship of parent and children as existing between him and them. A combined illustration showing that the righteous are the children of God and the wicked the children of the devil appears in the parable of the tares: "The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Matt. 13:38).

Men may become children of Jesus Christ by being born anew—born of God, as the inspired word states:

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 Jn. 3:8–10).

Those who have been born unto God through obedience to the gospel may by valiant devotion to righteousness obtain exaltation and even reach the status of godhood.

Of such we read: "Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God" (D&C 76:58; compare 132:20, and contrast v. 17 in same section; see also v. 37). Yet though they be gods, they are still subject to Jesus Christ as their Father in this exalted relationship; and so we read in the paragraph following the above quotation: "And they are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (D&C 76:59).

By the new birth—that of water and the Spirit—mankind may become children of Jesus Christ, being through the means by Him provided "begotten sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:24). This solemn truth is further emphasized in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ given through Joseph Smith in 1833:

"And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn;

"And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn" (D&C 93:21–22).

For such figurative use of the term "begotten" in application to those who are born unto God, see Paul's explanation: "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4:15). An analogous



Jesus Christ is the Son of Elohim, both as spiritual and bodily offspring.

instance of sonship attained by righteous service is found in the revelation relating to the order and functions of priesthood, given in 1832:

“For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priest-hoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies:

“They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God” (D&C 84:33–34).

If it be proper to speak of those who accept and abide in the gospel as Christ’s sons and daughters—and upon this matter the scriptures are explicit and cannot be gainsaid nor denied—it is consistently proper to speak of Jesus Christ as the Father of the righteous, they having become His children and He having been made their Father through the second birth—the baptismal regeneration.

4. JESUS CHRIST THE “FATHER” BY DIVINE INVESTITURE OF AUTHORITY

A fourth reason for applying the title “Father” to Jesus Christ is found in the fact that in all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. This is true of Christ in His preexistent, antemortal, or unembodied state, in the which He was known as Jehovah; also during His embodiment in the flesh; and during His labors as a disembodied spirit in the realm of the dead; and since that period in His resurrected state. To the Jews He said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30; see also 17:11, 22); yet He declared, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), and further, “I am come in my Father’s name” (John 5:43; see also 10:25). The same truth was declared by Christ Himself to the Nephites (see 3 Ne. 20:35; 28:10), and has been reaffirmed by revelation in the present dispensation (D&C 50:43). Thus the Father placed His name upon the Son; and Jesus Christ spoke and ministered in and through the Father’s name; and so far as power, authority, and godship are concerned His words and acts were and are those of the Father.

We read, by way of analogy, that God placed His name upon or in the angel who was assigned to special ministry unto the people of Israel during the



In all His dealings with the human family, Jesus the Son represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. This principle is known as “Divine Investiture of Authority.”

exodus. Of that angel the Lord said, “Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him” (Ex. 23:21).

The ancient Apostle John was visited by an angel who ministered and spoke in the name of Jesus Christ. As we read, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John” (Rev. 1:1). John was about to worship the angelic being who spoke in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but was forbidden:

“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

“Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God” (Rev. 22:8–9).

And then the angel continued to speak as though he were the Lord Himself:

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (vv. 12–13).

The resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ, who had been exalted to the right hand of God His Father, had placed His name upon the angel sent to John, and the angel spoke in the first person, saying, “I come quickly,” “I am Alpha and Omega,” though he meant

that Jesus Christ would come and that Jesus Christ was Alpha and Omega.

None of these considerations, however, can change in the least degree the solemn fact of the literal relationship of Father and Son between Elohim and Jesus Christ. Among the spirit children of Elohim the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors. Following are affirmative scriptures bearing upon this great truth. Paul, writing to the Colossians, says of Jesus Christ:

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

“And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (Col. 1:15–19).

From this scripture we learn that Jesus Christ was “the firstborn of every creature,” and it is evident that the seniority here expressed must be with respect to antemortal existence, for Christ was not the senior of all mortals in the flesh. He is further designated as “the firstborn from the dead,” this having reference to Him as the first to be resurrected from the dead, or as elsewhere written “the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20; see also v. 23); and “the first begotten of the dead” (Rev. 1:5; compare Acts 26:23). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms the status of Jesus Christ as the firstborn of the spirit children of His Father and extols the preeminence of the Christ when tabernacled in flesh: “And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Heb. 1:6; read the preceding verses). That the spirits who were juniors to Christ were predestined to be born in the image of their Elder Brother is thus attested by Paul:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:28–29).

John the Revelator was commanded to write to the head of the Laodicean church, as the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14). In the course of a revelation given through Joseph Smith in May 1833, the Lord Jesus Christ said, as before cited, “And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn” (D&C 93:21). A later verse makes plain the fact that human beings generally were similarly existent in spirit state prior to their embodiment in the flesh: “Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth” (D&C 93:23).

There is no impropriety, therefore, in speaking of Jesus Christ as the Elder Brother of the rest of humankind. That He is by spiritual birth Brother to the

rest of us is indicated in Hebrews: “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17). Let it not be forgotten, however, that He is essentially greater than any or all others, by reason (1) of His seniority as the oldest or firstborn; (2) of His unique status in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father; (3) of His selection and fore-

ordination as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of the race; and (4) of His transcendent sinlessness.

Jesus Christ is not the Father of the spirits who have taken or yet shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of them. He is The Son, as they are sons or daughters of Elohim. So far as the stages of eternal progression and attainment have been made known through divine revelation, we are to understand that only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring. Only such exalted souls have reached maturity in the appointed course of eternal life; and the spirits born to them in the eternal worlds will pass in due sequence through the several stages or estates by which the glorified parents have attained exaltation. □

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND THE COUNCIL OF THE
TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
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Among the spirit children of Elohim, the firstborn was Jesus Christ.

Chapter 9

The Eternal Godhead

(in Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 71-77)

The Mystery of Godliness

We have set forth the true doctrine relative to those Gods whose witnesses and servants we are. It is the same doctrine that those holy beings have always revealed to their servants the prophets, and it has come anew to us in these last days by the opening of the heavens. The scriptures, both ancient and modern, contain as much about the members of the Eternal Godhead as the members of that Holy Presidency, in their infinite wisdom, feel that we as mortals should have before us in our present state of spiritual progression. But in the final and ultimate sense they are known only by personal revelation, revelation that comes to those separate individuals who attune their souls to the Infinite. To the faithful, the Holy Ghost bears witness of the Father and the Son. Then those who receive this divine witness have power, through faith and righteousness, to progress in spiritual things until the heavens are rent and they see and know for themselves.

Those desiring to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom he sent into the world, must of necessity turn for help and guidance to others who have already gained that knowledge. Truth seekers must heed the voices of the legal administrators sent to teach the truth in their day, and they must search the scriptures and ponder the inspired writings of the apostles and prophets of all ages. The light and truth they receive from the spoken word and from the written record will depend on their own spiritual status. Each pronouncement in the holy scriptures, for instance, is so written as to reveal little or much, depending on the spiritual capacity of the student. To a carnal person, a passage of scripture may mean nothing; to an honest though uninformed truth seeker, it may shed forth only a few rays of heavenly light; but to one who has the mind of Christ, the same passage may blaze forth an effulgence of celestial light. That which is a mystery to one is plain and simple to another. The things of the Spirit can be understood only by the power of the Spirit.

Using the holy scriptures as the recorded source of the knowledge of God, knowing what the Lord has revealed to them of old in visions and by the power of the Spirit, and writing as guided by that same Spirit, Joseph Smith and the early brethren of this dispensation prepared a creedal statement on the Godhead. It is without question the most

excellent summary of revealed and eternal truth relative to the Godhead that is now extant in mortal language. In it is set forth the mystery of Godliness; that is, it sets forth the personalities, missions, and ministries of those holy beings who comprise the supreme presidency of the universe. To spiritually illiterate persons, it may seem hard and confusing; to those whose souls are aflame with heavenly light, it is a nearly perfect summary of those things which must be believed to gain salvation.

"There are two personages [of tabernacle] who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible; whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth; under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space." (Lectures on Faith 5:2.)

These two, standing alone, are not the Godhead. But they are God the first and God the second. They are personages, individuals, persons, holy men. They created and they have power over all things. Their power is supreme and their wisdom infinite; there is no power they do not possess, no truth they do not know. From eternity to eternity they are the same; they are omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.

"They are the Father and the Son—the Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power, possessing all perfection and fullness, the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle." (Lectures on Faith 5:2.)

They are the two personages who came to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820 in a grove of trees in western New York. They are exalted men. Each is a personage of spirit; each is a personage of tabernacle. Both of them have bodies, tangible bodies of flesh and bones. They are resurrected beings. Words, with their finite connotations, cannot fully describe them. A personage of tabernacle, as here used, is one whose body and spirit are inseparably connected and for whom there can be no death. A personage of spirit, as here used and as distinguished from the spirit children of the Father, is a resurrected personage. Resurrected bodies, as contrasted with mortal bodies, are in fact spiritual bodies. With reference to the change of our bodies from mortality to immortality, Paul says: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:44.) "For

notwithstanding they [the saints] die, they also shall rise again, a spiritual body." (D&C 88:27.)

"The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man, or rather man was formed after his likeness and in his image; he is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father, possessing all the fullness of the Father, or the same fullness with the Father." (Lectures on Faith 5:2.)

Christ as the Firstborn, the firstborn spirit child of the Father, was in the bosom of the Father before the world was. Though he was then "in the form of God" and was "equal with God," as Paul expresses it—equal in knowledge and truth and all of the attributes of godliness—yet he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Thus he was "found in fashion as a man." (Philippians 2:6-8.) After the days of his flesh and when he had been raised from mortality to immortality by the power of the Father, he was able to say: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matthew 28:18.) Thus, the Son, as Paul tells us, now possesses "the brightness of his [Father's] glory, and the express image of his person." (Hebrews 1:3.) From all of this it follows that the Son possesses the same fullness with the Father, that is, the same glory, the same power, the same perfection, the same holiness, the same eternal life.

"The Son, . . . being begotten of him, and ordained from before the foundation of the world to be a propitiation for the sins of all those who should believe on his name, . . . is called the Son because of the flesh, and descended in suffering below that which man can suffer; or, in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be." (Lectures on Faith 5:2.)

As with all men, Christ was a spirit son in preexistence. In that premortal sphere he was chosen and ordained to be the Redeemer and Savior and to make a propitiation for the sins of all who believe and obey. But he is the Son because he alone was begotten in the flesh, in mortality, in this probationary sphere, where, as a man, he would "suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death." (Mosiah 3:7.) The greatest suffering ever endured by man or God was in Gethsemane, where the Son, in agony, sweat great drops of blood from every pore. Truly, "in bringing many sons unto glory," it pleased God "to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Hebrews 2:10.)

"But, notwithstanding all this, he kept the law of God, and remained without sin, showing thereby that it is in the power of man to

keep the law and remain also without sin; and also, that by him a righteous judgment might come upon all flesh, and that all who walk not in the law of God may justly be condemned by the law, and have no excuse for their sins." (Lectures on Faith 5:2.)

Jesus was and is the Sinless One; he kept the whole law of the whole gospel. His every thought and word and deed conformed to a divine and perfect standard. Before his birth, during mortality, and now in exalted immortality, he was and is the Holy One. Because he was sinless and perfect, he is both our Exemplar and our Judge. Being himself perfect—without taint of sin and under no personal condemnation—he can sit in judgment upon all others without having his judgments colored by any untoward thought, word, or deed. Thus, speaking of himself as both our Exemplar and our Judge, he said to the Nephite Twelve: "Ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am." (3 Nephi 27:27.)

"And he being the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fullness of the glory of the Father, possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son." (Lectures on Faith 5:2.) The mortal Jesus, as a man among men, had both a father and a mother. God was his Father, and Mary was his mother. He was begotten by a Holy Man, by that God whose name is Man of Holiness; and he was conceived in the womb of a mortal woman. Mary, a virgin of Nazareth in Galilee, was "the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh." (1 Nephi 11:18.) She was overshadowed by the Holy Ghost; "she was carried away in the Spirit" (1 Nephi 11:19); she conceived "by the power of the Holy Ghost," and she brought forth a son, "even the Son of God" (Alma 7:10). That Son, who is called Christ, is the Only Begotten, the only offspring of the Father born into mortality. As a man, as God's only Son, his only mortal Son, he overcame the world. He overcame the world of evil and carnality and devilishness, and then, having died, he rose again in glorious immortality to receive all power both on earth and in heaven, which power is the fullness of the glory of the Father. He thus possesses the same mind with the Father, knowing and believing and speaking and doing as though he were the Father. This mind is theirs by the power of the Holy Ghost. That is, the Holy Ghost, who is a personage of spirit (a spirit man!), using the light of Christ, can give the same mind to all men, whether mortal or immortal. The saints who are true and faithful in all things have, as Paul said, "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), which means also that they have the mind of the Father. It is to the faithful saints that the Holy Spirit bears witness of the Father and the Son, and it

is to them that he reveals all things.

"And these three are one, or, in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things; by whom all things were created and made that were created and made." (Lectures on Faith 5:2.)

In what way are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost one God? Though three persons are involved, they are one supreme presidency, one in creating all things, one in governing the universe with almighty power.

"And these three constitute the Godhead, and are one; the Father and the Son possessing the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power and fullness—filling all in all, the Son being filled with the fullness of the mind, glory, and power; or, in other words, the spirit, glory, and power, of the Father, possessing all knowledge and glory, and the same kingdom, sitting at the right hand of power, in the express image and likeness of the Father, mediator for man, being filled with the fullness of the mind of the Father; or, in other words, the Spirit of the Father, which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe on his name and keep his commandments." (Lectures on Faith 5:2.)

One Godhead! Three persons possessing the same mind, power, and glory! Three individuals actuated by the same spirit, knowing all things, and working together in perfect unity! God the Creator united in all things with God the Redeemer, who mediates between the Great Creator and his fallen creatures! And—wonder of wonders—the same spirit which unites the Gods of heaven is shed forth on the righteous, that they may be one as the Gods themselves are one.

"And all those who keep his commandments shall grow up from grace to grace, and become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ,—possessing the same mind, being transformed into the same image or likeness, even the express image of him who fills all in all; being filled with the fullness of his glory, and become one in him, even as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one." (Lectures on Faith 5:2.)

Thus is set forth in the credal document the doctrine—later to be endorsed and expounded in even plainer language—that as God now is, man may become.

"From the foregoing account of the Godhead, which is given in his revelations, the saints have a sure foundation laid for the exercise of faith unto life and salvation, through the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ; by whose blood they have a forgiveness of sins, and also a sure reward laid up for them in heaven, even that of partaking of the fullness of the Father and the Son through the spirit. As the Son partakes of the fullness of the Father through the Spirit, so the saints are, by the same Spirit, to be partakers of the same fullness, to enjoy the same glory; for as

the Father and the Son are one, so, in like manner, the saints are to be one in them. Through the love of the Father, the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, they are to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." (Lectures on Faith 5:3.)

Such is the course whereby the saints gain eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God. And how could Deity give anything greater to any man than the glory, power, and dominion that he himself possesses? The name of the kind of life he lives is eternal life, and all those who know him in the full and complete sense shall have eternal life.

"Behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it!" (D&C 19:10.)

A Discussion of Lecture 2

The Supreme Power over All Things: The Doctrine of the Godhead in the Lectures on Faith

(Robert L. Millet, *The Lectures on Faith in Historical Perspective*, 221-240)

Not long before his death, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote the following concerning the fifth Lecture on Faith:

Using the holy scriptures as the recorded source of the knowledge of God, knowing what the Lord has revealed to them of old in visions and by the power of the Spirit, and writing as guided by that same Spirit, Joseph Smith and the early brethren of this dispensation prepared a creedal statement on the Godhead. It is without question the most excellent summary of revealed and eternal truth relative to the Godhead that is now extant in mortal language. In it is set forth the mystery of Godliness; that is, it sets forth the personalities, missions, and ministries of those holy beings who comprise the supreme presidency of the universe. To spiritually illiterate persons, it may seem hard and confusing; to those whose souls are aflame with heavenly light, it is a nearly perfect summary of those things which must be believed to gain salvation (*A New Witness* 72).

After many years of concentrated study of the Lectures on Faith, and particularly Lecture 5, I have come to appreciate Elder McConkie's assessment; I believe the doctrines taught therein to be true and the concepts presented—though difficult and in some cases seemingly at odds with more traditional discussions of God and the Godhead—to be deep, penetrating, and, when fully grasped, soul inspiring. I believe them to be in harmony with other doctrines found in the standard works and the teachings of living apostles and prophets.

Because the Prophet was not at liberty to reveal all he knew, we are under solemn obligation to read, study, teach, and take seriously that which God *did* see fit to make known to the Latter-day Saints through him. Because Joseph Smith was given the mind of Deity, and because he was given the unique power and authorization of "expounding all scriptures" (see D&C 24:5, 9) unto the people of this dispensation, it is both fitting and proper that as we search and prayerfully consider matters pertaining to the Godhead, we give solemn and ponderous thought to insights provided by "the choice seer" of the last days.

God and the Godhead: Some Preliminary Observations

The nature of God—his character and attributes and perfections—has been treated at length by others in this symposium. I would like here to simply draw attention to a few matters which have some doctrinal bearing on a more detailed discussion of the Godhead.

First of all, it is important to note that there is no distinction made in the lectures between faith in God the Father and faith in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is as it should be, for faith in one is faith in the other. "Christ and his Father are one," wrote Elder McConkie.

They possess the same powers, are of the same character, embody the same attributes, and stand as beacons to all others with reference to the same eternal perfections. The words and acts of one are the words and acts of the other. The Father was in Christ manifesting himself to the world. Hence, faith in the Son is faith in the Father. And as Christ is the way to the Father, faith centers in him and in his redeeming sacrifice and goes thereby to the Father, who is the Creator (*A New Witness* 185).

Secondly, a careful study of all of the lectures reveals a profoundly deep concept of God. These teachings relative to God—despite some claims to the contrary—are neither primitive nor Protestant. We are made privy to a divine Being who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent:¹ he has all power, all knowledge, and is, by the power of his Spirit, everywhere present. At the same time, we are given insights into a Being who can be approached, a God who communicates freely with his people and reveals himself to those who, like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, seek after him with diligence and faithfulness (see LF 2:55). Most profoundly, we come face to face with the reality later taught in the King Follett Sermon—that men and women can mature spiritually to the point where they can become even as their exalted Sire (see LF 5:2-3; 7:8-9, 16). As indicated, these lectures are not primitive: they contain doctrinal pronouncements and

allusions which would normally be associated with the mature Joseph Smith in Nauvoo. These lectures are not Protestant: indeed, we learn of a truly infinite Being—a totally independent Being (see LF 2:2) who possesses every godly attribute in perfection (see LF 3:12-24; 4:3-16, 19; 5:1). But in no way do we encounter the utterly transcendent Deity of the creeds. God's infinity does not preclude either his immediacy or his intimacy.

The Father: A Personage of Spirit

"There are two personages," Joseph Smith explained, "who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made They are the Father and the Son" (LF 5:2). The Father and the Son are indeed the central members of the heavenly hierarchy, but as the Prophet later observed in the same lecture, the Holy Spirit is also a vital part of this eternal presidency. "These three are one," he stated; "or, in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made. And these three constitute the Godhead and are one" (LF 5:2).

Again quoting from the Prophet: "They are the Father and the Son: *the Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power*, possessing all perfection and fulness. *The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, is a personage of tabernacle*" (LF 5:2; emphasis added). This is a perplexing passage, perhaps one of the two most enigmatic passages of Lecture 5,² a segment of the lecture which seems to have resulted in confusion on the part of members and may have contributed eventually to the deletion of the Lectures on Faith from the Doctrine and Covenants in 1921. The problem lies in the fact that the Prophet appears to be teaching that God the Father is a "personage of spirit" while Jesus is "a personage of tabernacle." The latter proposition is, of course, no problem. It is the notion of the Father as a personage of spirit which is unsettling. Let us consider some possible explanations for this statement.

We cannot avoid the possible conclusion that Joseph Smith simply did not understand the corporeal or physical nature of God at the time the Lectures on Faith were delivered in the winter of 1834-35. His knowledge of things—like that of all men and women—was often incremental, and his development in understanding was thereby accomplished in "line upon line" fashion. When he left the grove of trees in 1820, Joseph Smith, Jr. did not have the doctrinal grasp or spiritual maturity that he would have when he died a martyr's death in Carthage

some 24 years later. As a result of the First Vision, Joseph knew that the heavens were no longer sealed; that Satan was more than myth or metaphor; and that the Father and Son were separate and distinct personages. There is no mention in any of his known accounts of the First Vision of the fact that God has a body of flesh and bones (Backman, *Joseph Smith's First Vision* 155-67). The earliest reference in a sermon by Joseph Smith on the corporeality of God seems to be 5 January 1841. On that occasion William Clayton recorded the Prophet as saying: "That which is without body or parts is nothing. There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones" (Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith* 60; hereafter *Words*).³ Six weeks later "Joseph said concerning the Godhead [that] it was not as many imagined—three heads and but one body; he said the three were separate bodies" (*Words* 63). On 9 March 1841 he spoke of the ministries of Jesus as the Mediator and the Holy Ghost as the witness or Testator. He then declared that "the Son had a Tabernacle and so had the Father" (*Words* 64). Finally, it was on 2 April 1843 in Ramus, Illinois that Joseph the Prophet delivered instructions on this matter which are the basis for D&C 130:22-23: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost ... is a personage of Spirit" (see *Words* 173).

A second possibility is that Joseph Smith did indeed understand that God has a body but that the passage in Lecture 5 under consideration has simply been misunderstood. If so, what could the phrase mean? To begin with, we should note that the complete expression is not "a personage of spirit," but rather "a personage of *spirit, glory, and power*." This may well be intended more as a description of God's divine nature—a statement regarding his exalted and glorified status—than of his physical being. The word "spirit," as used for example in Moses 1, is a synonym for glory or power: his Spirit is his glory. Thus the account indicates that after a marvelous vision "the *presence* of God withdrew from Moses, that his *glory* was not upon Moses" (v 9). When Satan came tempting and taunting, the Lawgiver found that he was still possessed of sufficient spiritual power and discernment to distinguish between the true God of glory and the "god of this world" (v 20; see also 2 Cor 4:4). "Blessed be the name of my God," Moses exulted, "for *his Spirit* hath not altogether withdrawn from me" (Moses 1:15; emphasis added). To speak of the spirit, glory, and power of the Father is to speak of his greatness, of his omnipotence, of his majesty. Thus it is that later in this lecture the Prophet says, "The Father and the Son possess the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power,

and fulness—filling all in all. *The Son, being filled with the fulness of the mind, glory, and power, or in other words, the spirit, glory, and power, of the Father, possesses all knowledge and glory*" (LF 5:2; emphasis added). Please note that the phrase "spirit, glory, and power" is used here to describe that which makes the Son one with the Father—the attributes of Godhood. Note the equation of spirit with *light* in the following verse from the Doctrine and Covenants: "For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (D&C 84:45).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has suggested that the phrase "a personage of spirit" has reference to God's *spiritual* nature—the fact that he is a resurrected and immortal being and as such is not subject to death, ie, a spiritual body. "They are the two personages who came to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820"; he also wrote:

They are exalted men. Each is a personage of spirit; each is a personage of tabernacle. Both of them have bodies, tangible bodies of flesh and bones. They are resurrected beings. Words, with their finite connotations, cannot fully describe them. A personage of tabernacle, as here used, is one whose body and spirit are inseparably connected and for whom there can be no death. A personage of spirit, as here used and as distinguished from the spirit children of the Father, is a resurrected personage. Resurrected bodies, as contrasted with mortal bodies, are in fact spiritual bodies (*A New Witness* 72-73; see also Penrose 12-13; 1 Cor 15:44; D&C 88:27; Alma 11:45).

It is interesting to read the catechism following Lecture 5. In response to the question, "What is the Father?" the answer is given: "He is a personage of glory and of power." Note the rather obvious omission of any reference to the Father as *a personage of spirit*. I suggest that there is no reference to his being a personage of spirit because to say such is repetitious; we have already established that he is a personage of power and glory, which in the mind of Joseph Smith is the same as saying that he is a personage of spirit. It is also worth noting in the catechism that in the scriptures cited to establish the Father as a personage of power and glory, all of them speak of his attributes and his exaltation. Noticeably absent is John 4:24—the one passage from the Bible that might have been used to establish clearly that God is a spirit. "God is a spirit," the King James Version has Jesus explaining, "and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." But of course

Joseph Smith would not cite this passage from the King James Bible, since he had previously learned by revelation—some time between November 1831 and 16 February 1832 (Matthews 96)—that this verse was a mistranslation. The inspired translation reads as follows: "And the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. For unto such hath God promised his Spirit. And they who worship him, must worship in spirit and in truth" (JST John 4:25-26). One cannot help but wonder whether the inspired revision did not have some impact on the Prophet's thought regarding the nature of God; that is to say, if he did not know of the corporeality of God at the time of the First Vision, did he know it by the time he had translated these verses in John?⁴

I am indebted to my colleague Professor Milton Backman for bringing to light an important document—a description of Mormonism by a Protestant clergyman in Ohio. Truman Coe, a Presbyterian minister who had for four years lived among the Saints in Kirtland, published the following regarding the Mormons in the 11 August 1836 *Ohio Observer*: "They contend that the God worshipped by the Presbyterians and all other sectarians is no better than a wooden god. *They believe that the true God is a material being, composed of body and parts*; and that when the Creator formed Adam in his own image, he made him about the size and shape of God himself" (Backman, "Truman Coe's 1836 Description of Mormonism" 347, 354; emphasis added). If a non-Mormon had observed as early as 1836 that the Latter-day Saints were teaching that God has a body, it is certainly not inconceivable that such things were known by Joseph Smith a year or so earlier at the time of the School of the Elders. It is interesting to note in D&C 93:33 the Lord states that "man is spirit." This would appear to be a reference to man's eternal nature, and certainly not an allusion to his physical person. Perhaps the phrase "personage of spirit" also has reference to God as a being who is from everlasting to everlasting.

The Son: A Personage of Tabernacle

Jesus Christ the Son is described in Lecture 5 as having been "in the bosom of the Father ... a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man, being in the form and likeness of man, or rather man was formed after his likeness and in his image. He is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father, possessing all the fulness of the Father, or the same fulness with the Father" (LF 5:2). The section of this lecture dealing with Christ is a statement of the

Incarnation, a reaffirmation of what the Book of Mormon prophets knew as "the condescension of God" (see 1 Nephi 11; Mosiah 3:1-11; 7:26-28). He who had been in the bosom of the Father—who had been the Lord God Omnipotent, the Holy One of Israel and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—came to earth; he chose to "descend from his throne divine" (*Hymns* 193) to accomplish his mission of mercy. The Son is called a "personage of tabernacle" here because his assignment on earth pertained to the redemption and regeneration of the flesh. Thus Elohim is designated as the Father, a being of spirit, glory, and power, while Jesus Christ is called the Son, "because of the flesh" (LF 5:2). These words are in harmony with the doctrines of the condescension of God in the Book of Mormon. Abinadi thus prophesied that because Jesus the Messiah would dwell "in the flesh he shall be called the Son of God" (Mosiah 15:2). King Limhi explained to Ammon concerning Abinadi:

And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or, in other words, he said that man was created after the image of God, and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth—and now, because he said this, they did put him to death (Mosiah 7:27-28).

The language of Lecture 5 regarding the relationship of the Father to the Son is also highly reminiscent of the language of the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants. In this revelation, for example, Christ explained that he is called "the Father because [Elohim] gave me of his fulness, and *the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle*, and dwelt among the sons of men" (D&C 93:4; emphasis added). Further, in regard to the divine indwelling relationship that exists between the Father and the Son—the manner in which in the resurrection the fulness of the glory of the Father came to be centered in the Son—the revelation continues with an excerpt from the record of John. It is stated that Christ was called the Son of God "because he received not of the fulness at the first," but that in the resurrection "he received a fulness of the glory of the Father; and he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him" (D&C 93:14, 16-17). The divine Sonship of Christ—the fact that Jesus possessed the powers of immortality while he

dwelt in the flesh—is also affirmed in Lecture 5. Jesus "descended in suffering below that which man can suffer; or, in other words, he suffered greater sufferings and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be" (LF 5:2). The conclusion: Jesus of Nazareth was more than man, for the full act of propitiation required a God (see Mosiah 3:7, 9; Alma 34:11). Our Lord is "he that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth" (D&C 88:6). In the words of Paul, "he that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph 4:10). How is it that Christ "was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be"? Simply stated, the ministry of Messiah was a life filled with irony. During the hours of atonement, for example, he who had remained sinless became, as it were, the great sinner. In the language of Paul, God the Father "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor 5:21). To the Galatian Saints, Paul taught that "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). He who deserved least of all to suffer suffered the most—more than mortal mind can fathom. He who had brought life—the more abundant life (John 10:10)—subjected himself to the powers of death and darkness.

Notwithstanding all the sufferings and the infinite opposition faced by the Infinite One, the Prophet testified that the Savior "kept the law of God and remained without sin, showing thereby that it is in the power of man to keep the law and remain also without sin. And also that by him a righteous judgment might come upon all flesh, that all who walk not in the law of God may justly be condemned by the law and have no excuse for their sins" (LF 5:2). Jesus never took a backward step nor a moral detour. He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15; see also 1 Peter 2:22). As the Sinless One, he is thus the perfect Prototype (see LF 7:9), the standard against which all others are judged. The standard of perfection is fixed. It is in place. It is irrevocable. Because God himself is the embodiment of "truth, justice, judgment, mercy, and an infinity of fulness, from everlasting to everlasting" (D&C 109:77), he could not expect less from his children. What is possible, however, is not always probable. Though the standard is set and the example a matter of history, the Prophet recognized that ultimate perfection is a matter toward which men and women reach even beyond this life (*Words* 345, 358). "Where is the man that is free from vanity?" Joseph Smith asked on a subsequent occasion. "None ever were perfect but Jesus," he taught, "and why was he perfect? because he was

the Son of God, and had the fulness of the Spirit, and greater power than any man" (*Words* 72). Similarly, Elder Bruce R. McConkie declared in an address at Brigham Young University:

We have to become perfect to be saved in the celestial kingdom. But nobody becomes perfect in this life. Only the Lord Jesus attained that state, and he had an advantage that none of us has. He was the Son of God, and he came into this life with a spiritual capacity and a talent and an inheritance that exceeded beyond all comprehension what any of the rest of us was born with. Our revelations say that he was like unto God in the premortal life and he was, under the Father, the creator of worlds without number. That Holy Being was the Holy One of Israel anciently and he was the Sinless One in mortality. He lived a perfect life, and he set an ideal example. This shows that we can strive and go forward toward that goal, but no other mortal—not the greatest prophets nor the mightiest apostles nor any of the righteous saints of any of the ages—has ever been perfect, but we must become perfect to gain a celestial inheritance. As it is with being born again, and as it is with sanctifying our souls, so becoming perfect in Christ is a process ("Jesus Christ and Him Crucified" 399-400).

Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). To the Nephites he said: "I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live" (3 Nephi 15:9).

The Holy Spirit: The Mind of the Father and Son

Though the Prophet began the fifth lecture by stating that the Father and Son were the supreme power over all things, he also observed that the Holy Spirit is the third member of the eternal presidency and that these three—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—"constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made. And these three constitute the Godhead and are one" (LF 5:2). It is true, as some have pointed out, that the Prophet did not refer in Lecture 5 to the Holy Spirit as a *personage*. Some have further suggested that this doctrine was not clarified until the administration of President Joseph F. Smith (Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine" 25-26; also *Mormonism in Transition* 272-306). As we will discuss later, what Joseph

Smith knew and taught and what the Saints understood may be two different matters. One of the earliest references to the personage status of the Holy Spirit in the documents now available to us is from a sermon delivered some six years later, on 9 March 1841, a portion of which I cited earlier. In speaking of the separate and severable functions of the members of the Godhead, Joseph Smith explained that "the Son had a tabernacle and so had the Father, but the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit without tabernacle" (*Words* 64). The most famous statement in Latter-day Saint theology regarding the mission of the Spirit is that recorded by Willard Richards in Ramus, Illinois:

The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also. But the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit. And a person cannot have the personage of the Holy Ghost in his heart. He may receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; it may descend upon him but not tarry with him (*Words* 173).

On 11 June 1843 Wilford Woodruff recorded the following remarks by the Prophet:

There is much said concerning God the Godhead. And the scripture says there are Gods many and Lords many. The teachers of the day say that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God and that they are all in one body and one God. Jesus says or prays that those that the Father had given him out of the world might be made one in us as we are one, but if they were to be stuffed into one person that would make a great God. If I were to testify that the world was wrong on this point it would be true. Peter says that Jesus Christ sat on the right hand of God. *Any person that has seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens holding the keys of power* (*Words* 214; emphasis added).

Finally, perhaps the most explicit statement as to the role and mission of the Holy Ghost is recorded by George Laub. According to Brother Laub, Joseph Smith taught on 16 June 1844 that God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost are separate persons but that they "all agree in one or the self same thing. But the Holy Ghost is yet a spiritual body and waiting to take to himself a body as the Savior did, or as God did, or the Gods before them took bodies" (*Words* 382).

The matter in Lecture 5 is complicated somewhat by the unusual

manner in which the Prophet describes the work of the Spirit. Jesus Christ is said to have "received a fulness of the glory of the Father, *possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit that bears record of the Father and the Son*" (LF 5:2; emphasis added). Not only is the Holy Spirit not accorded personage status in this reference, but he seems to be relegated to some type of mystical connecting link between the other two members of the Godhead. The Son is said to be "filled with the fulness of the *mind*, glory, and power, or in other words, the *spirit*, glory, and power, of the Father." The Son is "filled with the fulness of the *mind* of the Father, or ... the *Spirit* of the Father, which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe on his name and keep his commandments" (LF 5:2; emphasis added). It appears to me that the difficulty here is heightened by the lack of distinction between what we would call the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith is speaking in the broadest of terms and simply refers to the Holy Spirit as the mind of God. "It is true," stated President Charles W. Penrose, "that the Holy Spirit conveys the mind of God; that is, I am speaking now of this universal spirit which is the life and the light of all things, which is in and through and round about all things, and God says he made the world by the power of that spirit. That is his agent; but the personage, the Comforter, which Jesus Christ said he would send when he went away, that was a personage of the Trinity" (Penrose 16). Elder Bruce R. McConkie likewise wrote that the Savior

possesses the same mind with the Father, knowing and believing and speaking and doing as though he were the Father. This mind is theirs by the power of the Holy Ghost. That is, the Holy Ghost, who is a personage of spirit (a spirit man!), using the light of Christ, can give the same mind to all men, whether mortal or immortal. The saints who are true and faithful in all things have, as Paul said, "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), which means also that they have the mind of the Father (*A New Witness* 75).

It would not be difficult to suppose that at the time the Lectures on Faith were delivered the Prophet Joseph Smith had not yet learned of the personage status of the Holy Ghost and thus made no doctrinal distinction between the Spirit's person and powers. There is, however, one major difficulty with drawing the conclusion that the personage status of the Holy Ghost was not taught until after the turn of this century—Joseph Smith himself made a statement just eleven days before

his death that disproves such a proposition. "I have always [taught]," Thomas Bullock quoted Joseph Smith as saying, "in all congregations when I have preached, it has been the plurality of Gods. It has been preached fifteen years. I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father. The Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and or spirit, and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods" (*Words* 378). Rather than contradicting the Prophet—rather than concluding that Joseph did not preach something when he said he had—I choose to believe, with Elders Penrose and McConkie, that Joseph Smith did know the difference even though that difference is not clear in the records we have. Or it may have been that he thought it unnecessary to make that distinction every time he spoke because he had made it before. As we shall discuss shortly, there was, no doubt, a significant chasm between what the Prophet knew and what the Saints knew, as well as between what the Prophet knew and what he taught.

Becoming Heirs of the Heavenly Kingdom

In Lecture 5 Joseph Smith lifted our vision of man's eternal possibilities. Simply stated, he taught at this early date that man may become even as God. He instructed the School of the Elders that the Saints "who keep [the Lord's] commandments shall grow from grace to grace and become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. They will possess the same mind, being transformed into the same image or likeness, even the express image of him who fills all in all, being filled with the fulness of his glory and becoming one in him, even as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one" (LF 5:2). We see reflected once again the doctrine of D&C 93, wherein Christ's pathway to Godhood is laid out, and the Saints are taught *how* to worship and *what* to worship. The essence of true worship is emulation, the imitation of the works and labors of Christ (McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* 568-69). Just as their prototype received divine assistance from the Father as he gave of himself to his fellow men (ie, he received "grace for grace"); just as Christ "received not of the fulness" of the glory of the Father at the first, but "continued from grace to grace"—grew line upon line, developed from one level of spiritual grace to a higher; and just as Christ received in the resurrection the fulness of the Father, so may all men and women follow such a path and grow in spiritual graces until they inherit all that the Father has (see D&C 93:12-20).

To say that men may possess "the same mind" as God, that they

may be "transformed into [his] same image or likeness," or that they may partake "of the fulness of the Father and the Son through the Spirit" (LF 5:2, 3), is to say that men may come unto God in more than metaphorical fashion. To be a "joint-heir with Christ" is to be a co-inheritor with him, to possess on equal standing with the Holder of the birthright.⁵ Elder McConkie has stressed that the fifth Lecture on Faith teaches "that we, as fallible, weak, mortal men—subject to all the ills, difficulties, and vicissitudes of life—have power to advance and progress and become like our exalted and eternal Father and his beloved Son." It thus sets forth "the same doctrine that concludes, 'As God now is, man may become.' This thing was announced, in principle, in the School of the Prophets and did not have to wait for a King Follett sermon, although, I suppose, the Saints did not fully grasp what was involved in this language initially" (McConkie, "The Lord God of Joseph Smith" 5). "Here then is Eternal life," the Prophet would teach at the theological peak of his ministry,

to know the only wise and true God. You have got to learn how to be a God yourself and to be a king and priest to God, [the] same as all have done, by going from a small capacity to another, from grace to grace, until the resurrection, and sit in everlasting power as they who have gone before.... How consoling to the mourner when they are called to part with a wife, mother, father, daughter, relative, to know that although the earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved that they shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ, to inherit the same power ... the same as those who are gone before" (*Words* 350).

Again I am eager to affirm that the Lectures on Faith are not primitive; I do not see them as being out of harmony in any way with what Joseph the Prophet later taught; they are certainly not something beyond which he and the Church later evolved. All the Lectures on Faith, and Lecture 5 in particular, contain much that is meaty, much that requires pondering and prayer and comparison and contemplation. They "were given to the saints and not the world, to enable the apostles, elders, and righteous people of the kingdom to fulfill the same plea made by the prophets of old—'Lord, Increase our faith'" (McConkie, "Lord, Increase Our Faith" 5).

The Knowledge of God: The Prophets and the People

"Brother Joseph," observed Wilford Woodruff,

used a great many methods of testing the integrity of men; and he taught a great many things which, in consequence of tradition, required prayer, faith, and a testimony from the Lord, before they could be believed by many of the Saints. His mind was opened by the visions of the Almighty, and the Lord taught him many things by vision and revelation that were never taught publicly in his days; for the people could not bear the flood of intelligence which God poured into his mind (*Journal of Discourses* 5:83-84; hereafter *JD*).

Five months before his death, Joseph Smith lamented that there has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle. Even the Saints are slow to understand.

I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all. How many will be able to abide a celestial law, and go through and receive their exaltation, I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen (*History of the Church* 6:184-85; hereafter *HC*).

We simply are unable to gauge how much the Prophet knew—how much God had revealed to him personally—using only the basis of what the Saints knew. It would be a serious historical error to suppose that because the average member of the Church did not understand the nature of the Godhead—whether, for example, the Father had a corporeal body or whether the Holy Ghost was a personage—that Joseph the Prophet did not understand, and that the Lectures on Faith reflect that lack of understanding. This would also apply to some of the leaders of the Church, even some of the first Apostles. Because Parley P. Pratt failed to distinguish the Light of Christ from the personage of the Holy Ghost in his masterwork, *Key to the Science of Theology*,⁶ does not reflect one way or another on what Joseph Smith comprehended or what

he intended in the School of the Elders. Few would argue against the proposition that Parley's brother, Orson, was one of the great theological minds of this dispensation. And yet we find Orson Pratt, as late as 1855, still wondering about the personage status of the Holy Ghost (*JD* 2:337-38), when, in fact, Joseph Smith had revealed clearly, as early as 1841, that the Holy Ghost was a personage of spirit as has already been noted above. The fact that the people did not fully grasp the intricacies of the doctrines is totally unrelated to what their leader was able to grasp and thus is unrelated to what he taught and what he intended to be understood. We must not be guilty of setting bounds for God or his prophet-leaders, subscribing them on the basis of our present view of things.

Conclusion

In my view the Lectures on Faith have not received the positive attention they ought to have received by the Latter-day Saints. They were, in fact, acknowledged by the members in 1835 as the "doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day Saints." I find the doctrine and scope of the Lectures to be stimulating and the perspective to be harmonious with traditional theology of the 20th-century Church. Like the Book of Mormon, I find their contents to be profound, even though they come from an early period in the Church's history. Truly "one of the flaws in the reasoning of some ... is an over-reliance upon a linear view of history, an acceptance of the principle that phenomena evolve from previously existing circumstances. Such is certainly not the case in all situations; many events or movements"—and, without question, many doctrines—"[are] more revolutionary than evolutionary" (Millet 189). The Lectures on Faith are illustrative of this phenomenon: they come from a formative period of our history but make known truths which, when carefully studied and fully appreciated, would be considered a part of the mature Joseph Smith and the Nauvoo Church. Whether Joseph Smith himself literally wrote every word in Lecture 5 is immaterial to me; the

Lectures were at least in part written by the Prophet and wholly approved by him in preparation for their inclusion in the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (HC 2:180).

"In my own judgment," said President Joseph Fielding Smith, "these Lectures on Faith are of great value and should be studied.... They were not taken out of the Doctrine and Covenants because they contained false doctrine, and I consider them to be of extreme value in the study of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (194). Perhaps Elder McConkie voiced my own feelings best when he spoke of Lecture Five to a Brigham Young University audience in 1972. "In my judgment," he said, "it is the most comprehensive, intelligent, inspired utterance that now exists ... in one place defining, interpreting, expounding, announcing, and testifying what kind of being God is. It was written by the power of the Holy Ghost, by the spirit of inspiration. It is, in effect, eternal scripture; it is true" ("The Lord God of Joseph Smith" 4).

NOTES

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Footnotes

1. I should distinguish here between and LDS view of God's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, and that held by many in Catholicism or Protestantism. We do not believe in the utterly transcendent Being of the creeds, nor do we subscribe to the notion of a creation *ex nihilo*. God has all power but works within established parameters. "Whatever His wisdom indicates as necessary to be done God can and will do. The means through which He operates may not be of infinite capacity in themselves, but they are directed by an infinite power. A rational conception of His omnipotence is power to do all that He may will to do" (Talmage 44). Latter-day Saints attest to God's corporeality and thus his inability to be, in person at least, everywhere at the same time. He is able, however, through his holy Spirit (also called the Light of Christ) to be in and through all things.
2. The other troublesome passage deals with the role of the Holy Spirit as the "mind" of the other two members of the Godhead (LF 5:2), and will be discussed below.
3. Quotations from *Words of Joseph Smith* have been modernized and corrected in this article.
4. At an even earlier date (Nov-Dec 1830), the Prophet's inspired revision of Genesis resulted in the following scripture: "In the day that God created man, (in the likeness of God made he him,) *in the image of his own body*, male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created, and became living souls, in the land, upon the footstool of God" (JST Gen 6:9; emphasis added; see also Moses 6:8-9).
5. Thus those who are entitled to membership in the "Church of the Firstborn" are not simply those who are members of the Lord's earthly church, but rather those who with Christ become joint-heirs to all the Father has; they are entitled to all of the blessings of the Firstborn and thus inherit them as though they were

the firstborn. As such they are not just sons and daughters of Jesus Christ but sons and daughters of God, meaning the Father (see McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 2:471-75; See also D&C 76:58).

6. See Alexander's discussion in *Mormonism in Transition* (280-81). See also Parley P. Pratt's *An Answer to Mr. William Hewitt's Tract Against the Latter-Day Saints*, wherein even Elder Pratt gives evidence that he was struggling to understand the corporeality of God the Father.

Lecture 6

ON FAITH

1. Having treated the ideas of the character, perfections, and attributes of God in the preceding lectures, we next proceed to treat the knowledge which persons must have that the course of life which they pursue is according to the will of God, so they may be enabled to exercise faith in him unto life and salvation.

2. This knowledge supplies an important place in revealed religion; for it was by reason of it that the ancients were enabled to endure "as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27). It is essential for any person to have an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to the will of God to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life. It was this that enabled the ancient Saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing (not believing merely) that they had a more enduring substance (Heb 10:34).

3. Having the assurance that they were pursuing a course which was agreeable to the will of God, they were enabled to take not only the spoiling of their goods and the wasting of their substance joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms, knowing (not merely believing) that when this "earthly house of this tabernacle [was] dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1).

4. Such was and always will be the situation of the Saints of God. Unless they have an actual knowledge that the course they are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds and faint. For such has been and always will be the opposition in the hearts of unbelievers and those who know not God against the pure and unadulterated religion of heaven (the only thing which ensures eternal life). They will persecute to the uttermost all who worship God according to his revelations, receive the truth in the love of it, and submit themselves to be guided and directed by his will. And they will drive them to such extremities that nothing short of an actual knowledge of their being the favorites of heaven and of their having embraced that order of things which God has established for the redemption of man will enable them to exercise that confidence in

him necessary for them to overcome the world and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God.

5. For a man to lay down his all—his character and reputation, his honor and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also, counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ—requires more than mere belief or supposition that he is doing the will of God. It requires actual knowledge, realizing that when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest and be a partaker of the glory of God.

6. For unless a person does know that he is walking according to the will of God, it would be offering an insult to the dignity of the Creator were he to say that he would be a partaker of his glory when he should be done with the things of this life. But when he has this knowledge and most assuredly knows that he is doing the will of God, his confidence can be equally strong that he will be a partaker of the glory of God.

7. Let us here observe that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation. For from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It is through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life. And it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do His will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering and that he has not sought nor will he seek His face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

8. It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice and

through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him.

9. It was in offering sacrifices that Abel, the first martyr, obtained knowledge that he was accepted of God. And from the days of righteous Abel to the present time, the knowledge that men have that they are accepted in the sight of God is obtained by offering sacrifice. And in the last days before the Lord comes, he is to gather together his saints who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Ps 50:3-5).

10. Those, then, who make the sacrifice will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God. And those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith. Therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority so to do; and without this guarantee faith could not exist.

11. All the Saints of whom we have account in all the revelations of God which are extant obtained the knowledge which they had of their acceptance in his sight through the sacrifice which they offered unto him. And through the knowledge thus obtained, their faith became sufficiently strong to lay hold upon the promise of eternal life and to endure "as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27). They were enabled through faith to combat the powers of darkness, contend against the wiles of the adversary, overcome the world, and obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

12. But those who have not made this sacrifice to God do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight. For whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter of doubt and uncertainty in their mind; and where doubt and uncertainty are, there faith is not, nor can it be. For

doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time. So persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence, and where unshaken confidence is not, there faith is weak. And where faith is weak, the persons will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. But they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them. 1

Note: This lecture is so plain and the facts set forth so self-evident that it is deemed unnecessary to form a catechism upon it. The student is, therefore, instructed to commit the whole to memory [1835 footnote].

Chapter 21

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

(Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 185-201)

Faith Centers in Christ

Thus far in our analysis of faith we have spoken primarily of faith in God without differentiating between the Father and the Son. Nor has it been necessary so to do, for faith in one is faith in the other. Joseph Smith taught that the Father is the author of the plan of salvation and of the law of faith that is part of this great and eternal plan. This plan has become Christ's by adoption, and he has put all its terms and conditions into full operation through his infinite and eternal atonement.

To gain salvation, men must come unto the Father, attain the faith that he exercises, and be as he is. Christ has done so; he is both a saved being and the perfect and only illustration of what others must do to gain like inheritances and be joint-heirs with him. He is thus the way to the Father; no man cometh unto the Father but by him and by his word. He is our Mediator, Advocate, and Intercessor, all because he wrought out the perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood. Through him, and through him only, fallen men may be reconciled to God if they repent and work righteousness.

Christ and his Father are one. They possess the same powers, are of the same character, embody the same attributes, and stand as beacons to all others with reference to the same eternal perfections. The words and acts of one are the words and acts of the other. The Father was in Christ manifesting himself to the world. Hence, faith in the Son is faith in the Father. And as Christ is the way to the Father, faith centers in him and in his redeeming sacrifice and goes thereby to the Father, who is the Creator.

We do not single Christ out and set him apart from the [page 186] Father; our prayers do not go through him to the Father; he does not stand alone as a person with whom we do or should have some special relationship that excludes the other members of the Godhead. We are commanded in the revealed word to worship the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Ghost. We are the spirit children of the Father, as is Christ, and our objective is to do what Christ did and thus become like the Father. Elohim is our God and he is Christ's God. The

Son worships the Father, as we are commanded to do; if there is any being with whom we should feel a special kinship, it is with the Father. But Christ as the Only Begotten in the flesh, as the Redeemer, as the Savior, has made salvation possible and has become one with the Father. Thus salvation is in Christ; faith centers in him; and faithful saints have power to become like him and be as he is, even as he is as his Father.

Growing in Faith

One man and one man only had perfect faith. He was the Lord Jesus, and his faith was perfect because he lived a life of perfection. None others have ever done so. He alone knew no sin. His every word and act conformed to a divine standard; from Bethlehem to Calvary, the light of heaven guided his deeds and placed words in his mouth. None of the residue of men have ever walked in such an upright course. But all faithful people have the desire, born of the Spirit, to grow in faith and be more like him. All the saints desire to increase in faith and godliness. His ancient apostles, for instance, said to him: "Increase our faith." Such of his reply as is recorded tells them not how to increase their faith, but the power that will be theirs if they do so. "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed," Jesus responded, "ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." (Luke 17:5-6.)

These ancient apostles had faith. They knew Jesus was the Son of God, and they had already preached and would yet preach the gospel and work miracles. Faith was theirs because they worshipped the true God and had a knowledge of his character, attributes, and perfections. We also stand where they stood. We have forsaken the creeds of Christendom and [page 187] believe in those Holy Beings who appeared to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820. We have proper views as to their character, attributes, and perfections. What must we yet do to gain faith unto life and salvation? The answer is found in these words of the Prophet Joseph Smith: "An actual knowledge to any person, that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life." (*Lectures on Faith* 6:2.)

Faith is born of knowledge. It first breathes the breath of life in the hearts of those who believe in God and who know what kind of a being he is. Then,

as a newborn baby, it begins to grow by obedience to the laws of the Lord. It reaches full maturity when its possessor, through righteousness, gains the assurance that his way of life conforms to the divine will.

Faith in its full and pure form requires an unshakable assurance and an absolute confidence that Deity will hear our pleas and grant our petitions. It requires a mental guarantee, sealed with surety in the soul, that what we ask is right and will be granted. Only then can we "come boldly unto the throne of grace," there to "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16.) And it scarcely needs stating that no person can have this confidence and assurance when he knows he is not living in the way the Lord wants him to live.

According to the Prophet, it was this knowledge of conformity to divine standards and the resultant oneness it created between man and his Maker, "that enabled the ancient saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions, and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing (not believing merely) that they had a more enduring substance. (Hebrews 10:34.) Having the assurance that they were pursuing a course which was agreeable to the will of God, they were enabled to take, not only the spoiling of their goods, and the wasting of their substance, joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms; knowing (not merely believing) that when this earthly house of their tabernacle was dissolved, they had a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Corinthians 5:1.)"

And if it was thus among the ancients, whom we so highly revere, should it not be the same among us? In answer, the [page 188] Prophet's account attests: "Such was, and always will be, the situation of the saints of God, that unless they have an actual knowledge that the course they are pursuing is according to the will of God they will grow weary in their minds, and faint; for such has been, and always will be, the opposition in the hearts of unbelievers and those that know not God against the pure and unadulterated religion of heaven (the only thing which insures eternal life), that they will persecute to the uttermost all that worship God according to his revelations, receive the truth in the love of it, and submit themselves to be guided and directed by his will; and drive them to such extremities that nothing short of an actual knowledge of their being the favorites of heaven, and of their having embraced that

order of things which God has established for the redemption of man, will enable them to exercise that confidence in him, necessary for them to overcome the world, and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God." (*Lectures on Faith* 6:2-4.)

Sacrificing to Gain Faith

In this mortal probation, as pilgrims far from their heavenly home, the saints are called upon to put first in their lives the things of God's kingdom and to let the things of this world sink into a place of relative insignificance. If their hearts are set upon worldly things, including lands and money and power, their reward will come in the currency of the world. It is only when men's hearts are set on heavenly things, when they lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal, that they are paid in the currency of heaven.

The trials and tests of mortality are designed to determine whether men will use their time and talents in worldly or spiritual pursuits. The crowning test in this field is the test of sacrifice. The Lord's saints must be willing, if called upon to do so, to sacrifice all that they have, including life itself, in their pursuit of eternal life. It is to them that this promise of Jesus applies: "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." (Matthew 19:29.) [page 189]

Nowhere in all our literature is the law of sacrifice set forth with such clarity and power as is found in these words of Joseph Smith: "For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor, and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also—counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ—requires more than mere belief or supposition that he is doing the will of God; but actual knowledge, realizing that, when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest, and be a partaker of the glory of God. For unless a person does know that he is walking according to the will of God, it would be offering an insult to the dignity of the Creator were he to say that he would be a partaker of his glory when he should be done with the things of this life. But when he has this

knowledge, and most assuredly knows that he is doing the will of God, his confidence can be equally strong that he will be a partaker of the glory of God."

Faith and sacrifice go hand in hand. Those who have faith sacrifice freely for the Lord's work, and their acts of sacrifice increase their faith. "Let us here observe," the Prophet continues, "that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God."

We do not say that no person will gain eternal life unless and until he sacrifices all things, life included. If such were the case, there would be no saved beings except the martyrs whose blood is spilt in the cause of truth and righteousness. But we do say that all who receive so great a reward must be willing to forsake their all if called upon to do so. "When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life," our account continues, "and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most [page 190] assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life."

To gain the same faith and inherit the same reward enjoyed by the saints of old, we must live and sacrifice as they did. "It is vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him."

Addressing himself to the Latter-day Saints, who in holy places "have made a covenant" of sacrifice with the Lord, the Prophet continues: "Those, then, who make the sacrifice, will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of

God; and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith: therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority so to do, and without this guarantee faith could not exist."

Thus, it is with the true believers today as it has been with their counterparts in former days. "All the saints of whom we have account, in all the revelations of God which are extant, obtained the knowledge which they had of their acceptance in his sight through the sacrifice which they offered unto him; and through the knowledge thus obtained their faith became sufficiently strong to lay hold upon the promise of eternal life, and to endure as seeing him who is invisible; and were enabled, through faith, to combat the powers of darkness, contend against the wiles of the adversary, overcome the world, and obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."

What of the saints, no matter what age they live in, who are not willing to offer their all upon the Lord's altar? "Those who [page 191] have not made this sacrifice to God do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight; for whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter of doubt and uncertainty in their mind; and where doubt and uncertainty are there faith is not, nor can it be. For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time; so that persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence; and where unshaken confidence is not there faith is weak; and where faith is weak the persons will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; and they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them." (*Lectures on Faith* 6:5-12.)

Working by Faith

How do men exercise faith? If they have an occasion to heal the sick, raise the dead, or move mountains, how is it done? Faith is power, but what causes the power to flow forth and accomplish the desired result? As an introductory explanation, the account we are studying asks: "What are we to understand by a man's working by faith?"

By way of answer, the account says: "We understand that when a man works by faith he works by mental exertion instead of physical force. It is by words, instead of exerting his physical powers, with which every being works when he works by faith. God said, 'Let there be light: and there was light.' Joshua spake and the great lights which God had created stood still. Elijah commanded, and the heavens were stayed for the space of three years and six months, so that it did not rain: he again commanded and the heavens gave forth rain. All this was done by faith. And the Saviour says: 'If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, say to this mountain, "Remove," and it will remove; or say to that sycamine tree, "Be ye plucked up, and planted in the midst of the sea," and it shall obey you.' Faith, then, works by words; and with these its mightiest works have been, and will be performed." (*Lectures on Faith* 7:3.)

But working by faith is not the mere speaking of a few well-[page 192] chosen words; anyone with the power of speech could have commanded the rotting corpse of Lazarus to come forth, but only one whose power was greater than death could bring life again to the brother of Mary and Martha. Nor is working by faith merely a mental desire, however strong, that some eventuality should occur. There may be those whose mental powers and thought processes are greater than any of the saints, but only persons who are in tune with the Infinite can exercise the spiritual forces and powers that come from him.

Those who work by faith must first have faith; no one can use a power that he does not possess, and the faith or power must be gained by obedience to those laws upon which its receipt is predicated. These we have set forth. Those who work by faith must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and in his Father. They must accept at face value what the revealed word teaches as to the character, attributes, and perfections of the Father and the Son. They must then work the works of righteousness until they know within themselves that their way of life conforms to the divine will, and they must be willing

to lay their all on the altar of the Almighty.

And then—when the day is at hand and the hour has arrived for the miracle to be wrought—then they must be in tune with the Holy Spirit of God. He who is the Author of faith, he whose power faith is, he whose works are the embodiment of justice and judgment and wisdom and all good things, even he must approve the use of his power in the case at hand. Faith cannot be exercised contrary to the order of heaven or contrary to the will and purposes of him whose power it is. Men work by faith when they are in tune with the Spirit and when what they seek to do by mental exertion and by the spoken word is the mind and will of the Lord.

“Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father”

Neal A. Maxwell, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 22-24

Whenever Church members speak of consecration, it should be done reverently while acknowledging that each of us “come[s] short of the glory of God,” some of us far short ([Rom. 3:23](#)). Even the conscientious have not arrived, but they sense the shortfall and are genuinely striving. Consolingly, God’s grace flows not only to those “who love [Him] and keep all [His] commandments,” but likewise to those “that [seek] so to do” ([D&C 46:9](#)).

A second group of members are “honorable” but not “valiant.” They are not really aware of the gap nor of the importance of closing it (see [D&C 76:75, 79](#)). These “honorable” individuals are certainly not miserable nor wicked, nor are they unrighteous and unhappy. It is not what they have done but what they have left undone that is amiss. For example, if valiant, they could touch others deeply instead of merely being remembered pleasantly.

In a third group are those who are grossly entangled with the “ungodliness” of the world, reminding us all, as Peter wrote, that if “[we are] overcome” by something worldly, “[we are] brought in bondage” ([2 Pet. 2:19](#)).

If one “mind[s] the things of the flesh” ([Rom. 8:5](#)), he cannot “have the mind of Christ” ([1 Cor. 2:16](#)) because his thought patterns are “far from” Jesus, as are the desires or the “intents of his heart” ([Mosiah 5:13](#)). Ironically, if the Master is a stranger to us, then we will merely end up serving other masters. The sovereignty of these other masters is real, even if it sometimes is subtle, for they do call their cadence. Actually, “we are all enlisted” (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 250), if only in the ranks of the indifferent.

To the extent that we are not willing to be led by the Lord, we will be driven by our appetites, or we will be greatly preoccupied with the lesser things of the day. The remedy is implicit in the marvelous lamentation of King Benjamin: “For how knoweth a man the master

whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” ([Mosiah 5:13](#)). For many moderns, sad to say, the query “What think ye of Christ?” ([Matt. 22:42](#)) would be answered, “I really don’t think of Him at all!”

Consider three examples of how honorable people in the Church keep back a portion and thus prevent greater consecration (see [Acts 5:1–4](#)).

A sister gives commendable, visible civic service. Yet even with her good image in the community, she remains a comparative stranger to Jesus’ holy temples and His holy scriptures, two vital dimensions of discipleship. But she could have Christ’s image in her countenance (see [Alma 5:14](#)).

An honorable father, dutifully involved in the cares of his family, is less than kind and gentle with individual family members. Though a comparative stranger to Jesus’ gentleness and kindness, which we are instructed to emulate, a little more effort by this father would make such a large difference.

Consider the returned missionary, skills polished while serving an honorable mission, striving earnestly for success in his career. Busy, he ends up in a posture of some accommodation with the world. Thus he forgoes building up the kingdom first and instead builds up himself. A small course correction now would make a large, even destination, difference for him later on.

These deficiencies just illustrated are those of omission. Once the celestial sins are left behind and henceforth avoided, the focus falls ever more on the sins of omission. These omissions signify a lack of qualifying fully for the celestial kingdom. Only greater consecration can correct these omissions, which have consequences just as real as do the sins of commission. Many of us thus have sufficient faith to avoid the major sins of commission, but

not enough faith to sacrifice our distracting obsessions or to focus on our omissions.

Most omissions occur because we fail to get outside ourselves. We are so busy checking on our own temperatures, we do not notice the burning fevers of others even when we can offer them some of the needed remedies, such as encouragement, kindness, and commendation. The hands which hang down and most need to be lifted up belong to those too discouraged even to reach out anymore.

Actually, everything depends—initially and finally—on our desires. These shape our thought patterns. Our desires thus precede our deeds and lie at the very cores of our souls, tilting us toward or away from God (see [D&C 4:3](#)). God can “educate our desires” (see Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939, p. 297). Others seek to manipulate our desires. But it is we who form the desires, the “thoughts and intents of [our] hearts” ([Mosiah 5:13](#)).

The end rule is “according to [our] desires ... shall it be done unto [us]” ([D&C 11:17](#)), “for I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts” ([D&C 137:9](#); see also [Alma 41:5](#); [D&C 6:20, 27](#)). One’s individual will thus remains uniquely his. God will not override it nor overwhelm it. Hence we’d better want the consequences of what we want!

Another cosmic fact: only by aligning our wills with God’s is full happiness to be found. Anything less results in a lesser portion (see [Alma 12:10–11](#)). The Lord will work with us even if, at first, we “can no more than desire” but are willing to “give place for a portion of [His] words” ([Alma 32:27](#)). A small foothold is all He needs! But we must desire and provide it.

So many of us are kept from eventual consecration because we mistakenly think that, somehow, by letting our will be swallowed up in the will of God, we lose our individuality (see [Mosiah 15:7](#)). What we are really worried about, of course, is not giving up self, but selfish things—like our roles, our time, our preeminence, and our possessions. No wonder

we are instructed by the Savior to lose ourselves (see [Luke 9:24](#)). He is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new self. It is not a question of one’s losing identity but of finding his true identity! Ironically, so many people already lose themselves anyway in their consuming hobbies and preoccupations but with far, far lesser things.

Ever observant, in both the first and second estates, consecrated Jesus always knew in which direction He faced: He consistently emulated His Father: “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” ([John 5:19](#)), for “I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning” ([3 Ne. 11:11](#)).

As one’s will is increasingly submissive to the will of God, he can receive inspiration and revelation so much needed to help meet the trials of life. In the trying and very defining Isaac episode, faithful Abraham “staggered not ... through unbelief” ([Rom. 4:20](#)). Of that episode John Taylor observed that “nothing but the spirit of revelation could have given him this confidence, and ... sustained him under these peculiar circumstances” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:361). Will we too trust the Lord amid a perplexing trial for which we have no easy explanation? Do we understand—really comprehend—that Jesus knows and understands when we are stressed and perplexed? The complete consecration which effected the Atonement ensured Jesus’ perfect empathy; He felt our very pains and afflictions before we did and knows how to succor us (see [Alma 7:11–12](#); [2 Ne. 9:21](#)). Since the Most Innocent suffered the most, our own cries of “Why?” cannot match His. But we can utter the same submissive word “nevertheless ...” ([Matt. 26:39](#)).

Progression toward submission confers another blessing: an enhanced capacity for joy. Counseled President Brigham Young, “If you want to enjoy exquisitely, become a Latter-day Saint, and then live the doctrine of Jesus Christ” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:247).

Thus, brothers and sisters, consecration is not resignation or a mindless caving in. Rather, it is a deliberate expanding outward, making us more honest when we sing, “More used would I be” (“More Holiness Give Me,” 1985, *Hymns*, no. 131). Consecration, likewise, is not shoulder-shrugging acceptance, but, instead, shoulder-squaring to better bear the yoke.

Consecration involves pressing forward “with a steadfastness in Christ” with a “brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men ... [while] feasting upon the word of Christ” (2 Ne. 31:20). Jesus pressed forward sublimely. He did not shrink, such as by going only 60 percent of the distance toward the full atonement. Instead, He “finished [His] preparations” for all mankind, bringing a universal resurrection—not one in which 40 percent of us would have been left out (see [D&C 19:18–19](#)).

Each of us might well ask, “In what ways am I shrinking or holding back?” Meek introspection may yield some bold insights! For example, we can tell much by what we have already willingly discarded along the pathway of discipleship. It is the only pathway where littering is permissible, even encouraged. In the early stages, the debris left behind includes the grosser sins of commission. Later debris differs; things begin to be discarded which have caused the misuse or underuse of our time and talent.

Along this pathway leading to consecration, stern and unsought challenges sometimes hasten this jettisoning, which is needed to achieve increased consecration (see [Hel. 12:3](#)). If we have grown soft, hard times may be necessary. If we are too contented, a dose of divine discontent may come. A relevant insight may be contained in reproof. A new calling beckons us away from comfortable routines wherein the needed competencies have already been developed. One may be stripped of accustomed luxury so that the malignant mole of materialism may be removed. One may be scorched by humiliation so pride

can be melted away. Whatever we lack will get attention, one way or another.

John Taylor indicated that the Lord may even choose to wrench our very heartstrings (see *Journal of Discourses*, 14:360). If our hearts are set too much upon the things of this world, they may need to be wrenched, or broken, or undergo a mighty change (see [Alma 5:12](#)).

Consecration is thus both a principle and a process, and it is not tied to a single moment. Instead, it is freely given, drop by drop, until the cup of consecration brims and finally runs over.

Long before that, however, as Jesus declared, we must “settle this in [our] hearts” that we will do what He asks of us (JST, Luke 14:28). President Young further counseled us “to submit to the hand of the Lord, ... and acknowledge his hand in all things, ... then you will be exactly right; and until you come to that point, you cannot be entirely right. That is what we have to come to” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:352).

Thus, acknowledging God’s hand includes, in the words of the Prophet Joseph, trusting that God has made “ample provision” beforehand to achieve all His purposes, including His purposes in our lives (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 220). Sometimes He clearly directs; other times it seems He merely permits some things to happen. Therefore, we will not always understand the role of God’s hand, but we know enough of his heart and mind to be submissive. Thus when we are perplexed and stressed, explanatory help is not always immediately forthcoming, but compensatory help will be. Thus our process of cognition gives way to our personal submission, as we experience those moments when we learn to “be still, and know that I am God” ([Ps. 46:10](#)).

Then, the more one’s will is thus “swallowed up,” the more his afflictions, rather than necessarily being removed, will be “swallowed up in the joy of Christ” ([Alma 31:38](#)).

Seventy years ago, Lord Moulton coined a perceptive phrase, “obedience to the unenforceable,” describing “the obedience of a man to that which he cannot be forced to obey” (“Law And Manners,” *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1924, p. 1). God’s blessings, including those associated with consecration, come by unforced obedience to the laws upon which they are predicated (see [D&C 130:20–21](#)). Thus our deepest desires determine our degree of “obedience to the unenforceable.” God seeks to have us become more consecrated by giving everything. Then, when we come home to Him, He will generously give us “all that [He] hath” ([D&C 84:38](#)).

In conclusion, the submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. The many other things we “give,” brothers and sisters, are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!

Consecration thus constitutes the only unconditional surrender which is also a total victory!

May we deeply desire that victory, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Trust in the Lord

Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 16-18

It is so hard when sincere prayer about something we desire very much is not answered the way we want. It is especially difficult when the Lord answers *no* to that which is worthy and would give us great joy and happiness. Whether it be overcoming illness or loneliness, recovery of a wayward child, coping with a handicap, or seeking continuing life for a dear one who is slipping away, it seems so reasonable and so consistent with our happiness to have a favorable answer. It is hard to understand why our exercise of deep and sincere faith from an obedient life does not bring the desired result.

No one wants adversity. Trials, disappointments, sadness, and heartache come to us from two basically different sources. Those who transgress the laws of God will always have those challenges. The other reason for adversity is to accomplish the Lord's own purposes in our life that we may receive the refinement that comes from testing. It is vitally important for each of us to identify from which of these two sources come our trials and challenges, for the corrective action is very different.

If you are suffering the disheartening effects of transgression, please recognize that the only path to permanent relief from sadness is sincere repentance with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Realize your full dependence upon the Lord and your need to align your life with His teachings. There is really no other way to get lasting healing and peace. Postponing humble repentance will delay or prevent your receiving relief. Admit to yourself your mistakes and seek help now. Your bishop is a friend with keys of authority to help you find peace of mind and contentment. The way will be opened for you to have strength to repent and be forgiven.

Now may I share some suggestions with you who face the second source of adversity, the testing that a wise Heavenly Father determines is needed even when you are living

a worthy, righteous life and are obedient to His commandments.

Just when all seems to be going right, challenges often come in multiple doses applied simultaneously. When those trials are not consequences of your disobedience, they are evidence that the Lord feels you are prepared to grow more (see [Prov. 3:11-12](#)). He therefore gives you experiences that stimulate growth, understanding, and compassion which polish you for your everlasting benefit. To get you from where you are to where He wants you to be requires a lot of stretching, and that generally entails discomfort and pain.

When you face adversity, you can be led to ask many questions. Some serve a useful purpose; others do not. To ask, Why does this have to happen to me? Why do I have to suffer this, now? What have I done to cause this? will lead you into blind alleys. It really does no good to ask questions that reflect opposition to the will of God. Rather ask, What am I to do? What am I to learn from this experience? What am I to change? Whom am I to help? How can I remember my many blessings in times of trial? Willing sacrifice of deeply held personal desires in favor of the will of God is very hard to do. Yet, when you pray with real conviction, "Please let me know Thy will" and "May Thy will be done," you are in the strongest position to receive the maximum help from your loving Father.

This life is an experience in profound trust—trust in Jesus Christ, trust in His teachings, trust in our capacity as led by the Holy Spirit to obey those teachings for happiness now and for a purposeful, supremely happy eternal existence. To trust means to obey willingly without knowing the end from the beginning (see [Prov. 3:5-7](#)). To produce fruit, your trust in the Lord must be more powerful and enduring than your confidence in your own personal feelings and experience.

To exercise faith is to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing with you and that He can accomplish it for your eternal good even though you cannot understand how He can possibly do it. We are like infants in our understanding of eternal matters and their impact on us here in mortality. Yet at times we act as if we knew it all. When you pass through trials for His purposes, as you trust Him, exercise faith in Him, He will help you. That support will generally come step by step, a portion at a time. While you are passing through each phase, the pain and difficulty that comes from being enlarged will continue. If all matters were immediately resolved at your first petition, you could not grow. Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you perfectly. They would not require you to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for your personal benefit or for that of those you love.

As in all things, the Master is our perfect example. Who could have asked with more perfect faith, greater obedience, or more complete understanding than did He when He asked His Father in Gethsemane: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" ([Matt. 26:39](#)). Later He pled twice again: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" ([Matt. 26:42](#); see also [Matt. 26:44](#)).

How grateful I am personally that our Savior taught we should conclude our most urgent, deeply felt prayers, when we ask for that which is of utmost importance to us, with "Thy will be done" ([Matt. 26:42](#)). Your willingness to accept the will of the Father will not change what in His wisdom He has chosen to do. However, it will certainly change the effect of those decisions on you personally. That evidence of the proper exercise of agency allows His decisions to produce far greater blessings in your life. I have found that because of our Father's desire for us to grow, He may give us gentle, almost imperceptible promptings that, if we are willing to accept without complaint, He will enlarge to become a very

clear indication of His will. This enlightenment comes because of our faith and our willingness to do what He asks even though we would desire something else.

Our Father in Heaven has invited you to express your needs, hopes, and desires unto Him. That should not be done in a spirit of negotiation, but rather as a willingness to obey His will no matter what direction that takes. His invitation, "Ask, and ye shall receive" ([3 Ne. 27:29](#)) does not assure that you will get what you *want*. It does guarantee that, if worthy, you will get what you *need*, as judged by a Father that loves you perfectly, who wants your eternal happiness even more than do you.

I testify that when the Lord closes one important door in your life, He shows His continuing love and compassion by opening many other compensating doors through your exercise of faith. He will place in your path packets of spiritual sunlight to brighten your way. They often come after the trial has been the greatest, as evidence of the compassion and love of an all-knowing Father. They point the way to greater happiness, more understanding, and strengthen your determination to accept and be obedient to His will.

It is a singularly marvelous blessing to have faith in the Savior and a testimony of His teachings. So few in the world have that brilliant light to guide them. The fulness of the restored gospel gives perspective, purpose, and understanding. It allows us to face what otherwise appear to be unjust, unfair, unreasonable challenges in life. Learn those helpful truths by pondering the Book of Mormon and other scriptures. Try to understand those teachings not only with your mind but also with your heart.

True enduring happiness with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the most challenging difficulties comes from a life centered in Jesus Christ. Obedience to His teachings provides a sure foundation upon which to build. That takes effort. There is no guarantee of overnight results, but there is absolute assurance that, in

the Lord's time, solutions will come, peace will prevail, and emptiness will be filled.

Recently a great leader, suffering from physical handicaps that come with advancing age, said, "I am glad I have what I have." It is wisdom to open the windows of happiness by recognizing your abundant blessings.

Don't let the workings of adversity totally absorb your life. Try to understand what you can. Act where you are able; then let the matter rest with the Lord for a period while you give to others in worthy ways before you take on appropriate concern again.

Please learn that as you wrestle with a challenge and feel sadness because of it, you can simultaneously have peace and rejoicing. Yes, pain, disappointment, frustration, and anguish can be temporary scenes played out on the stage of life. Behind them there can be a background of peace and the positive assurance that a loving Father will keep His promises. You can qualify for those promises by a determination to accept His will, by understanding the plan of happiness, by receiving all of the ordinances, and by keeping the covenants made to assure their fulfillment.

The Lord's plan is to exalt you to live with Him and be greatly blessed. The rate at which you qualify is generally set by your capacity to mature, to grow, to love, and to give of yourself. He is preparing you to be a god. You cannot understand fully what that means, yet, He knows. As you trust Him, seek and follow His will, you will receive blessings that your finite mind cannot understand here on earth. Your Father in Heaven and His Holy Son know better than you what brings happiness. They have given you the plan of happiness. As you understand and follow it, happiness will be your blessing. As you willingly obey, receive, and honor the ordinances and covenants of that holy plan, you can have the greatest measure of satisfaction in this life. Yes, even times of overpowering happiness. You will prepare yourself for an eternity of glorious life with your loved ones who qualify for that kingdom.

I know the principles that we have discussed are true. They have been tested in the crucible of personal experience. To recognize the hand of the Lord in your life and to accept His will without complaint is a beginning. That decision does not immediately eliminate the struggles that will come for your growth. But I witness that it is the best way there is for you to find strength and understanding. It will free you from the dead ends of your own reasoning. It will allow your life to become a productive, meaningful experience, when otherwise you may not know how to go on (see [D&C 24:8](#)).

I testify that you have a Heavenly Father who loves you. I witness that the Savior gave His life for your happiness. I know Him. He understands your every need. I positively know that as you accept Their will without complaint, They will bless and sustain you. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Great Faith Obtained Only Through Personal Sacrifice

Robert J. Matthews

It is an honor to be involved with this symposium which is sponsored by the Religious Studies Center and is focused on the Lectures on Faith. It is certainly an important subject and it is appropriate that Brigham Young University should present a symposium and prepare a publication on this topic. The Lectures on Faith are the greatest and most profound treatises on faith that we know of. Although the seven lectures are systematically arranged in a logical way, they are not easy reading, but are worth the effort. The spiritual understanding that is available from the Lectures on Faith justifies many re-readings and invites an intense study for anyone who sincerely wants to know what faith really is. The lectures are a valuable clarification and bringing together of what the scriptures teach about faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The orderly progress of ideas in the Lectures on Faith makes them one of our greatest possessions for explaining a systematic theology. The catechism for Lecture 1 defines "theology" as a "revealed science." We do not ordinarily think of theology or of religion as a "science," but it can be so regarded. And if the concepts are given by revelation, theology is the truest of sciences. President Brigham Young called it a "celestial science" (*Journal of Discourses* 6:318; hereafter *JD*). He also said:

We want every branch of science taught in this place that is taught in the world. But our favourite study is that branch which particularly belongs to the Elders of Israel—namely, theology. Every Elder should become a profound theologian—should understand this branch better than all the world (*JD* 6:317).

I am reminded also that the complete title to Elder Parley P. Pratt's popular work, *Key to Theology*, is actually *The Key to the Science of Theology*. In that light I would define the Lectures on Faith as lessons in the revealed science of theology. They are in a class by themselves and are literally "designed to unfold to the understanding the doctrine of Jesus Christ" in a rational, scientific manner (LF 1:1).

The earlier presentations in this symposium have emphasized what faith is and what it rests upon. It has been shown that in order to exercise true faith in God we need to know something of his perfect character and attributes. When we learn of the perfections and attributes of Deity, we are then able to develop unshaken confidence in God, because our minds can be at rest and be assured that God can and will fulfil all his promises. When we become men and women of faith, we can have this unshaken confidence and trust because the scriptures guarantee that the true God is perfect and is therefore an unchangeable, complete, and living God.

Such is the message of the first five of the Lectures on Faith. I have been asked to discuss the content of Lecture 6, which is a sobering task, and I feel a great need for the help of the Holy Ghost in order to present it in the proper perspective and spirit. I cannot speak for the Church or for the University, but I believe what I have written is correct. So that this paper will continue the unity and purpose of this symposium, it is necessary to quote briefly from two of the preceding lectures. First, from Lecture 4:2:

Let us here observe that the real design which the God of heaven had in view in making the human family acquainted with his attributes was that they might be enabled to exercise faith in him through the idea of the existence of his attributes.... The God of heaven, understanding most perfectly the constitution of human nature and the weakness of men, knew what was necessary to be revealed and what ideas needed to be planted in their minds to enable them to exercise faith in him unto eternal life.

And also paragraph 3 of Lecture 5:

From the foregoing account of the Godhead, which is given in his revelations, the Saints have a sure foundation laid for the exercise of faith unto life and salvation through the atonement and mediation of Jesus Christ. By his blood they have a forgiveness of sins.... As the Son partakes of the fulness of the Father through the Spirit, so the Saints are, by the same Spirit, to be partakers of the same fulness, to enjoy the same glory ... through the love of the Father, the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are to be

heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

The sixth lecture, building on the foundation established by the earlier ones, introduces two major items: first, the necessity of each person's knowing (not merely believing or hoping) that his/her life is acceptable to God; and second, the necessity of our being willing to sacrifice all earthly possessions and honors as the means to obtain the knowledge of and the approval of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will discuss these items in that order.

Knowing That One's Life Is Acceptable to God

In the sixth Lecture on Faith, paragraphs 2 and 3, we read the following:

It is essential for any person to have an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to the will of God to enable him to have that confidence in God without which no person can obtain eternal life. It was this that enabled the ancient Saints to endure all their afflictions and persecutions and to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing (not believing merely) that they had a more enduring substance.

Having the assurance that they were pursuing a course which was agreeable to the will of God, they were enabled to take not only the spoiling of their goods and the wasting of their substance joyfully, but also to suffer death in its most horrid forms, knowing (not merely believing) that when this "earthly house of this tabernacle [was] dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor 5:1).

What is there about living in this mortal fallen world that makes this kind of knowledge so important and necessary? We read from the next paragraph:

Such was and always will be the situation of the Saints of God. Unless they have an actual knowledge that the course they are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds and faint. For such has been and always will be the opposition in the hearts of unbelievers and those who know not God against the pure and unadulterated religion of heaven (the only thing which ensures eternal life). They will persecute to the uttermost all who worship God according to his revelations, receive the truth in the love of it, and submit themselves to be guided and directed by his will. And they will drive them to such extremities that nothing short of an actual knowledge of their being the favorites of heaven and of their having embraced that order of things which God has established for the redemption of man will enable them to exercise that confidence in him necessary for them to overcome the world and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God (LF 6:4).

The matter is stated even more clearly in paragraph 5:

For a man to lay down his all—his character and reputation, his honor and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also, counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ—requires more than mere belief or supposition that he is doing the will of God. It requires actual knowledge, realizing that when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest and be a partaker of the glory of God.

The foregoing is so plain, so well stated, and so reasonable that I feel confident that anyone who reads it will understand it and will almost automatically want to have that same knowledge and testimony. It just naturally follows that after we learn of the perfect character and nature of God, what kind of a being he is, there wells up within our own hearts an intense desire, a craving and thirsting, a longing to be in harmony with him. That is why repentance, followed by baptism for the remission of sins and the laying on of hands for the baptism of fire or the Holy Ghost, accompany true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These are sequential steps that inch us along the pathway towards having our own lives conform to the revelations and commandments of God. Such a course of life feeds the soul, and comforts and gives it rest. Only a very calloused nature would not long for that unity and joy that come as a result of our knowing that we have the Lord's specific, precise, and particular approval.

Faith begins by hearing the word of God as it is preached by an authorized person through the testimony of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit kindles a desire for repentance and urges us to remove from our lives every deed and thought that would be offensive to God. Repentance brings unity and wholeness, whereas sin is fractious

and divisive. "Wickedness never was happiness," and it jars the spirit of man ([Alma 41:10](#)). We cannot do wrong and feel right. These principles operate in everyone's life because we all came from God in the beginning and are his sons and daughters. Sometimes it takes a little longer for some of us to be touched and moved by the principles of eternal life, but we can be certain that sooner or later every human being will be so touched. With some it may be at the day of judgment, when it is too late to gain full benefit.

An example of how the preaching of the gospel and the workings of the Spirit move a people to repent and to seek divine approval is shown in [Alma 22](#). Aaron begins teaching the king of the Lamanites by telling him what kind of a being God is and about the creation of the world and of Adam. Then he teaches the king about the fall of man and the plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. "And Aaron did expound all these things unto the king" (v 14).

The effect these teachings and the testimony of Aaron had on the king's mind illustrates the doctrine we are examining in Lecture 6:

And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.

But Aaron said unto him: If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.

And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying:

O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day ([Alma 22:15-18](#)).

It is not difficult to see that the king wanted to be in favor with God. He didn't know a great deal about the scriptures or of the science of theology, but when he heard the gospel properly taught, his soul hungered for righteousness.

We have a similar example with Enos, who said his "soul hungered" because he had often heard his father Jacob speak "concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints," and these things "sunk deep into [his] heart" ([Enos 1:3-4](#)). He had great strugglings in the spirit, a "wrestle" (v 2) he called it, until he gained a remission of his sins and obtained the voice of the Lord to his mind. Then he said "my guilt was swept away" (v 6), and "my soul did rest" (v 17). When he asked how it was done, the Lord said, "thy faith hath made thee whole" (v 8).

By reading the accounts of the Lamanite king and of Enos, we obtain a glimpse of what they felt. But what about we who live now? How can we feel what they felt and gain what they gained?

The great question for us, therefore, is: How do we today go about getting that individual assurance and actual knowledge that we are pursuing a course of life that is acceptable to the will of God? The answer is that we have to do the same things that were required in earlier dispensations. The gospel has not changed. Faith is the same, the requirements are the same, and the rewards are the same. There are no special sales, no bargain days.

Being Willing to Sacrifice All Things

There is greater clarity given to us on the need to be willing to sacrifice all things than we have perhaps realized. We read in Lecture 6:7:

Let us here observe that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation. For from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It is

through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life. And it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do His will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering and that he has not sought nor will he seek His face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.

Why Faith and Knowledge Are Dependent upon Sacrifice

A major consideration at this point is *why* perfect faith can be obtained only by the willingness to sacrifice all earthly things. The quick answer may be: "God has so ordered it." No doubt this is true, but we may want to understand more about it. A large factor inherent in the willingness to sacrifice all earthly possessions is the knowledge that the plan of redemption neither begins nor ends with this mortal life. It began in the premortal world and extends to the postmortal one. This plan is founded in God's wisdom, God's knowledge, and God's power. Through the fall of Adam all mankind have become subject to two deaths—the physical death of the body, which is caused by the separation of the body and the spirit; and the spiritual death, which is caused by the separation of the person from the things of God, that is, to "die" as to things of righteousness.

Because of these two deaths, all human beings are cut off from a knowledge of God; they have no conscious memory of God, and no memory of a premortal life, nor any understanding of a postmortal one after this mortal probation. Our knowledge in this natural, mortal, fallen state is earthbound. Our affections, interests, ambitions, and desires are centered on this present mortal life. The natural man knows none of the things of God. Neither can he know them for they are only obtained by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor 2:14). As we learn the first principles of the gospel, the Holy Ghost gives us a testimony of the reality of God, of heaven, and of Jesus Christ. As we advance in righteousness, there comes a time when we will be asked to consecrate all that we have for the kingdom of God on earth. What better test of our faith and testimony is there than to be asked to forego our honors, possessions, reputations, and such things, to gain a future inheritance in a time and place which as natural man we didn't even know existed, nor did we know that the willingness to sacrifice all things is the way to get there.

In view of the conditions that exist with the natural, mortal world, it is obviously the right thing for the Lord to require of those of us who would partake of the fulness of salvation to consecrate all that we have to his work, and to be willing to serve him at all costs. Anything short of that would not be a complete and adequate test of our confidence and faith in the Almighty God. Nor could anything less measure the progress we have made in overcoming the natural man. It is in this way that mortality serves most effectively as a probationary and preparatory state.

Why the Miraculous Is Necessary in the Gospel

Due to the nature of fallen man, a true revealed religion must of necessity be miraculous in its nature. The knowledge, blessings, communications, and powers of a heavenly, divine system have to be extra-terrestrial. The power and the knowledge to save fallen mankind must come from outside the earth itself; outside of us ourselves. It cannot originate with us. It must come from God, or there can be no salvation or redemption in it. Hence God tests his children by asking them to do something entirely outside of the natural style of mortality. All of the commandments of God are that way. Baptism, ordination, faith, sacrifice, prayer, repentance, obedience to specified commandments, personal cleanliness of thought, etc.—all are contrary to what comes naturally to us. Acts of obedience are responses that we must learn and do deliberately; they cannot happen by chance, happenstance, or accident. And obeying the commandments is not the kind of thing we would do naturally. Doing what comes naturally does not lead to celestial glory and godhood. Only by doing what is not natural, because of our faith, do we find salvation. We wouldn't consistently keep all the commandments if we didn't have faith, and that is why we can see the truth of Paul's declaration, "Without faith it is impossible to please [God]" (Heb 11:6).

Natural man, with the natural, unregenerated mind, is given to rationalization and to discounting the validity of divine revelation and the importance of obedience, and even the need for a redemptive sacrifice and death of a God. Rationalization thus becomes the great usurper, the eroder and the robber of our faith. This is demonstrated very clearly in the book of Helaman just previous to the time of Jesus' birth. Even though so

many "signs ... [had been] wrought among the people," those who did not believe in the gospel said: "It is not *reasonable* that such a being as Christ shall come" (16:18-23; emphasis added). The unbelievers' idea of "reasonableness" caused them to miss the message of redemption through Jesus Christ.

The Role of Revelation and Testimony

It is totally clear from the content of the Lectures on Faith that there can be no true religion among men and women on this earth without revelation and testimony from God. Without revelation from heaven, mankind would not know what kind of being God is, and any ideas about his attributes and perfections could only be guesswork. The God of heaven must reveal himself, or he must remain forever unknown. First, as we have seen, we could not exercise true faith in a God we knew nothing about. True faith cannot take root and thrive in ignorance. Second, our faith would not be strong and unshaken unless we knew by continuing revelation that our lifestyle was pleasing to God. It would simply be impossible for any of us to exercise the kind of pure faith that is described in these lectures in the absence of direct, immediate, and personal revelation.

Such necessary revelation does not often come by an angelic visitor or personal open vision, but it comes most often by the personal manifestations and whisperings of the Holy Ghost. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, "the Holy Ghost is a revelator," and "no man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 328; hereafter *TPJS*). Revelation and testimony come to us through the Holy Ghost and are miraculous occurrences, outside the normal realm of man's five natural senses.

A religion without revelation is but a philosophical network of human ideas, no matter how ingenious and astute it may be. Without revelation its adherents and believers could not know whether the God they worshiped even existed—much less whether or not he was pleased with the way they worshipped him or even whether he cared. When it comes to the matter of man's relationship to God, not to have any revelation from him leaves everything to supposition and opinion. This is the idea given in [Doctrine and Covenants 93:19](#), wherein the Lord says: "I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness."

As we have discovered in the Lectures on Faith, revelation from God must cover several subject areas. First, it must reveal that there *is* a God. Second, it must reveal the traits of his character and attributes, and show that these attributes are perfect in him. Third, it must reveal what God wants man to do and what he wants him not to do. And fourth, it must assure us that what we are doing is what God would have us do. Receiving this last revelation is the basic message of the sixth lecture.

For a person to receive a direct, individual and personal revelation from God is an experience not obtained merely for the asking. To be told by the Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe, that he has noticed us and that he is pleased by our service and obedience is a blessing worth years of search and toil. Such a reward is the theme of both the parable of the "treasure hid in a field" and that of the "pearl of great price" ([Matt 13:44, 45-46](#)). The message of both parables is that giving all that we have would not be giving too much to gain such favor with God. Heaven, knowing the proper price to place on all its goods, has so ordained that the kind of faith that is powerful enough to enable us to lay hold on eternal life is available only on the basis of our being willing to sacrifice all earthly goods and honors.

There are records in the scriptures of those who have made this kind of sacrifice. Jesus is the greatest example. He said to the Nephites:

I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning ([3 Nephi 11:11](#)).

Saul of Tarsus, later known as Paul, was a learned man, accepted within his own Pharisee group, valiant above those his own age, and had position, power, and influence. He was determined to prevent Christianity from destroying the religion of the Jews. He was not an evil man; he simply did not understand. And in his error he viewed the doctrine of Christ as an enemy to the revelations God had given to Moses and to Abraham. What did the Lord require of Paul? The same thing that he requires of all who seek salvation and a place with him in eternity. He required total obedience and the willingness to sacrifice all things. When Paul

was first converted by a vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus, he little knew what awaited him. At that time the Lord said in a vision to Ananias, who had some doubts about Paul's reputation: "[Paul] is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" ([Acts 9:15-16](#)).

Paul had many visions, many revelations and many trials, and suffered intense persecution and hardship, including imprisonment, whippings, character assassination, loss of friends, privation, and illness. Yet he stayed true to his testimony and came off victorious. In speaking of himself and of his companions who were thus tried and tested to the uttermost, Paul wrote:

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed ([2 Cor 4:8-9](#)).

Later, while in a Roman prison, he wrote:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ ([Philip 3:7-8](#)).

Why was Paul willing to continue on in the face of so much opposition? It was because he knew what God required, and that the God of heaven had accepted his efforts, and that his salvation was sure. We read from [2 Timothy 4:6-8](#), as Paul wrote from a prison cell in Rome:

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Paul knew that his life was acceptable to God and that his calling and election were sure.

Paul's convert, Timothy, whom he affectionately called "my own dear son in the faith," was a man like Paul, dedicated to the work of the Lord above his own interests. Paul, writing to the Church at Philippi, said of Timothy:

For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel ([Philip 2:20-22](#)).

The Book of Mormon also is a record of faithful disciples who sacrificed all things. We read of Nephi, that righteous, wondrous prophet-son of Helaman who lived just before the advent of Jesus among the Nephites, that he was absolutely single-minded to God. In return for his obedience, the Lord trusted him and gave him power in the ministry and promised to bless him forever. We read from [Helaman 10:3-5](#):

And it came to pass as he was thus pondering—being much cast down because of the wickedness of the people of the Nephites, their secret works of darkness, and their murderings, and their plunderings, and all manner of iniquities—and it came to pass as he was thus pondering in his heart, behold, a voice came unto him saying:

Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unwearyingness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.

And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.

There can be no question that after receiving this revelation, Nephi knew his life was acceptable to God and he would be saved.

These valiant souls (Jesus, Paul, Timothy, and Nephi, among many others) gave all that they had, their time,

talents, possessions, and desires, to the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth. Some of them also gave their lives. And they knew that God was aware of their struggles and would not forget them.

But not all the heroes were in olden times. Those who lay in Richmond Jail, Liberty Jail, and Carthage Jail suffered in like manner as did the former prophets. And the Latter-day Saints who were driven out of Missouri and out of Illinois suffered as much in cold weather, prison, loss of family, loss of goods, and in death, as did the Former-day Saints in the lions' dens and the arenas of Rome.

It was in this light that the Prophet Joseph Smith viewed the sufferings of the Latter-day Saints in the early days of this Church:

Such inhumanity, and relentless cruelty and barbarity as were practiced against the Saints in Missouri can scarcely be found in the annals of history (*TPJS* 126).

We also read in the Prophet's epistle to the Church, written 25 March 1839 from Liberty Jail, Missouri:

And now, beloved brethren, we say unto you, that inasmuch as God hath said that He would have a tried people, that He would purge them as gold, now we think that this time He has chosen His own crucible, wherein we have been tried; and we think if we get through with any degree of safety, and shall have kept the faith, that it will be a sign to this generation, altogether sufficient to leave them without excuse; and we think also, it will be a trial of our faith equal to that of Abraham, and that the ancients will not have whereof to boast over us in the day of judgment, as being called to pass through heavier afflictions; that we may hold an even weight in the balance with them; but now, after having suffered so great sacrifice and having passed through so great a season of sorrow, we trust that a ram may be caught in the thicket speedily, to relieve the sons and daughters of Abraham from their great anxiety, and to light up the lamp of salvation upon their countenances, that they may hold on now, after having gone so far unto everlasting life (*TPJS* 135-136).

We now continue from Lecture 6:8:

It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him.

Trials and Tests Are Custom-made

We do not mean to imply by all these examples that only martyrs will be saved or that only those who are driven out of their homes or who lose their farms, businesses, and health to a mob are saved. What we find in the revelations and in the teachings of the brethren is that the Lord requires such undivided allegiance, that a person who expects to inherit a celestial glory must be willing to sacrifice all things if called upon to do so. The gospel provides a way for a person to show that willingness by solemn oath and covenant, in the Lord's own way and according to his plan of redemption. This is a covenant of total consecration. The Prophet Joseph Smith has said:

When we consecrate our property to the Lord it is to administer to the wants of the poor and needy, for this is the law of God; it is not for the benefit of the rich, those who have no need; and when a man consecrates or dedicates his wife and children, he does not give them to his brother, or to his neighbor, for there is no such law.... For a man to consecrate his property, wife and children, to the Lord, is nothing more nor less than to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the widow and fatherless, the sick and afflicted, and do all he can to administer to their relief in their afflictions, and for him and his house to serve the Lord. In order to do this, he and all his house must be virtuous, and must shun the very appearance of evil (*TPJS* 127).

The Lord's plan of redemption requires men and women to consecrate all their belongings and abilities to the service of God. This they do by covenant. The Lord may then test them to see how sincere they are and how much they are willing to sacrifice.

We cannot say what, in the economy of God, he will require of any one of us individually. There is a universal requirement of all mankind to "endure to the end," and we also know that "where much is given much is required." Some commandments pertain to everyone. Some individual tests, however, are "tailor-made" and

suited to the particular person and circumstances. When a person has been obedient to the first principles and the universal requirements, it appears that the Lord then devises more searching, individualized tests for a specific purpose in relation to a specific individual. The most popular example of this is the commandment God gave to Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. It seems to have had at least two immediate purposes. One was to test Abraham's faith and obedience; and the other was to give Abraham experience whereby he would learn something about himself and about godliness that he had not understood sufficiently before. We read from President John Taylor:

I heard the Prophet Joseph say, in speaking to the Twelve on one occasion: "You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (said he) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God" (*JD* 24:197).

And again from another talk by President Taylor:

I heard Joseph Smith say and I presume Brother Snow heard him also—in preaching to the Twelve in Nauvoo, that the Lord would get hold of their heart strings and wrench them, and that they would have to be tried as Abraham was tried....And Joseph said that if God had known any other way whereby he could have touched Abraham's feelings more acutely and more keenly he would have done so. It was not only his parental feelings that were touched. There was something else besides. He had the promise that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of the heaven and as the sand upon the sea shore. He had looked forward through the vista of future ages and seen, by the spirit of revelation, myriads of his people rise up through whom God would convey intelligence, light and salvation to a world. But in being called upon to sacrifice his son it seemed as though all his prospects pertaining to posterity were come to naught. But he had faith in God, and he fulfilled the thing that was required of him. Yet we cannot conceive of anything that could be more trying and more perplexing than the position in which he was placed (*JD* 24:264).

Speaking also of the test given to Abraham, President George Q. Cannon said:

Why did the Lord ask such things of Abraham? Because, knowing what his future would be and that he would be the father of an innumerable posterity, he [sic] was determined to test him. God did not do this for His own sake for He knew by His foreknowledge what Abraham would do; but the purpose was to impress upon Abraham a lesson and to enable him to attain unto knowledge that he could not obtain in any other way. That is why God tries all of us. It is not for His own knowledge for He knows all things beforehand. He knows all your lives and everything you will do. But He tries us for our own good that we may know ourselves; for it is most important that a man should know himself.

He required Abraham to submit to this trial because He intended to give him glory, exaltation and honor; He intended to make him a king and a priest, to share with Himself the glory, power and dominion which He exercised. And was this trial any more than God himself had passed through? (89).

We Receive No Witness Until After the Trial of Our Faith

There is always a spiritual reward and benefit from obeying any commandment of God, and there is always a divine reason for that commandment, although the one so commanded may not be able to comprehend it until later. If we fail the small tests, we may never have the opportunity to take the large ones. Consequently, we may not realize what was really taking place. I think this is the point the prophet Moroni was making when he said, "dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith" (*Ether* 12:6). One of the lessons we learn from the scriptures is that trials are not always a penalty for sins. Sometimes, as with Abraham, Job, or Joseph Smith, trials have an educational purpose and are designed to "give experience, and shall be for thy good" (see *D&C* 122:7).

Sacrifice Is an Educational Experience

A significant reason for the Lord's requiring the willingness to sacrifice all things is the experience it gives those who do it. It is not only necessary that we have confidence in God, but there is also a dimension to be gained about ourselves through the experience and the discipline of making a sacrifice. Our own acts tell us

something about ourselves. Sacrificing all that we have in obedience to the Lord's commandments greatly increases our own self-confidence. We know for ourselves that we *can* keep the commandments—we have done it. This has a powerful effect upon our attitude about ourselves. Notice the language of the Lord given in [Doctrine and Covenants 97:8-9](#):

Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me. For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit.

In speaking on this same subject—of a person's knowing and being aware that he or she has been obedient, even at a cost—President David O. McKay said that "spirituality is the consciousness of victory over self" (351).

Anciently, King David understood something of the importance of sacrifice, when on one occasion a friend wanted to give him oxen to sacrifice to the Lord. David's reply was:

I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver ([2 Sam 24:24](#)).

The concept of customized tests is very important. We do not all have the same tests, and we can benefit from what Elder Boyd K. Packer said on this theme in the October 1980 General Conference:

Our lives are made up of thousands of everyday choices. Over the years these little choices will be bundled together and show clearly what we value.

The crucial test of life, I repeat, does not center in the choice between fame and obscurity, nor between wealth and poverty. The greatest decision of life is between good and evil.

We may foolishly bring unhappiness and trouble, even suffering upon ourselves. These are not always to be regarded as penalties imposed by a displeased Creator. They are part of the lessons of life, part of the test.

Some are tested by poor health, some by a body that is deformed or homely. Others are tested by handsome and healthy bodies; some by the passion of youth; others by the erosions of age.

Some suffer disappointment in marriage, family problems; others live in poverty and obscurity. Some (perhaps this is the hardest test) find ease and luxury.

All are part of the test, and there is more equality in this testing than sometimes we suspect.

It is possible to be both rich and famous and at the same time succeed spiritually. But the Lord warned of the difficulty of it when He talked of camels and needles (see [Matt 19:24](#)) (21).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell spoke along the same lines to some students at Brigham Young University:

God knows what his children can become and tries them to help them reach their potential.... In time each person will receive a "customized challenge" to determine his dedication to God ("Link Truths" 11).

Trials and adversities may often be blessings in disguise and are part of the "sacrifice of all things" required for the development of true faith. Several great prophets of this dispensation have spoken on this subject. President Harold B. Lee said the following in addressing Church Office employees at the annual Christmas Devotional in the Tabernacle on Temple Square on 13 December 1973:

We are tested, we are tried.... We don't realize perhaps the severity of the tests that we are going through. In [the early days of the Church], there were murderings, there were mobbings.... [The Saints] were driven out into the desert, they were starving and they were unclad, they were cold. We are the inheritors of what they gave to us. But what are we doing with it? Today we are basking in the lap of luxury, the like of which we've never seen before in the history of the world. It would seem that probably this is the most severe test of any ... we've ever had in the history of this Church (4-5).

And President Ezra Taft Benson (then President of the Council of the Twelve) told the Regional Representatives on 30 September 1977:

Every generation has its tests and its chance to stand and prove itself. Would you like to know of one of our toughest tests? Hear the warning words of President Brigham Young: "The worst fear I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell. This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty and all manner of persecution and be true. But my greatest fear is that they cannot stand wealth."

Ours then seems to be the toughest test of all for the evils are more subtle, more clever. It all seems less menacing and it is harder to detect. While every test of righteousness represents a struggle, this particular test seems like no test at all, no struggle, and so could be the most deceiving of all tests.

Do you know what peace and prosperity can do to a people—it can put them to sleep (2).

Sacrifice Seen in Perspective

In this paper we have spoken much of sacrifice and the spiritual influence it has on those who do it and the loss to those who do not. In one sense, however, there is no lasting sacrifice as President George Q. Cannon explained:

If we expect to attain the fulfillment of the promises God has made to us, we must be self-sacrificing. There is no sacrifice that God can ask of us or His servants whom He has chosen to lead us that we should hesitate about making. In one sense of the word it is no sacrifice. We may call it so because it comes in contact with our selfishness and our unbelief (89).

And Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

Sacrifice pertains to mortality; in the eternal sense there is none. Sacrifice involves giving up the things of this world because of the promises of blessings to be gained in a better world. In the eternal perspective there is no sacrifice in giving up all things—even including the laying down of one's life—if eternal life is gained through such a course (664).

We conclude and summarize this discussion by quoting excerpts from Lecture 6:9-12:

In the last days before the Lord comes, he is to gather together his saints who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice.

... Those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith. Therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority so to do; and without this guarantee faith could not exist.

All the Saints of whom we have account in all the revelations of God which are extant obtained the knowledge which they had of their acceptance in his sight through the sacrifice which they offered unto him. And through the knowledge thus obtained, their faith became sufficiently strong to lay hold upon the promise of eternal life....

But those who have not made this sacrifice to God do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight. For whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter of doubt and uncertainty in their mind; and where doubt and uncertainty are, there faith is not, nor can it be. For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time. So persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence, and where unshaken confidence is not, there faith is weak. And where faith is weak, the persons will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. But they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them.

Making a serious study of the Lectures on Faith is a sobering experience. I can assure you that one cannot examine and absorb these lectures and afterwards be flippant or indifferent about what God requires of us in this life. To study these lectures and to prepare a paper on them is a deep spiritual experience.

NOTES

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Lecture 7

ON FAITH

1. In the preceding lectures, we treated what faith is and the object on which it rested. Agreeable to our plan, we now proceed to speak of its effects.

2. As we have seen in our former lectures that faith is the principle of action and of power in all intelligent beings both in heaven and on earth, it will not be expected that we will attempt to unfold all its effects in a lecture of this description. Neither is it necessary to our purpose so to do, for it would embrace all things in heaven and on earth and encompass all the creations of God with all their endless varieties. For no world has yet been framed that was not framed by faith, neither has there been an intelligent being on any of God's creations who did not get there by reason of faith as it existed in himself or in some other being. Nor has there been a change or a revolution in any of the creations of God but it has been effected by faith. Neither will there be a change or a revolution in any of the vast creations of the Almighty unless it is effected in the same way, for it is by faith that the Deity works.

3. Let us here offer some explanation in relation to faith that our meaning may be clearly comprehended. We ask, then, what are we to understand by a man's working by faith? We answer: we understand that when a man works by faith he works by mental exertion instead of physical force. It is by words, instead of by exerting his physical powers, with which every being works when he works by faith. God said, "Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen 1:3). Joshua spake and the great lights which God had created stood still (Joshua 10:12-13). Elijah commanded and the heavens were stayed for the space of three years and six months, so that it did not rain; he again commanded and the heavens gave forth rain (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-45). All this was done by faith. And the Savior says: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove . . . and it shall remove" (Matt 17:20); or "say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up . . . and . . . planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17:6). Faith, then, works by words; and with these its mightiest works have been and will be performed.

4. It surely will not be required of us to prove that this is the principle upon which all eternity has acted and will act, for every reflecting mind must know that it is by reason of this power that all the hosts of heaven perform their works of wonder, majesty, and glory. Angels move from place to place by virtue of this

power. It is by reason of it that they are enabled to descend from heaven to earth. And were it not for the power of faith, they never could be ministering spirits to them who should be heirs of salvation, neither could they act as heavenly messengers. For they would be destitute of the power necessary to enable them to do the will of God.

5. It is only necessary for us to say that the whole visible creation as it now exists is the effect of faith. It was faith by which it was framed, and it is by the power of faith that it continues in its organized form and by which the planets move round their orbits and sparkle forth their glory. So, then, faith is truly the first principle in the science of theology, and, when understood, it leads the mind back to the beginning and carries it forward to the end, or, in other words, from eternity to eternity.

6. As faith, then, is the principle by which the heavenly hosts perform their works and by which they enjoy all their felicity, we might expect to find it set forth in a revelation from God as the principle upon which his creatures here below must act to obtain the felicities enjoyed by the Saints in the eternal world. And when God would undertake to raise up men for the enjoyment of himself, he would teach them the necessity of living by faith, and the impossibility of their enjoying the blessedness of eternity without it, seeing that all the blessings of eternity are the effects of faith.

7. Therefore, it is said, and appropriately too, that "without faith it is impossible to please him [God]" (Heb 11:6). If it should be asked why it is impossible to please God without faith, the answer would be that without faith it is impossible for men to be saved. As God desires the salvation of men, he must, of course, desire that they should have faith; and he could not be pleased unless they had it, or else he could be pleased with their destruction.

8. From this we learn that the many exhortations to have faith in him which have been given by inspired men to those who had received the word of the Lord were not mere common-place matters, but were for the best of all reasons. And that reason is that without it there is no salvation, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. When men begin to live by faith, they begin to draw near to God; and when their faith is perfected, they are like him. And because he is saved, they are saved also; for they will be in the same situation he is in, because they have come to him. And "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

9. As all the visible creation is an effect of faith, so is salvation also. (We mean salvation in its most extensive latitude of interpretation, whether it is temporal or spiritual.) In order to have this subject clearly set before the mind, let us ask, what situation must a person be in in order to be saved? or, what is the difference between a saved man and one who is not saved? We answer from what we have before seen of the heavenly worlds that they must be persons who can work by faith and who are able, by faith, to be ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation. They must have faith to enable them to act in the presence of the Lord; otherwise, they cannot be saved. And what constitutes the real difference between a saved person and one not saved is the difference in the degree of their faith. One's faith has become perfect enough to lay hold upon eternal life, and the other's has not. But to be a little more particular, let us ask, where shall we find a prototype into whose likeness we may be assimilated, so we may be made partakers of life and salvation? or, where shall we find a saved being? For if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved—they must be like that individual or they cannot be saved. We think that it will not be a matter of dispute that two beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved; for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved. And if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be or else not be saved. We ask, then, where is the prototype? or, where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question that there will be no dispute among those who believe the Bible that it is Christ. All will agree that he is the prototype or standard of salvation, or in other words, that he is a saved being. And if we should continue our interrogation and ask how it is that he is saved, the answer would be that he is a just and holy being. If he were anything different from what he is, he would not be saved; for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. For if it were possible for him to change in the least degree, surely Christ would fail of salvation and lose all his dominion, power, authority and glory, which constitute salvation. For salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself or one like him. Thus says John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). Why purify themselves as he is pure? Because if they do not, they cannot be like him.

10. The Lord said unto Moses, "Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 19:2). And Peter says, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). And the Savior says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:48). If any should ask, why all these sayings? the answer is to be found from what is before quoted from John's epistle, that when he (the Lord) shall appear, the Saints will be like him; and if they are not holy, as he is holy, and perfect, as he is perfect, they cannot be like him. For no beings can enjoy his glory without possessing his perfections and holiness, no more than they could reign in his kingdom without his power.

11. This clearly sets forth the propriety of the Savior's saying: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). This taken in connection with some of the sayings in the Savior's prayer recorded in John 17 gives great clearness to his expressions. He says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 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. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:20-24).

12. All these sayings put together give as clear an account of the state of the glorified Saints as language could give—the works that Jesus had done they were to do, and greater works than those which he had done among them should they do, and that because he went to the Father. He does not say that they should do these works in time; but they should do greater works, because he went to the Father. He says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory" (John 17:24). These sayings taken together make it very plain that the greater works which those who believed on his name were to do were to be done in eternity, where he was going and where they should behold his glory. He had said in another part of his prayer that he desired of his

Father that those who believed on him should be one in him, as he and the Father were one in each other. "Neither pray I for these [the apostles] 1 alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one"; that is, they who believe on him through the apostles' words, as well as the apostles themselves, "that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:20-21).

13. What language can be plainer than this? The Savior surely intended to be understood by his disciples, and he spake that they might understand him. For he declares to his Father, in language not to be easily mistaken, that he wanted his disciples, even all of them, to be as himself and the Father are, for as he and the Father were one so they might be one with them (John 17:21). And what is said in the 22nd verse is calculated to establish this belief more firmly, if it needs anything to establish it. He says: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (v 22). This is as much as to say that unless they have the glory which the Father had given him, they could not be one with them. For he says he had given them the glory that the Father had given him that they might be one, or, in other words, to make them one.

14. This fills up the measure of information on this subject and shows most clearly that the Savior wished his disciples to understand that they were to be partakers with him in all things, not even his glory excepted.

15. It is scarcely necessary here to observe what we have previously noticed: that the Father and the Son have the glory they have because they are just and holy beings; and if they were lacking in one attribute or perfection which they have, they could never enjoy the glory which they have, for it requires them to be precisely what they are in order to enjoy it. And if the Savior gives this glory to any others, he must do it in the very way set forth in his prayer to his Father: by making them one with him as he and the Father are one. In so doing he would give them the glory which the Father has given him; and when his disciples are made one with the Father and Son, as the Father and the Son are one, who cannot see the propriety of the Savior's saying, "The works that I do shall [they] 2 do also; and greater works than these shall [they] 3 do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

16. These teachings of the Savior most clearly show unto us the nature of salvation and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them: he proposed to make them like unto himself, and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all

saved beings. For any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved, and to be unlike them is to be destroyed. On this hinge turns the door of salvation.

17. Who cannot see, then, that salvation is the effect of faith? For as we have previously observed, all the heavenly beings work by this principle; and it is because they are able so to do that they are saved, for nothing but this could save them. And this is the lesson which the God of heaven has been endeavoring to teach to the world by the mouth of all his holy prophets. Hence we are told that "without faith it is impossible to please him [God]" (Heb 11:6), and that salvation "is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom 4:16). And "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone" (Rom 9:31-32). And Jesus said unto the man who brought his son to him to get the devil who tormented him cast out: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). These references with a multitude of other scriptures which might be quoted plainly set forth the light in which the Savior, as well as the Former-day Saints, viewed the plan of salvation. It was a system of faith—it begins with faith, it continues by faith, and every blessing which is obtained in relation to it is the effect of faith, whether it pertains to this life or that which is to come. All the revelations of God bear witness to this. If there were children of promise, they were the effects of faith, not even the Savior of the world excepted. "Blessed is she that believed," said Elizabeth to Mary, when she went to visit her, "for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45). Nor was the birth of John the Baptist any the less a matter of faith. For in order that his father Zacharias might believe, he was struck dumb. And through the whole history of the scheme of life and salvation, it is a matter of faith. Every man received according to his faith: according as his faith was, so were his blessings and privileges. And nothing was withheld from him when his faith was sufficient to receive it. He could stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, wax valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens; women could, by their faith, receive their dead children to life again (see Heb 11:33-35). In a word, there was nothing impossible for them who had faith. All things were in subjection to the Former-day Saints, according as their faith was. By their faith they could obtain heavenly visions and the ministering of angels. They could have knowledge of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the general assembly and church of

the Firstborn whose names are written in heaven, of God, the Judge of all, and of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. And they could become familiar with the third heavens, see and hear things which were not only unutterable but were unlawful to utter. Peter, in view of the power of faith, says to the Former-day Saints: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:2-3). In the first epistle, he says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

18. 4 These sayings put together show the Apostle's views most clearly, so as to admit of no mistake in the mind of any individual. He says that all things that pertain to life and godliness were given unto them through the knowledge of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. And if the question is asked, how were they to obtain the knowledge of God? (For there is a great difference between believing in God and knowing him—knowledge implies more than faith. And notice that all things that pertain to life and godliness were given through the knowledge of God.) The answer is that through faith they were to obtain this knowledge; and, having power by faith to obtain the knowledge of God, they could with it obtain all other things which pertain to life and godliness.

19. By these sayings of the Apostle Peter, we learn that it was by obtaining a knowledge of God that men got the knowledge of all things which pertain to life and godliness, and this knowledge was the effect of faith. So all things which pertain to life and godliness are the effects of faith.

20. From this we may extend as far as any circumstances may require, whether on earth or in heaven, and we will find it the testimony of all inspired men or heavenly messengers that all things that pertain to life and godliness are the effects of faith and nothing else. All learning, wisdom, and prudence fail, and everything else as a means of salvation but faith. This is the reason that the fishermen of Galilee could teach the world, because they sought by faith and by faith obtained. And this is the reason that Paul counted all things but filth and dross—what he formerly called his gain he called his loss. Yea, he counted "all things but loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," because he had to suffer "the loss of all things" to obtain the faith by which he could enjoy the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord (Philip 3:7-8). This is the reason that the Former-day Saints knew more and understood more of heaven and of heavenly things than all others beside, because this information is the effect of faith—to be obtained by no other means. And this is the reason that men, as soon as they lose their faith, run into strifes, contentions, darkness, and difficulties. For the knowledge which tends to life disappears with faith, but returns when faith returns. For when faith comes, it brings its train of attendants with it—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, gifts, wisdom, knowledge, miracles, healings, tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc. All these appear when faith appears on the earth and disappear when it disappears from the earth. For these are the effects of faith and always have attended and always will attend it. For where faith is, there will the knowledge of God be, also, with all things which pertain thereto: revelations, visions, and dreams, as well as every other necessary thing, so the possessors of faith may be perfected and obtain salvation. For God must change; otherwise, faith will prevail with him. And he who possesses it will obtain all necessary knowledge and wisdom through it until he shall know God and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he has sent, whom to know is eternal life. Amen.

The Fruits of Faith

(Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 192-201)

The Eternal Fruits of Faith

Faith is known by its fruits—on earth, in heaven, everywhere. Where the fruits of faith are found, there is faith; where there are no fruits, there is no faith. It is an eternal law of the universe that like begets like, that every tree brings forth after its own kind, and that the tree of faith bears, always and everlastingly, the fruit of faith. It is no more possible to pick the fruit of faith from the tree of unbelief than it is to harvest grapes from bramble bushes or figs from thistles.

There is no better way to envision the infinite and eternal nature of faith than to see its infinite and eternal fruits, the fruits that transcend the bounds of our lone earth. Thus we find the Prophet Joseph Smith saying that the effects of faith "embrace all things in heaven and on earth, and encompass all the creations of God, with all their endless varieties." How, we ask, can faith have such immanent, indwelling, ever-present, omnipotent power? We hear the answer: "No world has yet been framed that was not framed by faith, neither has there been an intelligent being on any of God's creations who did not get there by reason of faith as it existed in himself or in some other being"—worlds are created and men are saved by faith!—"nor has there been a change or a revolution in any of the creations of God, but it has been effected by faith; neither will there be a change or a revolution, unless it is effected in the same way, in any of the vast creations of the Almighty, for it is by faith that the Deity works."

Thus, faith precedes and accompanies all things. It is as near to being the First Great Cause of which philosophers speak as anything can be. Let the wise and the learned speak of the laws of nature or of the universe; in reality, as the weak and [page 194] the simple know, they are viewing the effects of faith, the faith that dwells independently in the Supreme Being. And thus the fruits of faith include this earth and all earths, our atmospheric heavens and the sidereal heavens, and all forms of life that have existed and do exist in every sphere of life, whether temporal or spiritual.

"It surely will not be required of us to prove that this [faith] is the principle upon which all eternity

has acted and will act," the Prophet reasons, "for every reflecting mind must know that it is by reason of this power that all the hosts of heaven perform their works of wonder, majesty, and glory. Angels move from place to place by virtue of this power; it is by reason of it that they are enabled to descend from heaven to earth; and were it not for the power of faith they never could be ministering spirits to them who should be heirs of salvation, neither could they act as heavenly messengers, for they would be destitute of the power necessary to enable them to do the will of God." Thus, it is by faith that gods and angels live and move and have their being. It is by faith that the Lord God Omnipotent operates and performs his wondrous works. It is by faith that the universe was created and is upheld and preserved.

"It is only necessary for us to say that the whole visible creation, as it now exists, is the effect of faith. It was faith by which it was framed, and it is by the power of faith that it continues in its organized form, and by which the planets move round their orbits and sparkle forth their glory." All that God does is done by the power of faith. "So, then, faith is truly the first principle in the science of THEOLOGY, and, when understood, leads the mind back to the beginning, and carries it forward to the end; or, in other words, from eternity to eternity." (*Lectures on Faith* 7:2, 4-5.)

Faith Among Mortals

"As faith, then, is the principle by which the heavenly hosts perform their works, and by which they enjoy all their felicity," our account continues, "we might expect to find it set forth in a revelation from God as the principle upon which his creatures here below must act in order to obtain the felicities enjoyed by the saints in the eternal world." How can [page 195] mortals become either gods or angels unless they obtain the same powers, the same attributes, and the same holiness that such eternal beings now possess? God is God and angels are angels because they possess the powers and perfections that now are theirs. If men gain these same states of glory and exaltation, can they do it without becoming like those who already have so inherited?

God created all men in his own image—physically, mentally, morally, spiritually. His offspring inherited from him the power and ability to become like him. Men are patterned after their

Eternal Father, and if they ever become as their Maker, they must gain the same faith or power embodied in the Deity. To the extent that fallen men gain faith, they become like God and exercise his power. To the extent that they live in unbelief, they are without God in the world, do not exercise his power, are not in process of becoming like him, and cannot and will not be saved.

"Therefore it is said, and appropriately too, that 'Without faith it is impossible to please God.' If it should be asked—Why is it impossible to please God without faith? The answer would be—Because without faith it is impossible for men to be saved; and as God desires the salvation of men, he must, of course, desire that they should have faith; and he could not be pleased unless they had, or else he could be pleased with their destruction. From this we learn that the many exhortations which have been given by inspired men, to those who had received the word of the Lord to have faith in him, were not mere common-place matters, but were for the best of all reasons, and that was—because without it there was no salvation, neither in this world nor in that which is to come." The two alternatives that face all men are salvation or damnation. Though there are degrees of each, any who fall short of becoming as God is fail to inherit eternal life, which status is the fulness of salvation.

"When men begin to live by faith they begin to draw near to God; and when faith is perfected they are like him; and because he is saved they are saved also; for they will be in the same situation he is in, because they have come to him; and when he appears they shall be like him, for they will see him as he is. As all the visible creation is an effect of faith, so is salvation also." Manifestly there neither is nor can be anything [page 196] greater than God. If men become like him, they ascend the throne of eternal power, are exalted to the highest state that exists in all the endless expanse of created things, and are themselves gods. Thus salvation is not only the greatest of all the gifts of God, it is also the chief and most glorious of all the fruits of faith.

At this point our account asks: "What situation must a person be in in order to be saved? or what is the difference between a saved man and one who is not saved?" In describing saved beings, the Prophet's words attest: "They must be persons who can work by faith and who are able, by faith, to be ministering spirits to them who shall be heirs of salvation; and

they must have faith to enable them to act in the presence of the Lord, otherwise they cannot be saved. And what constitutes the real difference between a saved person and one not saved is—the difference in the degree of their faith—one's faith has become perfect enough to lay hold upon eternal life, and the other's has not." (*Lectures on Faith* 7:6-9.)

Here on earth we are far removed from our heavenly home and can know only by revelation of the laws that prevail in that holy place. To the extent that we accept and obey the divine laws that prevail in that realm whence we came, we gain faith and thus prepare ourselves to return to the presence of Him whose we are. And salvation, as we have and shall set forth, is to be like Christ and inherit, receive, and possess as he does in the kingdom of the Father.

Faith Like the Ancients

Faith unto life and salvation has dwelt in the hearts of righteous men from the days of Adam to the present moment. They have overcome the world, and amid suffering and sorrow, and even death, they have pursued the one and only course back to the presence of Him by whom faith comes. Indeed, as it is written: "Through the whole history of the scheme of life and salvation, it is a matter of faith." It is faith, and faith alone, that opens the door to peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. Beginning with father Adam and continuing down through all succeeding generations, "every man [has] received according to his faith—according as his faith was, so were his blessings and privileges; and nothing [page 197] was withheld from him when his faith was sufficient to receive it." How could it be otherwise when faith is the power of God?

Thus, of all and any who had faith, it is written: "He could stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, wax valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens; women could, by their faith, receive their dead children to life again; in a word, there was nothing impossible with them who had faith. All things were in subjection to the Former-day Saints, according as their faith was. By their faith they could obtain heavenly visions, the ministering of angels, have knowledge of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, of God the judge of all, of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and become familiar with the third heavens, see and hear

things which were not only unutterable, but were unlawful to utter." (*Lectures on Faith* 7:17.)

An account of the faith of the ancients has been preserved in holy writ to serve as a pattern for us. What God did for them, he will do for us; in like circumstances and when importuned with like faith, the same unchangeable God will always respond in the same way. A miracle today need be no different than a miracle anciently. A soul is just as precious in the sight of the Lord today as it has ever been. And what matter the perils of the present and the future if we have faith in God? His power can and will preserve the faithful now as in days gone by, all in harmony with his will and purposes. Let us then, bring into holy remembrance the faith of the ancients.

By faith, Adam, dwelling in the peace and serenity of Eden, chose to fall that mortal man might be; this he did knowing that such a course opened the door to immortality and eternal life. By faith, he offered sacrifices, received revelations, entertained angels, and learned of the great plan of redemption. By faith, he assembled his righteous posterity in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, where the Lord appeared unto them all, and where Adam "being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation." (D&C 107:56.)

By faith, Enoch walked with God, founded a City of Holiness called Zion, and with his whole city was translated and [page 198] taken up into heaven without tasting death. "And so great was the faith of Enoch, that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him." (Moses 7:13.)

By faith, Noah preached the gospel, prepared an ark, and saved seed through the flood. And as to Melchizedek, he was like unto Enoch. Of him the holy word says: "Now Melchizedek was a man of faith who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with

Enoch, it being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God; and it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name." The priesthood here spoken of is called *the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God*, which we and the ancient saints call the *Melchizedek Priesthood*, to avoid the too frequent repetition of the name of Deity.

It is of this Melchizedek Priesthood and of all the faithful ones who hold it that the scripture attests: "For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course; to put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundations of the world. And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven." (JST, Genesis 14:26-32.)

By faith, Abraham "looked forth and saw the days of the Son of Man, and was glad, and his soul found rest, and he [page 199] believed in the Lord; and the Lord counted it unto him for righteousness." (JST, Genesis 15:12.) Through faith, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, each in turn, received promises concerning their seed. With them Jehovah covenanted that their seed, the fruit of their loins, should continue, both in the world and out of the world, as many as the stars in the sky or innumerable as the sand upon the seashore. Each of them, by faith, gained the divine promise that in them and in their seed all generations should be blessed and that their seed after them should have the right to the priesthood and to the gospel and to eternal life.

By faith, Moses caused the waters of the Red Sea to part, to congeal, and to form a wall of water on the right hand and on the left, that the fleeing Israelites might escape the chariots of Pharaoh. By faith, he fed the chosen seed with manna from heaven for forty years, during all of which time their clothes did not wear out and their shoes did not wax old. By faith, and to prepare them to receive their

Messiah, he gave them the law that bears his name, and finally, like Enoch and those whose faith moved mountains, Moses the man of God was translated and taken into heaven without tasting death.

All of these things and other miracles without number have been wrought by faith by the prophets and saints of all dispensations. And always faith precedes the miracle; always the power of faith performs the miracle; always the miracle proves that faith was present and in active operation. For instance: "The brother of Jared said unto the mountain Zerin, Remove—and it was removed." Those few words tell all we know about what must have been a mighty struggle of one of earth's greatest prophets. To them Moroni appends the rather wry understatement: "And if he had not had faith it would not have moved." (Ether 12:30.)

"Faith is things which are hoped for and not seen," Moroni says; "wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith." Some may suppose that the various miracles and historical events recorded in the scriptures took place simply because of some divine providence being shown forth in the lives of men. True it is that divine providence controls the destinies of men and nations, but behind each miracle is divine power, and that power is named faith. "For it was by faith that Christ showed himself unto our fathers, after he had risen from the dead," [page 200] Moroni continues; "and he showed not himself unto them until after they had faith in him." That is, the Risen Lord came to the Nephites because they had faith, not simply to fulfill a divine providence that called, for instance, for his teachings to be preserved for us in the Book of Mormon.

After his resurrection "he showed himself *not* unto the world" in general, only to those who were prepared by faith to feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and to thrust their hands into his riven side. "But because of the faith of men he has shown himself unto the world," that is, unto those in the world who had faith, and he has "glorified the name of the Father, and prepared a way that thereby others might be partakers of the heavenly gift, that they might hope for those things which they have not seen. Wherefore, ye [meaning us and all men] may also have hope, and be partakers of the gift, if ye will but have faith."

As to faith among the ancients, our inspired author continues: "Behold it was by faith that they of old were called after the holy order of God. Wherefore, by faith was the law of Moses given. But in the gift of his Son hath God prepared a more excellent way; and it is by faith that it hath been fulfilled. For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them; wherefore, he showed not himself until after their faith."

Moroni speaks of the faith of Alma and Amulek "that caused the prison to tumble to the earth"; of the faith of Nephi and Lehi "that wrought the change upon the Lamanites, that they were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost"; of the faith of Ammon and his brethren "which wrought so great a miracle among the Lamanites." Then he makes this all-comprehensive, prophetic declaration: "Yea, and even all they who wrought miracles wrought them by faith, even those who were before Christ and also those who were after." There neither has been, nor is, nor ever shall be an exception to this eternal law. God never changes, and his laws are everlastingly the same.

As his crowning illustration of faith among mortals, Moroni names the translation of the Three Nephites. "And it was by faith that the three disciples obtained a promise that they should not taste of death," he says, "and they obtained not the [page 201] promise until after their faith." What greater miracle could there be among us mortals than the miracle of translation? What power but the power of God can extend the life of mortal man on earth for thousands of added years? And what power does Deity possess except the power of faith?

And out of it all, our inspired author reaches this grand conclusion: "And neither at any time hath any wrought miracles until after their faith; wherefore they first believed in the Son of God." (Ether 12:6-18.) Truly, as the Lord Jesus said: "All things are possible to him that believeth." (Mark 9:23.)

Chapter 23

Faith and Salvation

(Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 202-211)

Faith and Miracles

Faith and salvation are linked together everlastingly. They attend and strengthen each other and are perfectly united in all things. By faith, salvation comes, and salvation is nothing more and nothing less than perfect faith in active operation. God is a saved being because faith dwells in him independently, and men will be saved when they become like God and faith dwells in them independently. Hence, mortals who are in process of gaining salvation are in process of perfecting their faith. The gospel is the law and system whereby men grow in faith until they gain salvation. And thus, where the gospel is, there is faith; and where faith is, there will be the fruits of faith. Hence, signs and miracles always attend, identify, and bless true believers.

"When faith comes," the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "it brings its train of attendants with it—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, gifts, wisdom, knowledge, miracles, healings, tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc. All these appear when faith appears on the earth, and disappear when it disappears from the earth; for these are the effects of faith, and always have attended, and always will, attend it. For where faith is, there will the knowledge of God be also, with all things which pertain thereto—revelations, visions, and dreams, as well as every necessary thing, in order that the possessors of faith may be perfected, and obtain salvation; for God must change, otherwise faith will prevail with him. And he who possesses it will, through it, obtain all necessary knowledge and wisdom, until he shall know God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he has sent—whom to know is eternal life." (*Lectures on Faith* 7:20.) [page 203]

Our Blessed Lord, ministering to the Nephites in resurrected glory, gave this divine promise: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you." (3 Nephi 18:20.) Nearly four hundred years later Mormon gave this rendition of Jesus' promise: "Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold, it shall be done unto

you." Thus, all true believers, in all ages, who ask the Father, in the name of Christ, in faith, for anything that is *right* and *good* shall receive that which they desire. In this connection the inspired account of Mormon preserves for us these words of Christ: "If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me."

What, then, is the destiny of those who have faith? It is to work miracles while in this mortal probation and to gain eternal life in the estate ahead. Of them the scripture says, Christ "claimeth all those who have faith in him." None such shall be lost; all who have faith will be saved.

How may those who have faith be known? What witness do they bear that sets them apart from the masses of men? "They who have faith in him [Christ] will cleave unto every good thing," Mormon says. Signs will attend their mortal ministries and angels will minister unto them while they yet dwell on earth.

Faith and angels go together. "Angels," according to the Book of Mormon account, show "themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness." Why do they minister unto men? "The office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men."

Mormon, whose words we are quoting, viewing the decadent and fallen religions of an apostate world, breaks forth [page 204] with these words of doctrine and of warning: "It is by faith that miracles are wrought." There is no other way. "And it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men." Without faith they remain hidden from mortal eyes. "Wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name." Faith and salvation go together. "Wherefore, if these things"—the working of miracles and the

ministering of angels—"have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made." Without faith they cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall and they remain forever cast out of the presence of the Lord. Such is Mormon's evaluation of apostate peoples and of those who belong to other churches than the Lord's. And having so stated, he says of those who have forsaken the world and taken upon themselves the name of Christ: "If ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church." (Moroni 7:26-39.)

"Miracles are the fruits of faith," the Prophet said. "Faith comes by hearing the word of God. If a man has not faith enough to do one thing, he may have faith to do another: if he cannot remove a mountain, he may heal the sick. Where faith is there will be some of the fruits: all gifts and power which were sent from heaven, were poured out on the heads of those who had faith." (*History of the Church* 5:355.) Also: "Because faith is wanting, the fruits are. No man since the world was had faith without having something along with it. The ancients quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, women received their dead, etc. By faith the worlds were made. A man who has none of the gifts has no faith; and he deceives himself, if he supposes he has. Faith has been wanting, not only among the heathen, but in professed Christendom also, so that tongues, healings, prophecy, and prophets and apostles, and all the gifts and blessings have been wanting." (*History of the Church* 5:218.)

Signs Attend True Believers

Moroni raises his voice alongside that of his father, Mormon, in proclaiming the gospel truths relative to faith, [page 205] miracles, and signs. As "an unchangeable Being," by whose power miracles have been wrought from the beginning, Deity is "a God of miracles," he says. "And the reason why he ceaseth to do miracles among the children of men is because that they dwindle in unbelief, and depart from the right way, and know not the God in whom they should trust." There is no such thing as faith unto life and salvation in a false god. Either men believe in the true and living God or they wear out their lives in faithless unbelief.

"Behold, I say unto you," Moroni continues, "that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, whatsoever he shall ask the Father in the name of

Christ it shall be granted him; and this promise is unto all, even unto the ends of the earth. For behold, thus said Jesus Christ, the Son of God, unto his disciples who should tarry [the Three Nephites who were translated], yea, and also to all his disciples, in the hearing of the multitude: Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; and he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." This is the same commission given the apostles who were with Jesus in Jerusalem. The message to all men was and is and ever shall be that salvation is in Christ and his holy gospel. Believe the true gospel and be saved; believe a false gospel and receive a lesser reward.

But how is the true gospel to be known? One voice cries out that Christ and salvation are here; another affirms they are there. There is unending discord and division among men, including those who profess to be Christians. To his legal administrators on both continents Jesus said: "And these signs shall follow them that believe—in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover; and whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth." (Mormon 9:19-25; Mark 16:14-20.)

Signs follow true believers! Miracles are the fruits of faith! Healings and gifts of the Spirit are always found in the true church! Where these are, there is the gospel that saves; where these are not, any supposed system of salvation has no saving [page 206] power. Faith and signs are inseparably connected. There is no such thing as having one without the other.

The law governing faith and signs is eternal and everlasting; it is the same in all ages and among all peoples, and it has been given to us in our day in these words: "It shall come to pass that he that hath faith in me to be healed," saith the Lord, "and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed." The exercise of faith is always subject to the overriding providences of the Lord. If it is the will of the Lord to take one of his children from this life to the next, then the Lord's will prevails. Faith cannot be exercised contrary to the order and will of heaven. Nevertheless, "he who hath faith to see shall see. He who hath faith to hear shall hear. The lame who hath faith to leap shall leap. And they who have not faith to

do these things, but believe in me"—the Lord is speaking—"have power to become my sons; and inasmuch as they break not my laws thou shalt bear their infirmities." (D&C 42:48-52.)

To his people in these last days, the Lord has promised that signs shall follow those who truly believe. "But a commandment I give unto them," he cautions and warns, "that they shall not boast themselves of these things, neither speak them before the world; for these things are given unto you for your profit and for salvation." (D&C 84:73.)

As faith *precedes* the miracle, so signs *follow* those who believe. Belief comes first; then its fruits are shown forth. Hence the saints seek faith, not signs. "Faith cometh not by signs, but signs follow those that believe. Yea, signs come by faith, not by the will of men, nor as they please, but by the will of God. Yea, signs come by faith, unto mighty works, for without faith no man pleaseth God; and with whom God is angry he is not well pleased; wherefore, unto such he showeth no signs, only in wrath unto their condemnation." (D&C 63:9-11.)

Being One with Christ

To be saved is to be like Christ, inheriting, receiving, and possessing as he does. To gain salvation is to grow in faith until we have the faith of Christ and thus are like him. Our nearness to him and to salvation is measured by the degree of our faith. To gain faith is to attain the power of Christ, which is God's power. To believe in Christ in the full and true sense is to "have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), that is, to [page 207] believe what he believes, think what he thinks, say what he says, and do what he does. It is to be one with him by the power of the Holy Ghost.

What say the scriptures about being one with Christ? "By faith," Mormon says, we "become the sons of God." (Moroni 7:26.) Speaking of true believers, John says: "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:2-3.) "Ye shall be holy," the Lord says to his saints, "for I the Lord your God am holy." (Leviticus 19:2.) As Christ "which hath called you is holy," Peter pleads with the saints, "so be ye holy." (1 Peter 1:15.) And the great exhortation of the Lord Jesus himself is: "I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect." (3 Nephi 12:48.)

Why must those who seek salvation pursue the course charted in these scriptures? Because if they do not, they cannot be like Christ. If they are not pure as he is pure, "holy, as he is holy, and perfect, as he is perfect, they cannot be like him; for no being can enjoy his glory without possessing his perfections and holiness, no more than they could reign in his kingdom without his power." (*Lectures on Faith* 7:10.)

It is on the basis of these principles that men are able to do the works of Christ. "He that believeth on me," Jesus said, "the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12.) When and why and how can men do greater works than the Lord Jesus did when he ministered among men? The answers are found in his great Intercessory Prayer. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me," Jesus prayed, "that they may be one, as we are." The apostles are to be one with the Father and the Son. "Neither pray I for these alone," the Lord continued, "but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 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." All true believers, all who have faith, all the saints, all the righteous of all the ages are to be one with the Father and the Son.

Then of the Twelve, Jesus prayed: "And the glory which [page 208] thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:11, 20-24.)

After quoting the scriptures that we have quoted, the Prophet Joseph Smith said: "All these sayings put together give as clear an account of the state of the glorified saints as language could give—the works that Jesus had done they were to do, and greater works than those which he had done among them should they do, and that because he went to the Father. He does not say that they should do these works in time; but they should do greater works, because he went to the Father." That is to say: "The greater works which those that believed on his name were to do were to be done in eternity, where

he was going and where they should behold his glory." They were to be done by those who were one with him and his Father. "For he declares to his Father, in language not to be easily mistaken, that he wanted his disciples, even all of them, to be as himself and the Father, for as he and the Father were one so they might be one with them."

Jesus is thus saying "that unless they have the glory which the Father had given him they could not be one with them; for he says he had given them the glory that the Father had given him that they might be one; or, in other words, to make them one. . . . They were to be partakers with him in all things, not even his glory excepted."

What is this New Testament doctrine but a proclamation that as God now is, man may become? Continuing his exposition of such a transcendent and glorious concept, Joseph Smith says that "the glory which the Father and the Son have is because they are just and holy beings; and that if they were lacking in one attribute or perfection which they have, the glory which they have never could be enjoyed by them, for it requires them to be precisely what they are in order to enjoy it; and if the Saviour gives this glory to any others, he must do it in the very way set forth in his prayer to his Father—by making them one with him as he and the Father are one. In so [page 209] doing he would give them the glory which the Father has given him; and when his disciples are made one with the Father and Son, as the Father and the Son are one, who cannot see the propriety of the Saviour's saying—The works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father."

What, then, is the relationship between faith and salvation? "These teachings of the Saviour most clearly show unto us the nature of salvation," the Prophet continues, "and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them—that he proposed to make them like unto himself, and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings; and for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved; and to be unlike them is to be destroyed; and on this hinge turns the door of salvation. Who cannot see, then, that salvation is the effect of faith? for, as we have previously observed, all the heavenly beings work by this principle; and it is because they are able so to do that they are saved, for nothing but this could save them. And this is the lesson which the God of heaven,

by the mouth of all his holy prophets, has been endeavouring to teach to the world."

Thus, we see "the light in which the Saviour, as well as the Former-day Saints, viewed the plan of salvation. That it was a system of faith—it begins with faith, and continues by faith; and every blessing which is obtained in relation to it is the effect of faith, whether it pertains to this life or that which is to come. To this all the revelations of God bear witness. If there were children of promise, they were the effects of faith, not even the Saviour of the world excepted." (*Lectures on Faith* 7:12-17.)

Faith and Knowledge

In the eternal sense, because faith is the power of God himself, it embraces within its fold a knowledge of all things. This measure of faith, the faith by which the worlds are and were created and which sustains and upholds all things, is found only among resurrected persons. It is the faith of saved beings. But mortals are in process, through faith, of gaining eternal salvation. Their faith is based on a knowledge of the truth, within the meaning of Alma's statement that "faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things," but that men have [page 210] faith when they "hope for things which are not seen, which are true." In this sense faith is both preceded and supplanted by knowledge, and when any person gains a perfect knowledge on any given matter, then, as pertaining to that thing, he has faith no longer; or, rather, his faith is dormant; it has been supplanted by pure knowledge. (See Alma 32:21-34.)

Once the saints gain faith, because they have believed in the true and living God, their assured hope in the unseen is the basis by which they may acquire knowledge; that is, they gain knowledge by faith. Thus, Peter said to those saints who had "obtained like precious faith" with the apostles: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." (2 Peter 1:1-3.)

Thus, for those who desire to gain all things that pertain to life and godliness, the great issue is one of coming to know God in the full and true sense of the word. In expounding upon this, our modern prophet said: "How were they to obtain the knowledge of God? (for there is a great difference

between believing in God and knowing him—knowledge implies more than faith. And notice, that all things that pertain to life and godliness were given through the knowledge of God) the answer is given—through faith they were to obtain this knowledge; and, having power by faith to obtain the knowledge of God, they could with it obtain all other things which pertain to life and godliness. By these sayings of the apostle, we learn that it was by obtaining a knowledge of God that men got the knowledge of all things which pertain to life and godliness, and this knowledge was the effect of faith; so that all things which pertain to life and godliness are the effects of faith."

Building, then, on this foundation, the Prophet set forth this concept: "From this we may extend as far as any circumstances may require, whether on earth or in heaven, and we will find it the testimony of all inspired men, or heavenly messengers, that all things that pertain to life and godliness are the effects of faith and nothing else; all learning, wisdom and prudence fail, and every thing else as a means of salvation but [page 211] faith. . . . This is the reason that the Former-day Saints knew more, and understood more, of heaven and of heavenly things than all others beside, because this information is the effect of faith—to be obtained by no other means. And this is the reason that men, as soon as they lose their faith, run into strifes, contentions, darkness, and difficulties; for the knowledge which tends to life disappears with faith, but returns when faith returns." (*Lectures on Faith* 7:20.)

The brother of Jared stands out as a good illustration of how the knowledge of God is gained by faith, and also of how that perfect knowledge, from a mortal perspective, replaces faith. He received the most complete revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ that had been given down to his day. After recording some of the details of this incomparable outpouring of divine truth, Moroni says: "And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw . . . the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting. Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him." And further: "The Lord . . . showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends

of the earth. For he had said unto him in times before, that if he would believe in him that he could show unto him all things—it should be shown unto him; therefore the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could show him all things." (Ether 3:19-20, 25-26.)

"And there were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad." (Ether 12:19.)

“In the Strength of the Lord”
(Words of Mormon 1:14; Mosiah 9:17;
Mosiah 10:10; Alma 20:4)

DAVID A. BEDNAR

Good morning, brothers and sisters. It is for me a blessing and a remarkable responsibility to stand before you today. I appreciate the invitation from Elder Bateman to speak with you.

As I entered the Marriott Center this morning, my mind was flooded with wonderful memories. I have been in this arena many, many times. I was a freshman at BYU in 1970 when the construction work on this building was started. I vividly remember sitting way up there on September 11, 1973, and listening to the teachings and testimony of President Harold B. Lee. I had returned from my mission to southern Germany just three weeks earlier, and the message he presented that day was entitled “Be Loyal to the Royal Within You.” I hope I shall never forget what I felt and heard and learned that day. His teachings have positively influenced me for the last 28 years.

I remember sitting right over there in 1973 when President Spencer W. Kimball, as president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, delivered a powerful and extremely direct message about the importance of eternal marriage (“Marriage Is Honorable,” 30 September 1973). I also remember how squirmy I and the young woman with whom I attended that fireside were—on our first date. (For those of you

who may be wondering, the young woman with whom I attended that fireside then is not Sister Bednar now.) And I remember sitting right over there in 1977 as a married student walking and wrestling with a young son. I sat right up there in 2000 when that same son graduated from BYU with his baccalaureate degree. I recall with great fondness numerous other occasions in this building when I have listened to inspired leaders and learned from great teachers.

It frankly never occurred to me that someday I might be invited to stand at this pulpit and speak to a group like you. It is clear to me that I likely will never be asked to do so again. Thus I have been most prayerful and serious about preparing my presentation for today. Assuming that I would never again stand at this pulpit to teach and testify, I have considered what might be the most important message I could share with you. My objective this morning is to describe and discuss both the *redeeming* and *enabling* powers of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. And I hope to place particular emphasis upon the enabling power of

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the Atonement. I yearn and invite and pray for the companionship of the Holy Ghost to be with me and with you as we visit together for these few minutes about this sacred subject.

The Journey of Life

The framework for my message today is a statement by President David O. McKay. He summarized the overarching purpose of the gospel of the Savior in these terms: “The purpose of the gospel is . . . to make bad men good and good men better, and to change human nature” (from the film *Every Member a Missionary*, as acknowledged by Franklin D. Richards, *CR*, October 1965, 136–37; see also Brigham Young, *JD* 8:130 [22 July 1860]).

Thus the journey of a lifetime is to progress from bad to good to better and to experience the mighty change of heart—and to have our fallen natures changed.

May I suggest that the Book of Mormon is our handbook of instructions as we travel the pathway from bad to good to better and to have our hearts changed. If you have your scriptures with you this morning, please turn with me to Mosiah 3:19. In this verse King Benjamin teaches about the journey of mortality and about the role of the Atonement in successfully navigating that journey: “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, *and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint* through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (emphasis added).

I want to stop at this point and draw our attention to two specific phrases. First, consider “and putteth off the natural man.” Let me suggest to you that President McKay was fundamentally talking about putting off the natural man when he said, “The purpose of the gospel is . . . to make bad men good.” Now I do not believe the word *bad* in this statement by President McKay connotes only *wicked, awful, horrible*, or *inherently evil*. Rather, I think he was

suggesting that the journey from bad to good is the process of putting off the natural man or the natural woman in each of us. In mortality we all are tempted by the flesh. The very elements out of which our bodies were created are by nature fallen and ever subject to the pull of sin, corruption, and death. And we can increase our capacity to overcome the desires of the flesh and temptations, as described in this verse, “through the atonement of Christ.” When we make mistakes—as we transgress and sin—we are able to overcome such weakness through the redeeming and cleansing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. As we frequently sing in preparation to partake of the emblems of the sacrament, “His precious blood he freely spilt; His life he freely gave, A sinless sacrifice for guilt, A dying world to save” (“How Great the Wisdom and the Love,” *Hymns*, 1985, no. 195).

Now, please notice the next line in Mosiah 3:19: “and becometh a saint.” May I suggest this phrase describes the continuation and second phase of life’s journey as outlined by President McKay. “The purpose of the gospel is . . . to make bad men good”—or, in other words, put off the natural man—“and good men better”—or, in other words, become more like a saint. Brothers and sisters, I believe this second part of the journey—this process of going from good to better—is a topic about which we do not study or teach frequently enough nor understand adequately.

If I were to emphasize one overarching point this morning, it would be this: I suspect that you and I are much more familiar with the nature of the redeeming power of the Atonement than we are with the enabling power of the Atonement. It is one thing to know that Jesus Christ came to earth to *die* for us. That is fundamental and foundational to the doctrine of Christ. But we also need to appreciate that the Lord desires, through His Atonement and by the power of the Holy Ghost, to *live* in us—not only to direct us

but also to empower us. I think most of us know that when we do things wrong, when we need help to overcome the effects of sin in our lives, the Savior has paid the price and made it possible for us to be made clean through His redeeming power. Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints—for good men and women who are obedient and worthy and conscientious and who are striving to become better and serve more faithfully. I frankly do not think many of us “get it” concerning this enabling and strengthening aspect of the Atonement, and I wonder if we mistakenly believe we must make the journey from good to better and become a saint all by ourselves through sheer grit, willpower, and discipline, and with our obviously limited capacities.

Brothers and sisters, the gospel of the Savior is not simply about avoiding bad in our lives; it also is essentially about doing and becoming good. And the Atonement provides help for us to overcome and avoid bad and to do and become good. There is help from the Savior for the entire journey of life—from bad to good to better and to change our very nature.

I am not trying to suggest that the redeeming and enabling powers of the Atonement are separate and discrete. Rather, these two dimensions of the Atonement are connected and complementary; they both need to be operational during all phases of the journey of life. And it is eternally important for all of us to recognize that *both* of these essential elements of the journey of life—both putting off the natural man and becoming a saint, both overcoming bad and becoming good—are accomplished through the power of the Atonement. Individual willpower, personal determination and motivation, and effective planning and goal setting are necessary but ultimately insufficient to triumphantly com-

plete this mortal journey. Truly we must come to rely upon “the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8).

Grace and the Enabling Power of the Atonement

I now want to describe in greater detail the enabling power of the Atonement. Brothers and sisters, please notice the use of the word *grace* in the verse from 2 Nephi to which we just referred. In the Bible Dictionary in our scriptures we learn that the word *grace* frequently is used in the scriptures to connote *enabling power*. On page 697, under the word *grace*, we read:

“A word that occurs frequently in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul. The main idea of the word is *divine means of help or strength*, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ (emphasis added).

“It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, made possible by his atoning sacrifice, that mankind will be raised in immortality, every person receiving his body from the grave in a condition of everlasting life.”

Please note these next sentences:

“It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts” (emphasis added).

That is, grace represents that divine assistance or heavenly help each of us will desperately need to qualify for the celestial kingdom. Thus the enabling power of the Atonement strengthens us to do and be good and serve beyond our own individual desire and natural capacity.

In my personal scripture study I often insert the term *enabling power* whenever I encounter

the word *grace*. Consider, for example, this verse with which we are all familiar: “For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23).

Let’s review this verse one more time: “For we know that it is by grace [the enabling and strengthening power of the Atonement of Christ] that we are saved, after all we can do.”

I believe we can learn much about this vital aspect of the Atonement if we will insert *enabling and strengthening power* each time we find the word *grace* in the scriptures.

Illustrations and Implications

The journey of a lifetime, as described by President McKay, is to go from bad to good to better and to have our very natures changed. And the Book of Mormon is replete with examples of disciples and prophets who knew and understood and were transformed by the enabling power of the Atonement in making that journey. May I suggest, brothers and sisters, that as we come to better understand this sacred power, our gospel perspective will be greatly enlarged and enriched. Such a perspective will change us in remarkable ways.

Nephi is an example of one who knew and understood and relied upon the enabling power of the Savior. In 1 Nephi 7 we recall that the sons of Lehi had returned to Jerusalem to enlist Ishmael and his household in their cause. Laman and others in the party traveling with Nephi from Jerusalem back to the wilderness rebelled, and Nephi exhorted his brethren to have faith in the Lord. It was at this point in their trip that Nephi’s brothers bound him with cords and planned his destruction. Now please note Nephi’s prayer in verse 17: “O Lord, according to my faith which is in thee, wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren; yea, even *give me strength that I may burst these bands* with which I am bound” (emphasis added).

Brothers and sisters, do you know what I likely would have prayed for if I had been

tied up by my brothers? My prayer would have included a request for something bad to happen to my brothers and ended with the phrase “wilt thou deliver me from the hands of my brethren” or, in other words, “Please get me out of this mess, now!” It is especially interesting to me that Nephi did not pray, as I probably would have prayed, to have his circumstances changed. Rather, he prayed for the strength to change his circumstances. And may I suggest that he prayed in this manner precisely because he knew and understood and had experienced the enabling power of the Atonement of the Savior.

I personally do not believe the bands with which Nephi was bound just magically fell from his hands and wrists. Rather, I suspect that he was blessed with both persistence and personal strength beyond his natural capacity, that he then “in the strength of the Lord” (Mosiah 9:17) worked and twisted and tugged on the cords and ultimately and literally was enabled to break the bands.

Brothers and sisters, the implication of this episode for each of us is quite straightforward. As you and I come to understand and employ the enabling power of the Atonement in our personal lives, we will pray and seek for strength to change our circumstances rather than praying for our circumstances to be changed. We will become agents who “act” rather than objects that are “acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:14).

Consider the example in Mosiah 24 as Alma and his people are being persecuted by Amulon. As recorded in verse 14, the voice of the Lord came to these good people in their affliction and indicated: “And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs.”

Now if I had been one of Alma’s people and received that particular assurance, my response likely would have been, “I thank thee, and please hurry!” But notice in verse 15

the process the Lord used to lighten the burden: “And now it came to pass that the burdens which were laid upon Alma and his brethren were made light; yea, *the Lord did strengthen them* that they could bear up their burdens with ease, and they did submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord” (emphasis added).

Brothers and sisters, what was changed in this episode? It was not the burden that changed; the challenges and difficulties of persecution were not immediately removed from the people. But Alma and his followers were strengthened, and their increased capacity and strength made the burdens they bore lighter. These good people were empowered through the Atonement to *act* as agents and *impact* their circumstances—“in the strength of the Lord.” Alma and his people were then directed to safety in the land of Zarahemla.

Now some of you may legitimately be wondering, “Brother Bednar, what makes you think the episode with Alma and his people is an example of the enabling power of the Atonement?” I believe the answer to your question is found in a comparison of Mosiah 3:19 and Mosiah 24:15. Let’s resume reading in Mosiah 3:19 where we previously had stopped: “and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and *becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father*” (emphasis added).

As we progress in the journey of mortality from bad to good to better, as we put off the natural man or woman in each of us, and as we strive to become saints and have our very natures changed, then the attributes detailed in this verse increasingly should describe the type of person you and I are becoming. We will become more childlike, more submissive, more patient, and more willing to submit. Now compare these characteristics in Mosiah

3:19 with those used to describe Alma and his people in the latter part of verse 15 in Mosiah 24: “and they did *submit cheerfully and with patience to all the will of the Lord*” (emphasis added).

I find the parallels between the attributes described in these verses striking and an indication that Alma’s good people were becoming a better people through the enabling power of the Atonement of Christ the Lord.

We are all familiar with the story of Alma and Amulek contained in Alma 14. In this episode many faithful Saints had been put to death by fire, and these two servants of the Lord had been imprisoned and beaten. Please consider this petition contained in verse 26 offered by Alma as he prayed in prison: “O Lord, *give us strength* according to our faith which is in Christ, even unto deliverance” (emphasis added).

Here again we see reflected in his request Alma’s understanding of and confidence in the enabling power of the Atonement. Now note the result of this prayer, as described in the latter part of verse 26 and in verse 28:

“And they [Alma and Amulek] broke the cords with which they were bound; and when the people saw this, they began to flee, for the fear of destruction had come upon them. . . .

“And Alma and Amulek came forth out of the prison, and they were not hurt; for *the Lord had granted unto them power*, according to their faith which was in Christ” (emphasis added).

Once again the enabling power is evident as good people struggle against evil and strive to become even better and serve more effectively “in the strength of the Lord” (Mosiah 9:17).

Let me present one final example from the Book of Mormon. In Alma 31, Alma is directing a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites. You will recall that in this chapter we learn about Rameumptom and the prescribed and prideful prayer offered by the Zoramites. Please notice the plea for strength in Alma’s personal prayer, as described in verse 31:

“O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me *that I may have strength*, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people” (emphasis added).

In verse 33 Alma also prays that his missionary companions will receive a similar blessing: “Wilt thou grant unto them *that they may have strength*, that they may bear their afflictions which shall come upon them because of the iniquities of this people” (emphasis added).

Again we observe that Alma did not pray to have his afflictions removed. He knew he was an agent of the Lord, and he prayed for the power to act and affect his situation.

The key point of this example is contained in the final verse, Alma 31:38: “Yea, and *he also gave them strength*, that they should suffer no manner of afflictions, *save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ*. Now this was according to the prayer of Alma; and this because he prayed in faith” (emphasis added).

No, the afflictions were not removed. But Alma and his companions were strengthened and blessed through the enabling power of the Atonement to “suffer no manner of afflictions, save it were swallowed up in the joy of Christ.” What a marvelous blessing. And what a lesson each of us should learn.

Examples of the enabling power are not found only in the scriptures. Daniel W. Jones was born in 1830 in Missouri, and he joined the Church in California in 1851. In 1856 he participated in the rescue of handcart companies that were stranded in Wyoming by severe storms. After the rescue party found the suffering Saints, provided what immediate comfort they could, and made arrangements for the sick and the feeble to be transported to Salt Lake City, Daniel and several other young men volunteered to remain with and safeguard the company’s possessions. The food and supplies left with Daniel and his colleagues were, to say the least, meager and were rapidly expended. I will now quote

from Daniel Jones’ personal journal and his description of the events that followed:

“Game soon became so scarce that we could kill nothing. We ate all the poor meat; one would get hungry eating it. Finally that was all gone, nothing now but hides were left. We made a trial of them. A lot was cooked and eaten without any seasoning and it made the whole company sick. Many were so turned against the stuff that it made them sick to think of it. . . .

“Things looked dark, for nothing remained but the poor raw hides taken from starved cattle. We asked the Lord to direct us what to do. The brethren did not murmur, but felt to trust in God. We had cooked the hide, after soaking and scraping the hair off until it was soft and then ate it, glue and all. This made it rather inclined to stay with us longer than we desired. Finally I was impressed how to fix the stuff and gave the company advice, telling them how to cook it; for them to scorch and scrape the hair off; this had a tendency to kill and purify the bad taste that scalding gave it. After scraping, boil one hour in plenty of water, throwing the water away which had extracted all the glue, then wash and scrape the hide thoroughly, washing in cold water, then boil to a jelly and let it get cold, and then eat with a little sugar sprinkled on it. This was considerable trouble, but we had little else to do and it was better than starving” (Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians* [Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890], 81).

All that I have read thus far is a preparation for the next line from Daniel W. Jones’ journal. It illustrates how those pioneer Saints may have known something about the enabling power of the Atonement that we, in our prosperity and ease, are not as quick to understand: “We asked the Lord to bless our stomachs and *adapt them to this food*” (Jones, *Forty Years*, 81; emphasis added). My dear brothers and sisters, I know what I would have prayed for in those circumstances. I would have prayed for something

else to eat. “Heavenly Father, please send me a quail or a buffalo.” It never would have occurred to me to pray that my stomach would be strengthened and adapted to what we already had. What did Daniel W. Jones know? He knew about the enabling power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He did not pray that his circumstances would be changed. He prayed that he would be strengthened to deal with his circumstances. Just as Nephi, Amulek, and Alma and his people were strengthened, Daniel W. Jones had the spiritual insight to know what to ask for in that prayer. “We hadn’t the faith to ask him to bless the raw-hide, for it was ‘hard stock.’ On eating now all seemed to relish the feast. We were three days without eating before this second attempt was made. We enjoyed this sumptuous fare for about six weeks” (Jones, *Forty Years*, 81–82).

The enabling power of the Atonement of Christ strengthens us to do things we could never do on our own. Sometimes I wonder if in our latter-day world of ease—in our world of microwave ovens and cell phones and air-conditioned cars and comfortable homes—I wonder if we ever learn to acknowledge our daily dependence upon the enabling power of the Atonement.

The greatest lessons I have learned about the enabling power have come from the quiet example of my wife in our own home. I watched her persevere through intense and continuous morning sickness and vomiting during each of her three pregnancies. She literally was sick all day every day for eight months with each pregnancy. That challenge was never removed from her. But together we prayed that she would be strengthened, and she indeed was blessed through the enabling power of the Atonement to do physically what in her own power she could not do. Sister Bednar is a remarkably capable and competent woman, and over the years I have seen how she has been magnified to handle the mocking and scorn that come

from a secular society when a Latter-day Saint woman heeds prophetic counsel and makes the family and home and the nurturing of children her highest priorities. In today’s world a righteous woman and mother in Zion will need both priesthood support and the enabling power of the Atonement. I thank and pay tribute to Susan for helping me to learn such invaluable lessons.

In Alma 7 we learn how and why the Savior is able to provide the enabling power, beginning with verse 11: “And he shall go forth, suffering *pains* and *afflictions* and *temptations* of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the *pains* and the *sicknesses* of his people” (emphasis added).

Thus the Savior has suffered not just for our iniquities but also for the inequality, the unfairness, the pain, the anguish, and the emotional distress that so frequently beset us. Additional detail is described in verse 12:

“And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their *infirmities*, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (emphasis added).

There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, “No one understands. No one knows.” No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, and succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which

we could never do through relying only upon our own power.

Perhaps now we can more fully understand and appreciate the lesson of Matthew 11:28–30:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

I express my appreciation for the infinite and eternal sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Atonement is not only for people who have

done bad things and are trying to be good. It is for good people who are trying to become better and serve faithfully and who yearn for an ongoing and mighty change of heart. Indeed, “in the strength of the Lord” (Mosiah 9:17) we can do and overcome all things.

Brothers and sisters, I know the Savior lives. I have experienced both His redeeming and enabling power, and I witness that these powers are real and available to each of us. I know He directs the affairs of this Church. I know apostles and prophets authoritatively act for and in behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ. These things I know to be true and so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Challenge to Become

Dallin H. Oaks, *Ensign*, Nov 2000, 32–34

The Apostle Paul taught that the Lord's teachings and teachers were given that we may all attain "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" ([Eph. 4:13](#)). This process requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be *convinced* of the gospel; we must act and think so that we are *converted* by it. In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to *become* something.

Many Bible and modern scriptures speak of a final judgment at which all persons will be rewarded according to their deeds or works or the desires of their hearts. But other scriptures enlarge upon this by referring to our being judged by the *condition* we have achieved.

The prophet Nephi describes the Final Judgment in terms of what we *have become*: "And if their works have been filthiness they must needs *be* filthy; and if they *be* filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God" ([1 Ne. 15:33](#); emphasis added). Moroni declares, "He that *is* filthy shall be filthy still; and he that *is* righteous shall be righteous still" ([Morm. 9:14](#); emphasis added; see also [Rev. 22:11–12](#); [2 Ne. 9:16](#); [D&C 88:35](#)). The same would be true of "selfish" or "disobedient" or any other personal attribute inconsistent with the requirements of God. Referring to the "state" of the wicked in the Final Judgment, Alma explains that if we are condemned by our words, our works, and our thoughts, "we shall not be found spotless; ... and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God" ([Alma 12:14](#)).

From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.

A parable illustrates this understanding. A wealthy father knew that if he were to bestow his wealth upon a child who had not yet developed the needed wisdom and stature, the inheritance would probably be wasted. The father said to his child:

"All that I have I desire to give you—not only my wealth, but also my position and standing among men. That which I *have* I can easily give you, but that which I *am* you must obtain for yourself. You will qualify for your inheritance by learning what I have learned and by living as I have lived. I will give you the laws and principles by which I have acquired my wisdom and stature. Follow my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours."

This parable parallels the pattern of heaven. The gospel of Jesus Christ promises the incomparable inheritance of eternal life, the fulness of the Father, and reveals the laws and principles by which it can be obtained.

We qualify for eternal life through a process of *conversion*. As used here, this word of many meanings signifies not just a convincing but a profound change of nature. Jesus used this meaning when He taught His chief Apostle the difference between a testimony and a conversion. Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" ([Matt. 16:13](#)). Next He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?"

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" ([Matt. 16:15–17](#)).

Peter had a *testimony*. He knew that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, and he declared it. To *testify* is to know and to declare.

Later on, Jesus taught these same men about *conversion*, which is far more than testimony. When the disciples asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye *be converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" ([Matt. 18:2–4](#); emphasis added).

Later, the Savior confirmed the importance of being converted, even for those with a testimony of the truth. In the sublime instructions given at the Last Supper, He told Simon Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" ([Luke 22:32](#)).

In order to strengthen his brethren—to nourish and lead the flock of God—this man who had followed Jesus for three years, who had been given the authority of the holy apostleship, who had been a valiant teacher and testifier of the Christian gospel, and whose testimony had caused the Master to declare him blessed still had to be “converted.”

Jesus’ challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see [Matt. 18:3](#)) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to *know* and to *declare*. The gospel challenges us to be “converted,” which requires us to *do* and to *become*. If any of us relies solely upon our knowledge and testimony of the gospel, we are in the same position as the blessed but still unfinished Apostles whom Jesus challenged to be “converted.” We all know someone who has a strong testimony but does not act upon it so as to be converted. For example, returned missionaries, are you still seeking to be converted, or are you caught up in the ways of the world?

The needed conversion *by* the gospel begins with the introductory experience the scriptures call being “born again” (e.g., [Mosiah 27:25](#); [Alma 5:49](#); [John 3:7](#); [1 Pet. 1:23](#)). In the waters of baptism and by receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, we become the spiritual “sons and daughters” of Jesus Christ, “new creatures” who can “inherit the kingdom of God” ([Mosiah 27:25–26](#)).

In teaching the Nephites, the Savior referred to what they must become. He challenged them to repent and be baptized and be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, “that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” ([3 Ne. 27:20](#)). He concluded: “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” ([3 Ne. 27:27](#)).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan by which we can become what children of God are supposed to become. This spotless and perfected state will result from a steady succession of covenants, ordinances, and actions, an accumulation of right choices, and from continuing repentance. “This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” ([Alma 34:32](#)).

Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal conversion, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. As we do so, we should remember that our family relationships—even more than our Church

callings—are the setting in which the most important part of that development can occur. The conversion we must achieve requires us to be a good husband and father or a good wife and mother. Being a successful Church leader is not enough. Exaltation is an eternal family experience, and it is our mortal family experiences that are best suited to prepare us for it.

The Apostle John spoke of what we are challenged to become when he said: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” ([1 Jn. 3:2](#); see also [Moro. 7:48](#)).

I hope the importance of conversion and becoming will cause our local leaders to reduce their concentration on statistical measures of actions and to focus more on what our brothers and sisters *are* and what they are striving to *become*.

Our needed conversions are often achieved more readily by suffering and adversity than by comfort and tranquillity, as Elder Hales taught us so beautifully this morning. Father Lehi promised his son Jacob that God would “consecrate [his] afflictions for [his] gain” ([2 Ne. 2:2](#)). The Prophet Joseph was promised that “thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high” ([D&C 121:7–8](#)).

Most of us experience some measure of what the scriptures call “the furnace of affliction” ([Isa. 48:10](#); [1 Ne. 20:10](#)). Some are submerged in service to a disadvantaged family member. Others suffer the death of a loved one or the loss or postponement of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing. Still others struggle with personal impairments or with feelings of rejection, inadequacy, or depression. Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to become.

We are challenged to move through a process of conversion toward that status and condition called eternal life. This is achieved not just by doing what is right, but by doing it for the right reason—for the pure love of Christ. The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity (see [1 Cor. 13](#)). The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant acts of goodness he cited is that charity, “the pure love of Christ” ([Moro. 7:47](#)), is not an *act* but a

condition or state of being. Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in a conversion. Charity is something one becomes. Thus, as Moroni declared, "except men shall *have* charity they cannot inherit" the place prepared for them in the mansions of the Father ([Ether 12:34](#); emphasis added).

All of this helps us understand an important meaning of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, which the Savior gave to explain what the kingdom of heaven is like. As you remember, the owner of the vineyard hired laborers at different times of the day. Some he sent into the vineyard early in the morning, others about the third hour, and others in the sixth and ninth hours. Finally, in the eleventh hour he sent others into the vineyard, promising that he would also pay them "whatsoever is right" ([Matt. 20:7](#)).

At the end of the day the owner of the vineyard gave the same wage to every worker, even to those who had come in the eleventh hour. When those who had worked the entire day saw this, "they murmured against the goodman of the house" ([Matt. 20:11](#)). The owner did not yield but merely pointed out that he had done no one any wrong, since he had paid each man the agreed amount.

Like other parables, this one can teach several different and valuable principles. For present purposes its lesson is that the Master's reward in the Final Judgment will not be based on how long we have labored in the vineyard. We do not obtain our heavenly reward by punching a time clock. What is essential is that our labors in the workplace of the Lord have caused us to *become* something. For some of us, this requires a longer time than for others. What is important in the end is what we have become by our labors. Many who come in the eleventh hour have been refined and prepared by the Lord in ways other than formal employment in the vineyard. These workers are like the prepared dry mix to which it is only necessary to "add water"—the perfecting ordinance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. With that addition—even in the eleventh hour—these workers are in the same state of development and qualified to receive the same reward as those who have labored long in the vineyard.

This parable teaches us that we should never give up hope and loving associations with family members and friends whose fine qualities (see [Moro. 7:5–14](#)) evidence their progress toward what a loving Father would have them become. Similarly, the power of the Atonement and the

principle of repentance show that we should never give up on loved ones who now seem to be making many wrong choices.

Instead of being judgmental about others, we should be concerned about ourselves. We must not give up hope. We must not stop striving. We are children of God, and it is possible for us to become what our Heavenly Father would have us become.

How can we measure our progress? The scriptures suggest various ways. I will mention only two.

After King Benjamin's great sermon, many of his hearers cried out that the Spirit of the Lord "has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually" ([Mosiah 5:2](#)). If we are losing our desire to do evil, we are progressing toward our heavenly goal.

The Apostle Paul said that persons who have received the Spirit of God "have the mind of Christ" ([1 Cor. 2:16](#)). I understand this to mean that persons who are proceeding toward the needed conversion are beginning to see things as our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, see them. They are hearing His voice instead of the voice of the world, and they are doing things in His way instead of by the ways of the world.

I testify of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, whose Church this is. I testify with gratitude of the plan of the Father under which, through the Resurrection and Atonement of our Savior, we have the assurance of immortality and the opportunity to become what is necessary for eternal life. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.