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Introduction

The Religious Educator

Perspectives on the Restored Gospel

The editors of *The Religious Educator* are pleased to be able to provide this inaugural volume of articles for teachers and students of religious education in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our hope is to provide readers with carefully prepared, inspirational, and information-packed writings on a wide range of

subjects explicitly associated with the Restoration. Teachers, authors, researchers, and students of Latter-day Saint studies at every level will appreciate discussions of relevant ideas and issues from a perspective of faith. This issue provides a taste of what readers can expect in the future. Regular features include pieces on Teaching the Gospel; studies on Scripture and Doctrine; LDS Church History; and Devotional essays. The contributions to each issue are carefully reviewed and edited by experienced teachers, writers, and scholars.

In the area of teaching the gospel, in this issue Brothers Dahl, Richardson, and Millet provide insights about how Church members both teach and learn. Everyone involved in teaching, researching, and writing about the gospel will appreciate Larry Dahl's frank discussion of "Gospel Scholarship and Gospel Teaching." He discusses how these endeavors should be undertaken and how they strengthen the Church and its members. Using the scriptural example of Philip and the Ethiopian court official (see Acts 8), Matthew Richardson describes how every gospel teacher is a guide, facilitator, leader, manager, demonstrator, and example. Robert Millet examines the purpose and meaning of "Bearing Pure Testimony" in the Church today. Church members sometimes fail to recognize their role in this important aspect of Latter-day Saint worship. Hearing heartfelt testimonies can transform a person, and bearing testimonies can bring reforming changes as well.

Since the days of his mortal ministry, Christ's nature and his place in our world have been debated by Christians in many lands. The inspired words of the Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi to apostate Nephites reveal Christ's roles in our lives as few Christians understand these roles. Paul Hoskisson's "The Fatherhood of Christ and the Atonement" helps us understand Abinadi's teachings about this subject in Mosiah 15:1-8. Students of the Book of Mormon who are interested in the evidence of the Near Eastern origins of its

writers will also enjoy Terrence Szink's "The Personal name 'Alma' at Elba." The explanation in this article of another link between the Book of Mormon and the peoples of the Near East is easy to understand and singularly persuasive. Ammon's missionary experiences have inspired generations of readers of the Book of Mormon. Robert Line's "The Middoni Principle" culls lessons from Alma 20 that will enhance teachers' and students' understanding of how obedience to God affects their lives.

Why does Nicodemus appear only in the Gospel of John? Which lessons does John intend to teach the world through Nicodemus? In Keith Wilson's "The Message of Nicodemus," readers will find the answers to these questions and find themselves rethinking their own relationship to Jesus.

The New Testament is also the setting for Andrew Skinner as he takes readers back to a time and place in which olives were fundamental to life. Readers of "Autumn, Olives, and the Atonement" will learn that the olive symbolizes life-changing principles that apply regardless of where a person lives.

Paul Peterson's article reminds us how the Lord accomplishes his purposes through his children. President Heber J. Grant "knew such people . . . and never [forgot] their sacrifices, their contributions, their dedication." President Grant reminds us how essential we all are in building the kingdom of God.

Richard Bushman has studied how the revelations to Joseph Smith were put together. He is "impressed with how effective the revelations are. . ." and curious about their rhetorical impact upon believing readers. Professor Bushman's treatment of this seldom explored topic in "The Little, Narrow Prison of Language: The Rhetoric of Revelation" will interest everyone studying The Doctrine and Covenants.

Laura Card has studied the lives of the early settlers in the mountain west by reading thousands of pages from their journals. The thoughts and impressions these first-hand accounts brought to her mind inspired three poems that provide readers a unique view of life on the frontier: "Homesteading," "Writing Lesson, 1874, Great Basin—No Paper," and "The Garden of Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich."

The Religious Educator has the same goal that all Latter-day Saints have for themselves, their families, and their neighbors: reinforcing a personal assurance through the Holy Ghost that God lives, Jesus Christ is his Son and our Savior, and that Joseph Smith and all the prophets who have followed him were commissioned by Christ to direct the kingdom of God on earth. It is the hope of the editorial board and the authors of this issue's articles that readers' testimonies and understanding of the gospel will grow as they read these pages.

Gospel Scholarship and Gospel Teaching

Larry E. Dahl

Every field of learning has accepted rules of scholarship for those who wish to be acknowledged and respected by their peers. The so-called pure sciences have carefully defined procedures known as the "scientific method," beginning with a hypothesis and proceeding through evidence, experimentation, conclusion, and verification. The social sciences have some variations of that method, but still employ rather strict standards of procedure for any who wish to be taken seriously in their field. Anyone trained in history, for example, is well schooled in the rules for evaluating evidence—primary versus

secondary; private versus public; documentary versus hearsay; nearness in time to the events; fitting everything into a broader context; personal involvement versus "objective" observation, etc. The humanities also have their own, somewhat unique, standards of acceptability. Here, rather than trying to duplicate and verify another's work, creativity and new twists are valued. The point to be made is that "scholarship" is not a monolithic enterprise. It is defined somewhat differently in various fields of learning, yet good work in any of the fields is accepted under the label "scholarship."

My thesis is that there is a legitimate field called "gospel scholarship," every bit as worthy of the label as are the other areas of study. Gospel scholarship assumes many of the same tools and standards as other disciplines and has the same expectation of rigor and integrity. It also has some unique features. For example, it does not "bracket" God, as do many other disciplines. God and revelation are not only acceptable in gospel scholarship; they are critical and central to it. And in gospel scholarship pertaining to the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith, there is a hierarchy in terms of relative value of evidence. Preeminent is the voice of God through his living Prophet, by way of official declarations from himself, or in concert with other members of the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles. Next is canonized scripture. Then come the inspired teachings of those we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators, who have the special call to "build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations" (D&C 107:33). After that, there is available to anyone who is desirous of learning gospel truths an abundance of inspired gospel teaching, verbal and written, from local leaders, teachers, and writers, both men and women. Also available are teachings, both verbal and written, which are not inspired, some of it promulgated in ignorance, and some of it deliberately intended to mislead or deceive. It is important, therefore, that we seek diligently for and live worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost in order to discern truth from error. And it is also important to weigh carefully the teachings of anyone, measuring them against the standard of prophetic utterances and scripture.

I would like now to discuss briefly what I believe are some essential characteristics for those engaged in gospel scholarship. Before listing and discussing those characteristics, however, I want to say just a word about the relationship of scholarship and teaching. I believe scholarship and teaching are inextricably intertwined. Although there may be some unusual examples of acknowledged scholars who do not communicate their learning effectively in the classroom and popular teachers who may not fit easily into the category of "scholar," I am persuaded that the very best teachers are also good scholars, and that good scholars are, for the most part, good teachers. I maintain that many of the same principles, including all those discussed below, govern both endeavors. I invite each of us to reflect honestly and carefully upon this list of characteristics and ask, "How well am I doing in this regard?" "What do I need to do to become more effective in my gospel scholarship and teaching?" "Do I really want to improve?" "What are the first steps I need to take?" And "when will I begin?"

Now to the characteristics:

1. Zeal for truth. There must be an ache to know, a hunger for answers and resolution, even if the resolution must be tentative, a divine discontent over fuzzy answers or lack of information or simplistic solutions to grave and complex issues. Such a zeal will compel us to read and read, to attend and listen, to share and discuss with our colleagues, to welcome and give careful attention to another's views, critically (in the best sense of the

word) evaluate that which we read and hear, compute and assimilate and grow in knowledge. Real gospel scholars have an insatiable appetite for learning.

2. Critical thinking skills. There must be an awareness of the interplay of assumptions, evidence, logic, and conclusions. So often we concern ourselves with our differences in conclusions, wondering whether someone is unaware of the evidence, or if there is something lacking in their powers of reason and logic, when the real difference lies in the assumptions we bring to the question and the evidence. To illustrate, consider the question of whether documents which contain similar ideas and language have an interdependency. It is generally agreed in academia, by those who adopt the historical method, that if two or more documents contain the same ideas or wording, the documents have interdependency, or derive from a common source document. Confidence that such interdependency exists increases with every added similarity of ideas, diction, and style. The principle is reasonable, and seems to work well in the world of secular scholarship as one attempts to sort out the interdependency and source of written documents, the provenance of which is not clearly known. And the principle works as well in the world of gospel scholarship, if one is willing to accept revelation from God as the original source of several interdependent documents, or just as possible, the independent source of a number of documents which contain similar ideas, words, and style.

Conclusions about the interdependency of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, the JST, etc., are greatly affected by what assumptions are brought to the discussion table, though the evidence is the same for all.

3. Conservation of evidence and living with ambiguity. There must be a willingness, even a determination, to examine all the relevant information that bears on an event or issue. Sometimes data may appear to challenge cherished notions or accepted historical events, or put Church leaders in an unfavorable light, saying things and doing things that seriously violate our sense of right or propriety. Even such a significant challenge does not justify denying or ignoring the evidence. We may have to shelve it and visit it later as we bump into it again, or learn bits of new information that shed light upon it. Living with some ambiguity is a reality for anyone who reads and thinks very much. But that ambiguity does not need to be spiritually disconcerting or faith destroying. If we know by the whisperings of heaven that the gospel is true, that Joseph Smith was indeed the Choice Seer of whom the Book of Mormon speaks, and that the keys of the kingdom of God are held by living prophets, we can live at peace amidst ambiguity on certain matters. We can know that when all the facts are in, our concerns will be resolved. We can enter into what the scriptures call "God's rest." Listen to the testimony of President Joseph F. Smith:

The ancient prophets speak of "entering into God's rest"; what does it mean? To my mind, it means entering into the knowledge and love of God, having faith in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else, we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunning and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive. We know of the doctrine that it is of God, and we do not ask any questions of anybody about it; they are welcome to their opinions, to their ideas and to their vagaries.¹¹

President Smith continues with this same theme after quoting Moroni 7:3 about the peaceable followers of Christ obtaining sufficient hope to enter in the rest of the Lord, "from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven."

This is a very significant passage. The rest here referred to is not physical rest, for there is no such thing as physical rest in the Church of Jesus Christ. Reference is made to the spiritual rest and peace which are born from a settled conviction of the truth in the minds of men. We may thus enter into the rest of the Lord today, by coming to an understanding of the truths of the gospel. No people is more entitled to this rest—this peace of the spirit—than are members of the Church. It is true that not all are unsettled. Not all need to seek this rest, for there are many who now possess it, whose minds have become satisfied, and who have set their eyes upon the mark of their high calling with an invincible determination in their hearts to be steadfast in the truth, and who are treading in humility and righteousness the path marked out for the Saints who are complacent followers of Jesus Christ. But there are many who, not having reached this point of determined conviction, are driven about by every wind of doctrine, thus being ill at ease, unsettled, restless. These are they who are discouraged over incidents that occur in the Church, and in the nation, and in the turmoils of men and associations. They harbor a feeling of suspicion, unrest, uncertainty. Their thoughts are disturbed, and they become excited with the least change, like one at sea who has lost his bearings.

Where would you have people go who are unsettled in the truth? The answer is plain. They will not find satisfaction in the doctrines of Men. Let them seek for it in the written word of God; let them pray to him in their secret chambers, where no human ear can hear, and in their closets petition for light; let them obey the doctrines of Jesus, and they will immediately begin to grow in the knowledge of the truth. This course will bring peace to their souls, joy to their hearts, and a settled conviction which no change can disturb. . . .

Happy is the man, indeed, who can receive this soul-satisfying testimony, and be at rest, and seek for no other road to peace than by the doctrines of Jesus Christ.ⁱⁱ²

I submit that our students, as well as those who read what we write, long to feel that peace and confidence radiating from us.

4. Honesty and candor. Closely linked to a willingness to look at all the available evidence is the willingness to deal with that evidence in honesty and candor. Is there information that doesn't seem to fit what you understand and believe? Say so! Acknowledge the complexities and seeming contradictions. Think about them. Discuss them with trusted colleagues. Study them out; pray about them. Even share appropriately some of your perplexities with students, but always in the context of faith—always communicating your own peaceful conviction that when all the facts are in, the perplexities will disappear. It is wrong to deny or twist or cleverly misuse evidence to make a point. How well I remember an experience as a young missionary in a discussion with a minister from the Church of Christ. He quoted Revelation 22:18-19 about adding

to or taking from the words of "this book" as scriptural evidence that the Book of Mormon could not be true. As young and as inexperienced as I was, I knew better than that. I looked at him incredulously and asked, "Are you serious?" He smiled a wry, mischievous grin, and answered, "It works with some people." I was stunned at his dishonesty and attempt to deceive. My respect for him vanished. Everything he said thereafter seemed hollow. Any chance of his influencing my mind disappeared. If we are viewed as not being authentic, we are "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1), having little or no positive influence upon those we seek to help. Similarly, we can do a lot of damage if we are cynical or cavalier about matters of faith and testimony and the kingdom of God on earth.

5. Wisdom—common sense, sacred silence. In our attempts to be open and honest with what we know, there may be a temptation to tell more than is wise to share. Years ago, Frank Day, one of the administrators of Seminaries and Institutes, came one-half hour late to an Area Directors meeting. He came into the room shaking his head; he was obviously distraught about something. He looked at us and said woefully, "Brethren, how do you in-service wisdom?" He had been on the phone trying to assuage the feelings of an irate stake president who was fuming over some of the teachings of an institute teacher. Much of what the institute teacher had taught was indeed true doctrine and true history. But how unwise! He had done what Jacob was so loathe to do. He had wounded "tender and chaste and delicate" feelings. He had placed before his students informational "daggers" which pierced souls and wounded "delicate minds" (Jacob 2:7-9). As wonderful as truth is, it can be hurtful, and is to be carefully dispensed. The Lord commanded:

Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by the constraint of the Spirit; and in this there is no condemnation, and ye receive the Spirit through prayer; wherefore, without this there remaineth condemnation. (D&C 63:64.)

Martin Harris was shown and told much. He was also carefully instructed in what to say and what not to say, and why. The Lord said to him:

And I command you that you preach naught but repentance, and show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me.

For they cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish. (D&C 19:21-22. See also D&C 5:23-27.)

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught "it is not always wise to relate all the truth,"ⁱⁱⁱ3 and said of himself, "I know much that I do not tell."^v4 He also explained, "I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them."^v5 I commend to you an address by Elder Russell M. Nelson, entitled "Truth and More," delivered at B YU' s Annual University Conference, 27 August 1985.

All this is to say that there is need for wisdom in writing about and teaching the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I know of no foolproof guide, except the promptings of the Holy Ghost. And that requires humility and worthy living.

6. Accepting revelation as the preeminent source of truth. We are all familiar with Jacob's classic statement about the relationship of the counsel of God and being learned, but it deserves repeating:

O that cunning plan of the evil one! [Isn't it interesting that he would ascribe the source of this notion to the devil's influence?] O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsel of God. (2 Nephi 9:28-29.)

I have always been intrigued by the assessment of Samuel the Lamanite prophet concerning the Nephites of his day. He tells us that they hardened their hearts against God, "and began to depend upon their own strength and upon their own wisdom . . . And they began to reason and to contend among themselves, saying: That it is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come." Because of their "boastings in their own strength, they were left in their own strength." And what was the result? "Therefore they did not prosper, but were afflicted and smitten, and driven before the Lamanites, until they had lost possession of almost all their lands" (Helaman 4:13; 16:15-18). The possessions lost by the self-sufficient Nephites were of this earth, but there is a lesson here about how to lose an even more precious commodity—spiritual "ground." Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke of what might be called the "gospel rule." He said:

There is almost a universal tendency for men and women who are specialists in an academic discipline to judge the Church against the principles of their profession. There is a great need in my mind for us, as students and teachers, to consciously and continually subjugate this tendency and relegate our professional training to a position secondary to the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In other words, rather than judge the Church and its program against the principles of our profession, we would do well to set the Church and its accepted program as the rule, then judge our academic training against this rule. This posture is remarkably difficult to achieve and sometimes even more difficult to maintain.ⁱⁱ⁶ [p.10]

Could I for a few moments apply this concept to a subject that is tender among some. It has to do with the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. Just how are we to view the JST in relationship to the biblical texts? We begin with the words of a revelation to Sidney Rigdon through the Prophet Joseph Smith. These verses are found in D&C 35:20-21:

And a commandment I give unto thee—that thou shalt write for him; and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in mine own bosom, to the salvation of mine own elect;

For they [the elect] will hear my voice, and shall see me, and shall not be asleep, and shall abide the day of my coming; for they shall be purified, even as I am pure.

Questions: 1) Does this mean that the most ancient texts available to us now have been seriously tampered with, and that the JST represents the way the texts were originally written? 2) Does the JST therefore invalidate the biblical texts? There does not seem to be a clear yes or no answer to those questions, because there are several factors to be considered. First, the Book of Mormon clearly states that someone "has taken away" from the Bible "many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants

of the Lord" with the deliberate attempt to "pervert the right ways of the Lord" (1 Nephi 13:26-27). It maybe reasonably argued that the phrase "taken away" means omitted, and/or perhaps "interpreted away." Therefore, currently available biblical texts may, in many instances, be viewed as more incomplete than inaccurate representations of what was originally written. Secondly, I do believe the JST at times, quite a few times in fact, does indeed restore original text. At other times, however, I am convinced the JST adds information beyond what the original writers recorded, true information about events and even conversations, that may or may not show up if and when the original manuscripts are found. I believe also that the JST contains clarifying prophetic commentary on the original texts. Accepting the message of D&C 35, therefore, does not require that we disregard or devalue biblical texts. On the other hand, I am disappointed when I hear people, sometimes our own people, dismissing the JST as if Joseph Smith played free and loose with biblical texts all on his own. If we believe that Joseph Smith truly received revelations from God, and that D&C 35 is one of those revelations, then what the JST contains represents what the Lord would have us know, or, as the Lord himself said, "the scriptures ... as they are in mine own bosom" (D&C 35:20). And that is true whether or not what is in the JST conforms to ancient, or even original biblical texts.

If indeed gospel scholars are to accept revelation as the pre-eminent source of truth, then clearly established revelation should take precedence over the learning of men, whether that learning relates to ancient manuscripts or to a multitude of other concerns. It has been my experience that real spiritual power attends the teaching and writing of those who use the revelations of the Restoration, including the JST, as a source and standard. Since we have talked of the JST, perhaps we could use it to summarize this section of our discussion. The KJV of Matthew's record at the end of the Sermon on the Mount reads as follows:

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.

For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

(Matthew 7:28-29.) [p.12]

The JST reads:

And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings *with his disciples*, the people were astonished at his doctrine;

For he taught them as one having authority/row *God*, and not as *having authority from* the scribes. (JST, Matthew 7:36-37, italics added.)

Message: We appeal to revelation from God for authority and approbation, rather than appealing to the learning and methods of men. That same principle is clearly taught in D&C 50:13-24.

7. Personal worthiness. If we are to teach the gospel as directed by the Spirit, we must of course learn the gospel and have the companionship of the Spirit. We are to learn "by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). How do we learn by faith? President Harold B. Lee taught that "learning by faith requires the bending of the whole soul through worthy living to become attuned to the Holy Spirit of the Lord, the calling up from the depths of one's own mental searching, and the linking of our own efforts to receive the true witness of the Spirit."ⁱⁱⁱ7 It appears that to learn by faith is to learn by revelation from the Holy Spirit. And the Lord has made it clear that elders, priests and teachers of the Church are to teach "as they shall be directed by the Spirit." In fact, they are told "if ye receive not

the Spirit ye shall not teach" (D&C 42:12-14). I have often wondered if the "shall not teach" means you will not have permission to teach, or if it means you simply will not be able to teach, even if you go through the motions. Does the same instruction as given to the elders of the Church apply to us as gospel teachers? I believe it does. I also believe that the pattern against being deceived by false teachers given by the Lord in D&C 52:14-19 applies to us. The pattern is that even if one "prayeth, whose spirit is contrite," or "speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth" that person is not of God unless he or she obeys "mine ordinances" and brings "forth fruits . . . according to the revelations and truths which" the Lord has given. Such a principle is in harmony with Alma's instruction to his little band of believers as they fled from King Noah: "And also trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments" (Mosiah 23:14). We radiate and teach what we really are, not what we pretend to be.

We have considered seven characteristics that I believe are important in the lives of those engaged in the business of gospel scholarship and teaching. Undoubtedly each of us can think of other characteristics, just as important, or perhaps more important than some of these. My hope is that each of us will consider carefully what it means to be a gospel scholar and teacher, and ponder what we can do to be better at it.

I testify to the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the importance of the work in which we are engaged. We do indeed have an "errand from the Lord" (Jacob 1:17) to be true to our personal and collective covenants, to learn and teach and write and bear witness—"to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things and in all places that ye may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9). Making and keeping gospel covenants is an integral part of gospel scholarship and teaching. That we will be true to our sacred privileges and covenant obligations is my prayer.

Notes

1. *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970), 58.
2. *Ibid.*, 126-28. [p.14]
3. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1 vols.*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), 6:608.
4. *Ibid.*, 6:244.
5. *Ibid.*, 5:402.
6. "A Dedication—to Faith," *1969 BYU Speeches of the Year* (Provo: Brigham Young University Publications, 1969), 6.
7. Conference Report, April 1971, 94.

A Teacher—The Gospel Guide

Matthew O. Richardson

An officer from the court of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, came to Jerusalem to worship. Following his devotional service, he returned to his country by way of Gaza. As he was sitting in his chariot reading from the book of Isaiah, Philip was inspired to approach him. When Philip heard the officer reading from the scriptures, he inquired: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" The faithful and honest Ethiopian replied: "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:26-31). As his guide, Philip helped

this willing Ethiopian understand the scriptural passage in question and ultimately led him to receive baptism.

It is interesting that such a simple story can provide more insight into teaching than much of the educational writings and research available today. Rather than looking for typical pedagogical methods of teaching in this vignette, an investigation of key words used within the storyline may yield more insight. For example, the Ethiopian desired someone to "guide" his study. The original word, as used in this passage, is the Greek term *hodegeo*. Other biblical translations of this verse suggest that the Ethiopian was looking for someone to "explain" (NIV) to him or to "instruct" (LB) him. In other non-biblical literature, *hodegeo* is commonly translated as "teach." *Hodegeo* is etymologically derived from two other Greek words: *hodegos* and *hodos*. A good historical translation of these three connected words renders: show (*hodegeo*), conductor (*hodegos*), and road (*hodos*). As we shall see, educators, especially religious educators, would do well to understand not only the meaning of these terms but how they define religious education. ***Hodegeo*:**

Showing

Hodegeo meaning, "to show the way," emphasizes the act of *showing*. It is interesting that the Ethiopian was already engaged in personal study of the scriptures when his guide appeared. As Philip discovered, the officer desired someone, a guide, to "show" him how to understand. It would be absurd to assume the Ethiopian officer did not possess some means of understanding the gospel plan himself. Remember, as a "God-fearer" he had just returned from worship in Jerusalem and was sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah. His desire for a guide did not undermine his capability for discovery or the value of self-instruction. He did, however, wisely recognize limitations.

The Ethiopian was wise enough to seek further insight, clarification, and understanding to add to his own discoveries. In a way, he was a tourist of eternal truth. He was obviously bright enough to know the important sights, but he also recognized that his familiarity with the terrain was lacking. Therefore, he sought after a guide—someone with the background, experience, understanding, and necessary knowledge of the road—to point out things in his journey that were beyond his own perspective, skills to understand, or powers to grasp. Thus, Philip, as a guide, was able to add substance, understanding, clarity, purpose, and/or even motivation to a journey that had already begun. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught, "We are, in fact, all somewhat like the man of Ethiopia to whom Philip was sent. Like him, we may know enough to reach out for religion. We may invest ourselves in the scriptures. We may even give up our earthly treasures, but without sufficient instruction we may miss the meaning of all this and the requirements that still lie before us."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ1 Therefore, a guide must provide sufficient direction as well as practical means for progress in one's journey. Ideologically, many teachers relate well with this aspect of guiding. As a matter of fact, when reviewing current educational studies and trends, it becomes obvious that a great deal of energy has been devoted to the clinical aspects of teaching. Thus, pedagogy tends to concentrate on the "hows" of teaching.^{xx}2 While the way one teaches is a vital part of guiding, there is a danger with this mindset. It is interesting that many teachers cannot talk about teaching without talking about instructional techniques. Without careful consideration, teachers can become devotees of certain methods, viewing them as solutions rather than merely means to an end. If good teaching can be reduced to a "one-size fits all" checklist performance, it easily risks becoming routine. Thus, Jane Tompkins, author of "Pedagogy of the Distressed,"

appropriately questioned "How did it come to be that our main goal as academicians turned out to be performance?"^{x3} Amidst the lopsided approach in education's quest of "how" to teach, one wonders if a balance might be achieved. Let us return to Philip and see how he practiced "guiding."

From a textual standpoint, exactly "how" Philip showed the man is unclear. With a little creativity and editing we can conclude that Philip greets, inquires, reads, answers, and then baptizes the Ethiopian—not exactly meat enough for compiling a "how to" guide on effective teaching. Perhaps that is precisely the point. The emphasis in this account is not on "how" Philip showed his student, but on the fact that *showing* did take place. Like the Greek *hodegeo*, the biblical sense of guiding does not emphasize one method over the other.ⁱⁱ⁴ Thus, as long as the means are appropriate and help the student along the right road, guiding allows varied responses in showing. Thomas Groome, a professor of religious pedagogy, concludes that "there can never be a simple formula, technique, nor 'how to do it' for education of any kind."ⁱⁱⁱ⁵ Guiding does not discount, nor does it sponsor any one method of teaching over another. At the same time, however, it would be folly to assume that guiding is some sort of "free-for-all" activity—especially in religious education. To help put guiding in context, we can turn to the "law of the Church" (D&C 42). In this revelation, Saints "may know how to govern my church" and "have all things right" before the Lord (D&C 41:3). In section 42, the Lord reveals the fundamental law of teaching (D&C 42:5-11). "Showing," or how one must teach, is included in the Lord's revelation. "[Lift] up your voices as with the sound of a trump" the Lord instructs, "declaring my word like unto angels of God" (D&C 42:6). This emphasizes how a teacher should present material and not necessarily the appropriate method of presentation. Thus Socratic dialogue, experiments, object lessons, lectures, collaborative problem solving, and group discussion may all fit into the Lord's method of showing. There is an important limitation, however, that must not be overlooked. The Lord instructs that the Spirit must direct guiding. If the Spirit is not part of the process of how we teach, then we "shall not teach" (D&C 42:14). The Spirit will direct and guide us in "how" we show the way. Without such guidance, it is likely that our methods would detract from the appropriate message. It is obvious that some teaching methods may offend the Spirit. Thus, if the Spirit determines the method, teaching is not only appropriate—it is effective.

Hodegos: The Conductor

Hodegos is commonly translated as teacher, but it literally means "conductor." Thus, a guide (or teacher) is one who leads, manages, or directs the act of teaching. President Spencer W. Kimball once said that religious educators are the "custodians of the bread of life."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ⁶ Philip conducted the act of teaching the Ethiopian officer as well as conducted his own actions in a way that did not distract from the message. This example provides further understanding of the role of a religious guide. A guide has responsibility of conducting not only how a message is presented (the "showing" or *hodegeo*) but also in a way that will not hinder the presentation of the message or the future progression of the student.

One of the primary responsibilities of the guide is to direct what is to be taught as well as when it should be taught. Paul patiently instructed the Corinthians and declared "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Cor. 3:2). Elder Packer reaffirms this principle in his teachings. He

said: "Teaching some things that are true, prematurely or at the wrong time, can invite sorrow and heartbreak instead of the joy intended to accompany learning."^{v7}

A conductor should also direct how material is presented and by whom. Some educators allow students to control both the method and content of instruction with irrelevant comments or by promoting others in sharing unfounded opinions, experiences, or even theologies. Thus, teachers allow the comments of the students to conduct the tone and the content of their message. While comments of others and sharing appropriate insight is often beneficial, it is the guide's responsibility, as the conductor, to meter the methods used in class. Dialogue, in whatever form, should be edifying (D&C 43:8; 88:122). In addition to guiding the illustrations of others, a teacher should never use an illustration that is provocative, controversial (playing the devil's advocate to create discussion, for example), or humorous just for the sake of being provocative, controversial, or funny. Illustrations should *illustrate!* Ill-advised teaching devices usually drive the Spirit from the instruction and leave the students no better off for having been under the conductor's tutelage. Elder Packer felt that gospel students should be taught "at least one thought, one idea, one inspiration that is theirs for having been in the class."^{v8} This is why Elder Holland reminded religious educators to avoid "theological Twinkies" or "fried froth" in their teaching.ⁱⁱⁱ⁹ It is the guide's responsibility to determine the best method of teaching gospel doctrines, when they should be taught, and always be mindful of the audience. A guide must conduct the message in such a way that others will not only understand but do it "*so plainly that no one can misunderstand.*"ⁱⁱⁱⁱ¹⁰

Finally, we must remember that a guide must never misdirect his students or get in the way of their progress. The guiding messenger should never be confused with the message itself; otherwise, this can only result in priestcraft (2 Ne. 26:29). We must never create a "spiritual eclipse" by getting in the way of the light. Remember the Savior is the light we are to hold up (3 Nephi 18:24). It is important for religious guides to accept the responsibility to personally conduct themselves in a manner that is reflective of their message. "Teaching," according to Parker Palmer, an educational researcher and writer, "emerges from one's inwardness, for better or for worse." In light of this, Palmer concludes: "As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ¹¹ In this way teaching could be considered a "mirror to the soul."^{xxx12} Elder Ezra Taft Benson taught that a teacher's first responsibility is to personally prepare spiritually.^{xx13} If our teaching reflects our soul, it is of little wonder why Alma asked if we have "clean hands and a pure heart" and if "the image of God [is] engraven upon our countenances" (Alma 5:19). We should reflect the Master. Thus, a religious guide should strive to "match" the message.ⁱⁱⁱ¹⁴

Hodos: The Path

Of all three terms, *hodos* is considered the primary root. *Hodos*, meaning "road, or way," emphasizes the path, or content, in the act of guiding or teaching. This may be a new twist to some modern pedagogues who vacillate between teacher-centered and student-centered philosophies of teaching. Too often, we forget the foundation of teaching, or guiding, and neglect the importance of the subject. It's not that we dismiss the subject altogether, but we typically emphasize something else in its place. When it comes to guiding or showing the way, for example, perhaps the emphasis is excessively placed upon *showing* rather than recognizing the importance of the *way* itself. Because of this misdirection, many educators are calling for a balanced return to a "subject-centered

classroom."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ15 It is apparent that good teaching requires a combination of many things, but its foundation is laid with sufficient quantity and quality of appropriate content. Let us return to Philip and his Ethiopian student. After all his personal study, the officer was still in need of a clear path to pursue. It is interesting that in this story, very little detail is offered about *the path* that Philip teaches. It is clear, however, that Philip guides his student to and then along a specific road. Perhaps this is the beauty of the story; there is very little to get in the way of what Philip taught. According to the text: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35). The road to which the Ethiopian was guided was Jesus Christ. Philip, by whatever means, taught Jesus Christ. Elder Neal A. Maxwell encouraged those who teach the gospel to focus on appropriate subject matter. "Other truths, by comparison," he reminded us, "are merely fleeting factoids about which we maybe 'ever learning' without coming to a knowledge of the grand truths."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ16 Thus, for religious educators, our textual analysis, illustrations, and even our testimonies should guide others to Jesus Christ through the restored gospel. In his classic address to religious educators, President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. adamantly stated: "your chief interest, your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as that has been revealed in these latter days."^{vvv}17

Conclusion

Recently, Elder Holland pointed to the need for "sufficient instruction" to guide all of us in our search of truth. Sufficient instruction is the result of guiding. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has taught: "There is a golden mean ... a kind of teaching which brings life and lessons together." He continued, "Such teaching generates faith which moves us to productive action in behalf of others because the gospel is true."^{vvv}18 Perhaps that is the best part of Philip's guiding moment: the results. His teaching led to something or someone—Jesus Christ.

When one fully understands the meaning of guiding and how it defines teaching, a synthesis occurs. To understand the context of a guide, one cannot look at only part of the definition. A schism already exists between those who are subject-centered and those who are "how to"-centered teachers. When one understands and then seriously considers *guiding*, the gap is naturally narrowed. Guiding requires one to consider all elements of teaching: showing, the road, and the conductor. Syntheses of all three aspects of guiding provide an important understanding of religious education. Guiding brings the ancient proverb to mind, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning" (Proverbs 9:9). Guiding, as bathed in Christ's light, truly allows one to become more (1 Thes. 4:10).

Notes

1. Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, April 1998, 31.
2. See, for example, Neil Postman, *Technopoly* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 42.
3. "Pedagogy of the Distressed," *College English*, vol. 52 no. 6 (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1991), 654.
4. This relationship is detailed in a study of leading and guiding in Matthew O. Richardson, "The World Perspective and its Impact on Leadership Conceptions" (Ed.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1996), 101-106.
5. *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980), 136.

6. Spencer W. Kimball, "Men of Example," *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 45.
7. Boyd K. Packer, "The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect," *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981-82), 34. See also D&C 19:22.
8. Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, Co., 1975), 154.
9. Elder Holland's full quotation is as follows: "Are we really nurturing our youth and our new members in a way that will sustain them when the stresses of life appear? Or are we giving them a kind of theological Twinkie—spiritually empty calories? President John Taylor once called such teaching 'fried froth,' the kind of thing you could eat all day and yet finish feeling totally unsatisfied." Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, April 1998, 32.
10. Harold B. Lee, "Loyalty," *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981-82), 64, emphasis in original. [p.24]
11. Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 2.
12. *Ibid.*, 2.
13. Ezra Taft Benson, "The Gospel Teacher and His Message," *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981-82), 48.
14. Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1975, 65.
15. See, for example, Palmer, 116.
16. Conference Report, April 1997, 12.
17. J. Reuben Clark, Jr. "The Charted Course of the Church in Education," in *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 7.
18. *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory Maxwell (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 338.

Bearing Pure Testimony

Robert L. Millet

We are engaged in the work of the Lord. This is his Church. It administers his gospel and teaches his doctrine. It bears his priesthood and performs his ordinances. These are facts. They are true. A knowledge of such things, an inner certitude, we call a testimony. We cannot long progress in the kingdom without a witness of this work, without a testimony. A testimony of the Savior, of his gospel, and of the Restoration, is foundational and fundamental to all we do. In fact, a knowledge of such things motivates us and impels us to faithfulness in the face of opposition; such an assurance helps us know why we do what we do.

President Heber C. Kimball issued a prophetic warning which should lead to sober thinking among Latter-day Saints. "We think we are secure here in the chambers of the everlasting hills," he said,

where we can close those few doors of the canyons against mobs and persecutors, the wicked and the vile, who have always beset us with violence and robbery, but I want to say to you, my brethren, the time is

coming when we will be mixed up in these now peaceful valleys to that extent that it will be difficult to tell the face of a Saint from the face of an enemy to the people of God. Then, brethren, look out for the great sieve, for there will be a great sifting time, and many will fall; for I say unto you there is a test, a Test, a TEST coming, and who will be able to stand? . . . Let me say to you, that many of you will see the time when you will have all the trouble, trial and persecution that you can stand, and plenty of opportunities to show that you are true to God and his work. *This Church has before it many close places through which it will have to pass before the work of God is crowned with victory. To meet the difficulties that are coming, it will be necessary for you to have a knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such a character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall. If you have not got the testimony, live right and call upon the Lord and cease not till you obtain it. If you do not you will not stand. Remember these sayings, for many of you will live to see them fulfilled. The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light. Each will have to be guided by the light within himself. If you do not have it, how can you stand?*ⁱⁱⁱⁱ¹

Declaring the Witness

As Latter-day Saints we bear our testimonies to one another and to those not of our faith quite often. It is a significant part of who we are and what we do. Some who feel that their testimony is not as strong as they would like it to be are sometimes hesitant to give voice to what they feel. "It is not unusual," Elder Boyd K. Packer observed, to have a missionary say, 'How can I bear testimony until I get one? How can I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ and that the gospel is true? If I do not have such a testimony would that not be dishonest?' 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 step 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.

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!ⁱⁱⁱⁱ²

I have been interested over the years in the manner in which testimonies are borne. While serving in a stake presidency a number of years ago, I had the responsibility for the youth programs of the stake. One year I worked closely with the stake Young Men's and Young Women's presidents in the planning of a youth conference. Because the young people of the stake were so spread out, because they saw one another so seldom, we wanted this two-day conference to be just right, to combine the elements of sociality and spirituality in such a way as to really make a difference in the lives of the youth. All of the events of Saturday morning and evening (including a dance) had gone so well. And now we

wanted more than anything for the testimony meeting, held early Sunday morning, to be the highlight of the conference. Special musical numbers were arranged. The setting was prepared. I asked that the Young Men's and Young Women's presidents stand at the first of the meeting and bear brief, heartfelt testimonies, to set the tone of the meeting and to model what we hoped would come to pass.

There was a brief pause after the Young Women's president had expressed her testimony.

Then the youth became involved. A young lady from one of the distant branches spoke:

"I want to stand and bear my testimony. I want to tell Laura (a young woman to whom she pointed) how much I love her. I want her to know how much she means to me." The speaker was very emotional, but managed to spend about ten minutes telling stories about herself and Laura. She closed. At that point Laura stood up, came to the pulpit, and said:

"I want to bear my testimony. I want to tell Stephanie how much I love her." She cried and cried, told stories about how the two of them had romped and played as little children, and about how close they were. Before she sat down she added: "Oh, I also need to tell Bill what a difference he has made in my life. He's been a wonderful friend to Stephanie and me. We love you Bill." As we might guess, Stephanie was followed by Bill, who was followed by the person about whom Bill spoke, and so on for about forty-five minutes.

This approach to things was broken suddenly by one young lady striding up to the stand and with much confidence saying: "I've been thinking about this meeting for some time, wondering what I should speak about, and so I went to my Mom and asked her what I should say. My mother suggested that I tell you what her Catholic priest taught her: 'Every time we sin, we drive the crown of thorns deeper into the skull of Jesus.'" She then encouraged us as a congregation to avoid sin. At this point the stake president, who sat two chairs from me, let out with a quiet groan which indicated his disappointment with the meeting. But frankly, things had been going fine when I consider where they would head for the next little while! A young man from one of the local wards came up to the pulpit carrying a folder. He opened the folder, took out several legal-size sheets of paper, and began: "My talk today is on the Sacrament." This person then delivered an eleven-minute sermon on the importance of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, on the need for being worthy to take the bread and water each Sunday morning, and on the meaning of taking upon us the name of Christ. It was really quite good.

At about the midpoint of the meeting, a young man came to the stand and took charge for about twenty-five minutes: he began by telling a few jokes, told a number of sad stories, and then (having elicited both laughter and tears) said: "Hey, I'm pretty good at this. I think I'll be an entertainer!" The congregation roared. At least most of them did. The stake president groaned again. (He slipped me a note which said simply: "This meeting is a disaster." I nodded to him my agreement of his assessment.) I sweat. The Young Women's president wept. The Young Men's president sighed. I wasn't sure what to do, whether to close the meeting, cast out the strange spirit there, or simply get up and explain what was wrong. The stake leaders, all of us, knew that this was a sensitive time, that feelings were delicate, that persons are easily hurt or their efforts easily stifled. So we did nothing. We sat. And we sat. Painfully, we sat.

After about two hours, a young man came to the pulpit, a boy we didn't recognize. He was extremely nervous, so much so that he dared not even lift his head to look at the congregation. He stammered: "My friends or, uh ... brothers and sisters, I... uh ... would

like to ... uh ... share some of my feelings. I am not a Mormon, not a member of your church, and so I don't really know how to bear testimony." The stake president, one of the most Christlike men I have ever known, whispered gently: "He should relax. He's in great company!" The young man continued: "The missionaries have been teaching my family about your church for a couple of weeks now. I just wanted to let you know that I really believe in God. I feel a lot of love for Jesus, who died for me. Something inside me tells me that what the missionaries have said about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon and the Mormon Church is true. I'm happy that in a short time we will be baptized. Thank you for being so nice to me." Then he sat down. Here was a testimony, a real testimony, and it came from the only person in our group who was not of our faith.

The meeting did finally come to an end. Mercifully, after almost three hours, it came to an end. I sat in despair. So did the other stake leaders. The stake president looked at me, shook his head in disbelief, and sighed. He then left. I turned to the stake youth leaders and said: "I'm too depressed to talk about it now. Could we meet this Wednesday evening in my office?" They agreed that we would face the music then. It was clear from the looks on their faces on Wednesday that they had spent a great deal of time in ponderous and solemn thought. So had I. Interestingly enough, each of us had had occasion on Sunday to return to our own wards and participate in the monthly fast and testimony meeting. And so I asked: "Is this a youth problem?" The Young Women's president quickly spoke up: "No, it's a Church problem." She continued: "The kids do basically the same things the adults do. Perhaps the grownups are a bit more dignified and formal about it." The Young Men's president nodded in agreement. I indicated that those were my feelings as well.

We sat for a long time that night, asking questions like: What's supposed to happen in a testimony meeting? What is appropriate and what is inappropriate? Are there some expressions that are perfectly right and good in one setting but not quite right for a testimony meeting? Why was the spirit of the youth meeting so strange? Why did so many of the youth feel it was inspirational? Are we the ones who are out of it, insensitive to what we ought to feel? And so on. It was a sober occasion for the three of us, a vexation of the soul, painful searching after truth. We felt the need thereafter to express our concerns to the stake president and to suggest that a message be prepared and delivered by him (or whomever he recommended) on the matter of acquiring and bearing testimony, a message for the whole stake membership. As a stake presidency we first instructed the bishops and high council, turning to the scriptures and the words of living Apostles and prophets for our pattern. We stressed the need for being delicate and sensitive, of never indicating that there was one "approved" way of bearing witness, a "proper" approach to sharing one's testimony. Rather, we strove to speak in terms of correct principles. I think some good came from the whole thing.

Seldom in my life have I spent as much time in serious reflection on a matter as I did in the weeks and months that followed that youth testimony meeting. Seldom in my life have I pondered and searched to understand the meaning and purpose of a meeting. I thought back of a thousand testimony meetings I had attended, and of the unusual things that had taken place there. I thought of my Sunday School teacher when I was twelve, a lovely young woman who loved the Lord and lived his gospel. It showed. I distinctly remember that every month in Fast and Testimony meeting she would stand up and say: "I'd like to read a message from the *Improvement Era*." She would then read an article to

the congregation. I thought it was what she was supposed to do, perhaps her church assignment or something! She did that month after month, year after year. I thought back of a middle-aged woman standing up in testimony meeting and, with fire in her eyes and voice, saying to all of us: "You hypocrites! You phonies! You claim to be Christians.

That's a joke!" She went on to tear apart the ward for not being more helpful in fellowshipping her non-member husband. I reflected on a man standing up in testimony meeting and startling us with the following: "As many of you know, I teach the fourteen-year olds in Sunday School. I wasn't able to finish my lesson in time today, and so I'd like to do that now, if it's okay with the rest of you." He then took about fifteen minutes to complete his Sunday School lesson.

A few years ago in one of my Book of Mormon classes at Brigham Young University, after I had finished a discussion of Alma 4:19 and of the matter of bearing pure testimony, a student spoke to me after class. He said: "Brother Millet, I wanted so badly to bear my testimony in yesterday's fast meeting in my BYU ward, but I knew that I didn't have anything original to say. I didn't have a special message to deliver." This experience highlights a problem we sometimes see in the Church: the presumption that one has to deliver a message, preach a sermon, or make some original contribution to the meeting. The general handbook of instructions simply indicates that members of the Church are to be invited to bear brief, heartfelt testimonies and, where appropriate, share faith-promoting experiences. There really is no need for the members of the Church to worry one tenth of a second about coming up with something to say, about leaving the congregation with a lasting message, about giving a talk.

I frequently ask groups of returned missionaries the following questions: "Did you ever have any inspirational testimony meetings on your mission?" They inevitably respond: "Oh yes. We had some great ones!" I continue: "I'll bet they were spiritual feasts because every elder or sister said something different. Right?" "Not usually," they answer. "I'll bet they were unusual spiritual experiences because each missionary came with a prepared sermon, delivered it effectively, and set the other missionaries back on their heels with the power of their oratory. Right?" "Not really," they respond. "Well then, what did the missionaries say as part of their expressions?" After a few moments' reflection, the class relates that most of the elders and sisters said about the same thing—they bore testimony of God, of Jesus as the Christ, of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, and of the guiding hand of the Lord in the Church today. Very little original stuff. But powerful.

There's a lesson there.

As I understand it, the purpose of a testimony meeting is for the bearing of personal testimony. Expressions of gratitude and love, so much a part of the lives of followers of the Christ, take a backseat to the bearing of testimonies if in fact the meeting has been set aside for the bearing of testimonies. Letting others know how thankful we are for our blessings, as well as how much we love the Lord and one another—these expressions can and should accompany our testimony, but we are asked primarily to stand and bear witness of what we know to be true. President Spencer W. Kimball counseled a group of young people gathered in a testimony meeting: "*Do not exhort each other; that is not a testimony. Do not tell others how to live. Just tell how you feel inside. That is the testimony. The moment you begin preaching to others, your testimony ended. Just tell us how you feel, what your mind and heart and every fiber of your body tells you.*"ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ3 On another occasion, President Kimball said to a similar group:

Now, you are going to give your testimonies this afternoon. I hope that you'll just open your hearts and let us look inside . . . will you? Just open them up wide and turn on the lights and let us see your hearts, . . . how you feel. *A testimony is not an exhortation; a testimony is not a sermon; none of you are here to exhort the rest. You are here to bear your own witness.* It is amazing what you can say in thirty seconds by way of testimony, or in sixty seconds, or one hundred and twenty, or two hundred and forty, or whatever time you are given, if you confine yourselves to testimony. We'd like to know how you feel.^{xxxx4}

I've thought back many times of the amount of emotion that was evident in the youth testimony meeting. I've been concerned over the years that too often our youth (and, unfortunately, some of our more experienced members) are prone to confuse sentimentality with spirituality, tears with testimony. Let me illustrate. One Mutual night as I came out of my bishop's office, I noticed that the Laurel class was huddled in the hall in the midst of what seemed to be quite a fascinating discussion. They appeared to be talking about one of the young women in their class who had during the last year slipped into inactivity in the Church. I heard one of the girls say, with some enthusiasm: "Well, I can tell you this much—she doesn't have much of a testimony." One of the others challenged her: "How can you say that? How do you know?" The first replied: "Well, you think about it for a minute. I've seen her bear her testimony many times, and I've never seen her cry once!" There was a pause, a moment of reflection on the part of twelve young ladies, and then a rather visible concurrence. Most of them nodded in agreement and said: "She's right about that." I was flabbergasted.

More than twenty years ago I taught several classes of eleventh graders in seminary. My fourth period class was a remarkable group. During the first part of the year, however, I noticed something a bit unusual. Day after day for about three weeks I noticed that every devotional (to start the class and set the spiritual tone) involved some kind of death story.

Somebody was dying or giving their life or blood or something. I pulled the class president aside after the third week and asked: "Fred, what's the deal with the devotionals?" He didn't follow me. "I mean, why all the morbid stories in our devotionals? Why are we so hung up with death?" Fred responded verbally in a polite manner, but the look on his face betrayed the fact that my question had totally mystified him. "Brother Millet," he came right back, "How else are we going to get the kids to cry?" I said, "Oh, I understand." I didn't follow up on the conversation at the time, but felt it was best to wait until I had thought through my response.

There's no question that when we have a genuine spiritual experience we may be touched emotionally. Tears come easily for some of us, and there should never be the slightest embarrassment about such a thing. And yet we do ourselves and our youth a tremendous disservice if we begin to believe that an emotional experience is always a spiritual experience. Tears may come, but they should never be manipulated or elicited or sought for. In the classroom, for example, there is plenty for the gospel teacher to do by way of study, prayer, preparation, organization, and presentation; he or she must not seek to usurp the role of the Holy Ghost. He is the Comforter. He is the Revelator. He is the Converter. He is, in reality, the Teacher. We strive to be an instrument. We may seek and pray for an outpouring of the Spirit, but we must never attempt to manufacture the same. President Howard W. Hunter, in speaking to Church Educational System personnel, said:

In one of the most basic revelations of this dispensation, the Lord said, "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (D&C 42:14).

I take this verse to mean not only that we *should not* teach without the Spirit, but also that we really *cannot* teach without it. Learning of spiritual things simply cannot take place without the instructional and confirming presence of the Spirit of the Lord. . . .

Let me offer a word of caution on this subject. I think if we are not careful as professional teachers working in the classroom every day, we may begin to try to counterfeit the true influence of the Spirit of the Lord by unworthy and manipulative means. I get concerned when it appears that strong emotion or free-flowing tears are equated with the presence of the Spirit. Certainly the Spirit of the Lord can bring strong emotional feelings, including tears, but that outward manifestation ought not be confused with the presence of the Spirit itself.

I have watched a great many of my brethren over the years and we have shared some rare and unspeakable spiritual experiences together. Those experiences have all been different, each special in its own way, and such sacred moments may or may not be accompanied by tears. Very often they are, but sometimes they are accompanied by total silence. Other times they are accompanied by joy. Always they are accompanied by a great manifestation of the truth, of revelation to the heart.

Give your students gospel truth powerfully taught; that is the way to give them a spiritual experience. Let it come naturally and as it will, perhaps with the shedding of tears, but perhaps not. If what you say is the truth, and you say it purely and with honest conviction, those students will feel the spirit of the truth being taught them and will recognize that inspiration and revelation has come into their hearts. That is how we build faith. That is how we strengthen testimonies—with the power of the word of God taught in purity and with conviction.^{xxx5}

Though President Hunter's remarks were directed primarily to full-time religious educators, the principles he enunciates certainly apply in our discussion of the bearing of pure testimony. There is something remarkable that takes place when the Latter-day Saints bear pure testimony. There is a spiritual presence that accompanies such expressions that can be felt in no other way, and there are outcomes which attest to the power and validity of doing so. Because of the growing waywardness of his people, Alma the younger determined to leave the office of chief judge or governor and devote himself to the work of the ministry. Of this occasion, Mormon wrote:

And this he did that he himself might go forth among his people, or among the people of Nephi, that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, *seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them.* (Alma 4:19, emphasis added.)

There is, on the other hand, something missing when the Latter-day Saints fail to bear pure testimony. Something is lost. Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke of a time when he presided over the New England Mission. "We held a series of zone conferences," he

wrote,

to improve the spirituality of the mission. Rather than schedule instruction on the mechanics of missionary work, we determined to have a testimony meeting. In the last conference, in the testimony of one of the humble elders, I found the answer to the problem. There was something different about the brief testimony of this frightened new elder. He stood for less than a minute, yet I learned from his expression what it was that was missing.

The testimonies we'd heard from all the other missionaries went something like this: "I'm grateful to be in the mission field. I've learned a lot from it. I have a fine companion. I've learned a lot from him. I'm grateful for my parents. We had an interesting experience last week. We were out knocking on doors and..." Then the missionary would relate an experience. His conclusion would be something like this: "I'm grateful to be in the mission field. I have a testimony of the gospel." And he would conclude "in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

This young elder was different somehow. Anxious not to spend an extra second on his feet, he said simply, in hurried, frightened words, "I know that God lives. I know that Jesus is the Christ. I know that we have a prophet of God leading the Church. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." This was a testimony. It was not just an experience nor an expression of gratitude. It was a declaration, a witness!

Most of the elders had said "I have a testimony," but they had not declared it. This young elder had, in a very few words, delivered his testimony—direct, basic, and, as it turned out, powerful.

I then knew what was wrong in the mission. We were telling stories, expressing gratitude, admitting that we had testimonies, but we were not bearing them.ⁱⁱⁱ6

A Witness Properly Rooted

I was asked some years ago by a mission president to speak to his missionaries at a zone conference. We had a lovely gathering and a fine exchange of ideas. I was invited to stay for lunch and visit with the missionaries. I did a great deal of listening and learned much.

One of the most interesting conversations revolved around a young couple who were being taught by the missionaries but who were not progressing. "They're golden people," one elder said, "ripe and ready for membership in the Church. They just won't commit to be baptized." Several suggestions were made by the missionaries listening in—fasting with them, having the bishop meet with them, intensifying the friendship effort, etc., to all of which the first elder said, "We've tried that." After a long pause, one elder spoke up: "Have you given them the Scrolls Discussion?" The first elder responded: "No, do you think this would be a good time for the Scrolls Discussion?" "Sounds like a perfect time to me," the first came back.

Now I had never heard of the Scrolls Discussion. I was dying to know what it was so I blurted out: "What's the Scrolls Discussion?" The second elder looked quizzically at me

and said: "Surely, Brother Millet, you've heard of the Scrolls Discussion?" I indicated that I had not. "The Scrolls Discussion," he said, "involves showing the people how the Dead Sea Scrolls proves the truthfulness of the Church!" I asked: "How do you do that?"

"Well," he replied, "as you know, the Dead Sea Scrolls contains information about a group of Christians out in the deserts of Judea." I said: "No, it doesn't. The Dead Sea Scrolls were written by a group of hyperreligious Jews." He said: "Oh. I didn't know that." Then the elder followed up: "Well, you do know that they had three presiding high priests at the head of their Church." I indicated that the leaders of their group were Aaronic priests, not Melchizedek. He went on: "Well, there's much doctrine within the Scrolls which proves ours to be true."

I commented that the Scrolls were interesting historical documents but did very little for us doctrinally. This exchange went on for about ten minutes, the elder providing what he thought to be airtight "proofs" and me trying to gently let him know that most of what he understood about the Dead Sea Scrolls was simply untrue. I could see the frustration in his eyes. He breathed a sigh and then concluded the debate with, "Well, I'll just say this—the Scrolls Discussion has always worked perfectly for me!" I thought then (and have since) about all the people who may have come into the Church as a result of what they learned in the famous Scrolls Discussion. I shuddered.

This is the Lord's Church. It is built upon divine precepts and principles, founded on diamond truth and God-given authority. It needs no props. We need not stretch nor sensationalize nor intellectualize the message of the Restoration in order to make it more palatable. It will stand on its own. Joseph Smith taught that truth cuts its own way.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ⁷ Our witness of the truth—a sign of our spiritual maturity in the faith—must be grounded in substance, in true doctrine, in that which will endure the test of time. We may have a testimony of many things—of the programs and procedures and policies of the Restored Church—and yet not be settled in truth.

There are some things that we must come to know, know with an assurance born of the Spirit, if we are to endure the tests spoken of earlier. We need to know that there is a God in heaven, that he is infinite and eternal, and that he is our Parent, the Father of the spirits of all men and women. We need to know that Jesus is the Christ, that he is literally the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh, and that salvation comes by and through him and in no other way. We need to know that Joseph Smith was and is a prophet of God, that he is a revealer of truth and a legal administrator, that knowledge and authority have been delivered to earth in this final gospel dispensation through his instrumentality.

We need to know that the revelations and translations given through Joseph the Seer, especially the Book of Mormon, are true and from God, that they contain the mind and will and voice of the Almighty to those who live in this last age of the earth's history. Finally, we need to know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is, in the language of the revelation, the only true and living Church on the face of the earth (D&C 1:30), is the kingdom of God on earth, is in the line of its duty, and is preparing a people for the Second Coming of the Son of Man. These things matter. They matter a great deal.

Our testimonies will be intact and solid to the degree that they are grounded in these essential verities.

Though we may begin simply in the development of our witness, the Lord expects his servants to search and study and grow in understanding, to acquire a reason for the hope that is within them (see 1 Peter 3:15). Simply stated, the Spirit bears witness of truth, of

substantive realities. "The sanctity of a true testimony," President Joseph F. Smith counseled the Church, should inspire a thoughtful care as to its use. That testimony is not to be forced upon everybody, nor is it to be proclaimed at large from the housetop. It is not to be voiced merely to "fill up the time" in a public meeting; far less to excuse or disguise the speaker's poverty of thought or ignorance of the truth he is called to expound.... Of those who speak in his name, the Lord requires humility, not ignorance.ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ⁸

In this day we have been commanded to be true and loyal to the Restoration, to bear testimony of those things which have come by and through Joseph Smith (see D&C 31:4; 49:1-4). Indeed, the Lord has warned us as a people of the condemnation, scourge, and judgment—surely the lost spiritual privileges and opportunities—which rest upon the Church because of our near neglect of the Book of Mormon and modern revelations. The Savior has also instructed us as to how we may extricate ourselves from this spiritual plight: "I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast in your minds in solemnity and the spirit of prayer, in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you" (see D&C 84:54-61). Occasionally we hear people complain that they hear too few testimonies of Christ and too many of Joseph Smith. To be sure, we worship the Father in the name of the Son; Christ our Lord is the way to the Father and his is the only name under heaven whereby man can be saved. And yet the dispensation head is the preeminent revealer of Christ to the world in his day. Thus to bear witness of Joseph Smith is to bear witness of Jesus Christ who sent him, just as to bear witness of Christ is to bear witness of the Eternal Father who sent him. I have observed that there is a power—an unusual spiritual endowment from that Lord we worship—associated with the bearing of a pure and fervent testimony of Joseph Smith and the Restoration. Such outpourings surely signify heaven's approbation.

President David O. McKay's father learned, as a young missionary, of the importance of bearing testimony of the Choice Seer. After laboring in a town in Scotland he had decided, because of persecution, to speak of Christ and Christian principles and to postpone for the time being his discussion of the Restoration. He thereafter experienced a gloom and darkness of soul that he had never known, a pall of bitterness so intense that he concluded either he would have it removed or he would leave his labors and return home. In pleading and sober prayer he called upon God for deliverance. The Spirit spoke: "Testify that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God." The darkness was lifted and Elder McKay's ministry continued.^{vvvvv9}

In this same spirit, Elder Matthew Cowley, prior to leaving on his first mission, was given the following counsel from his father: "My boy, you will go out on that mission; you will study; you will try to prepare your sermons; and sometimes when you are called upon, you will think you are wonderfully prepared, but when you stand up, your mind will go completely blank." Young Elder Cowley asked what he should do in such circumstances.

He said, "You stand up there and with all the fervor of your soul, you bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the living God, and thoughts will flood into your mind and words to your mouth, to round out those thoughts in a facility of expression that will carry conviction to the heart

of everyone who listens." And so my mind, being mostly blank during my five years in the mission field, gave me the opportunity to bear testimony to the greatest event in the history of the world since the crucifixion of the Master.^{vvvv}10

The Impact of Pure Testimony

There is no way, given our limited perspective in this life, that we can measure the eternal impact of pure testimony. Perhaps only when we are able to look back on the whole of our existence, able to see things as they really are, from God Almighty's point of view, we will be able to sense and feel the powerful coalescence of circumstances, the divinely-contrived orchestration of people and events. Perhaps then we will be in a position to measure just how much difference has been made by human testimony. Some testimonies shake the earth.

I remember very well the feeling of deep, personal loss when I learned of the passing of President David O. McKay in January 1970. He had been the prophet of my youth, the only president of the Church I really remembered. I worried about my ability to shift allegiance and commitment to President Joseph Fielding Smith, his successor. I prayed and prayed to have the same witness as to President Smith's call that I had felt in regard to President McKay. By the time the April 1970 conference convened, I still had not received what was to me a sufficient confirmation that the will of the Lord had been done. Things changed dramatically for me, however, as I heard President Smith speak the following words at the close of the conference:

I desire to say that no man of himself can lead this church. It is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ; he is at the head. The Church bears his name, has his priesthood, administers his gospel, preaches his doctrine, and does his work.

He chooses men and calls them to be instruments in his hands to accomplish his purposes, and he guides and directs them in their labors. But men are only instruments in the Lord's hands, and the honor and glory for all that his servants accomplish is and should be ascribed unto him forever.

If this were the work of man, it would fail, but it is the work of the Lord, and he does not fail.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ11

Something happened to me as a result of hearing that sweet but direct testimony, something which has affected my life permanently. I saw the power of God resting upon President Joseph Fielding Smith; that witness went down into my heart and burned like fire. It has happened in like manner on subsequent occasions as new prophets have been chosen and appointed.

I remember also some two and a half years later when a new Apostle was called at the October 1972 conference. The newly sustained Apostle declared:

As members of the church and kingdom of God on earth, we enjoy the gifts of the Spirit—those wonders and glories and miracles that a gracious and benevolent God always has bestowed on his faithful saints. The first of these gifts listed in our modern revelation on spiritual gifts is the gift of testimony, the gift of revelation, the gift of knowing of the truth and divinity of the work. This gift is elsewhere described as the testimony of

Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy. This is my gift. I know this work is true.

I have a perfect knowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that he was crucified for the sins of the world. I know that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God through whose instrumentality the fulness of the everlasting gospel has been restored again in our day. And I know that this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on earth.ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ12

I was moved and strengthened by that witness in ways that I cannot explain. I knew, with a knowledge more powerful than sight, that he knew.

Over twelve years later that same Apostle delivered his last testimony to the Church, one that has and will yet touch the hearts of millions of people across the globe. "And now," he affirmed, in speaking of the redemption of Christ,

as pertaining to this perfect atonement, wrought by the shedding of the blood of God—I testify that it took place in Gethsemane and at Golgotha, and as pertaining to Jesus Christ, I testify that he is the Son of the Living God and was crucified for the sins of the world. He is our Lord, our God, and our King. This I know of myself independent of any other person.

I am one of his witnesses, and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and shall wet his feet with my tears.

But I shall not know any better than I know now that he is God's Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer, and that salvation comes in and through his atoning blood and in no other way.ⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱⁱ13

Who among us that heard this final apostolic witness of Elder Bruce R. McConkie will ever be the same? Indeed, the witness of the Brethren provide not only sustenance and support for our own developing testimonies, but they also stand as a pattern and a guide as to how the Lord expects his Saints to bear pure testimony.

As we develop in line upon line fashion, as we grow here a little and there a little in our appreciation for and witness of the work in which we are engaged, we are becoming steadfast and immovable in the faith. Like Jacob, son of Lehi, because of our experience with the Spirit of the Lord we will be unshaken in the faith when we encounter antichrists and the doctrine of devils (Jacob 7:5). And, like Enos, his son, because we will have heard the word of the Lord and have come to treasure above all else those matters of eternal import, our faith will begin to be unshaken in the Lord (Enos 1:11). We will have begun to mature in our convictions.

Notes

1. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 446, 449-50, emphasis added.
2. Boyd K. Packer, *That All May Be Edified*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 339-40, emphasis in original.
3. *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 138, emphasis added.
4. Unpublished address delivered in Los Angeles, California, 2 January 1969, 9, as cited in *Testimony*, comp. H. Stephen Stoker and Joseph C. Muren (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 139, emphasis added.

5. "Eternal Investments," address given to CES personnel, Salt Lake City, 10 February 1989, 3, emphasis in original.
6. *Teach Ye Diligently* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975), 275.
7. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 313.
8. *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971), 205-6.
9. See *Gospel Ideals: Selections from the Discourses of David O. McKay* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953), 21-22.
10. *Matthew Cowley Speaks: Discourses of Elder Matthew Cowley of the Quorum of the Twelve of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971), 298-99.
11. Conference Report, April 1970, 113.
12. Bruce R. McConkie, Conference Report, October 1972, 21. [p.46]
13. Bruce R. McConkie, Conference Report, April 1985, 12.

The Middoni Principle

C. Robert Line

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). Paul's statement is true not only in the sense that God's vengeance brings fear upon the wicked, but also in that those who seek to place their trust in God during a moment of spiritual crisis (when the outcome of a particular leap of faith is in doubt) may experience anxiety.

Putting our trust in God when we do not know the outcome can indeed be "a fearful thing." During such moments we can trust and might even know that God will deliver us, but we are often uncertain about the method of deliverance. Elder Harold B. Lee taught that obeying in faith even while not understanding the reasons is the difference between "blind" obedience and "intelligent" obedience.^{xxxxx1}

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. (Moses 5:6-7.)

Adam was not guilty of blind obedience—that is, simply obeying because he was commanded. Rather, there was an initial trust in his Heavenly Father, a trust based upon spiritually confirming experience. Although Adam knew and trusted God, he would not learn the results of his obedience until later. He acted because he knew, as the Prophet Joseph Smith later taught, that "whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof until long after the events transpire."¹² This kind of obedience—"intelligent" obedience—is demonstrated in the missionary labors of Ammon and Lamoni in the land of Middoni as described in the Book of Mormon. For the purpose of this paper, I will call it the Middoni Principle. It requires of us the understanding that: 1) not only should we always do what God requires, but 2) we should also realize that quite often what we want or righteously *desire* is often what the Lord wants; he just has a different way of orchestrating events than we sometimes contemplate initially.

After much service and preaching among the people of King Lamoni, Ammon finally reaped the harvest of souls he had longed for. Among this harvest was the conversion of

King Lamoni himself. As was the case in Lehi's dream, Lamoni, after having tasted the precious "fruit" of the gospel, desired now to share that fruit (1 Nephi 8:12; see also Alma 36:24) with his family: "And it came to pass that when they had established a church in that land, that king Lamoni desired that Ammon should go with him to the land of Nephi, that he might show him unto his father" (Alma 20:1).

Lamoni's father was the chief of all the kings in the land (Alma 20:8). Apparently when Ammon inquired of the Lord to receive approval for this change in fields of labor his request was denied: "And the voice of the Lord came to Ammon, saying: Thou shalt not go up to the land of Nephi, for behold the king [the chief king] will seek thy life; but thou shalt go to the land of Middoni; for behold, thy brother Aaron, and also Muloki and Ammah are in prison" (Alma 20:2). Ammon told Lamoni the details of this revelation, whereupon Lamoni gave his wholehearted support and even volunteered his personal services to Ammon in order to free his brethren from captivity.

At this point the story takes a strange turn. While on their journey to Middoni, Ammon and Lamoni encounter the chief king. Just as the voice of the Lord had warned, the chief king sought to take Ammon's life; his attempt, however, was unsuccessful. At first glance one wonders why the voice of the Lord would tell Ammon to go to Middoni and not visit Lamoni's father in Nephi, if they end up encountering him anyhow. The Lord knew that Ammon and Lamoni would meet the chief king. In light of what happened, maybe the issue with the Lord was not "what is the best way to protect Ammon?" but rather, "What is the best way to bring about the conversion of the chief king?" God does intervene to save and protect, but he can never force the conversion of the soul (Helaman 14:30-31; 2 Nephi 10:23-24; see also *Hymns #240*).

God does, however, take a hand in shaping the circumstances and events surrounding the conversion of the soul. It might well be that being away from the confines of his home, and all the security that comes with it, was precisely what King Lamoni's father needed in order for a change of heart to take place. Perhaps the initial trek toward Middoni and the subsequent meeting out in the wilderness was a more effective way for God to show the chief king "the great love [that Ammon] had for his son Lamoni." Furthermore, once Ammon withstood the king and the king had to listen, he "was greatly astonished at the words which [Ammon] had spoken, and also at the words which had been spoken by his son Lamoni, therefore he was desirous to learn them" (Alma 20:26-27). Sometimes the only way the Lord enters into our hearts is when he takes us out of our element—out of our "comfort zone."

King Lamoni's desire to share the gospel with his father was a righteous desire that was fulfilled in a peculiar manner. We all have moments in life when we want spiritually "to go to Nephi," as it were, for whatever righteous reason we might have. The real test comes when the Lord tells us "to go to Middoni" instead. When this happens it is imperative that we not only do what the Lord says, but that we realize that by so doing it is quite likely that our original desired outcome just might be fulfilled, albeit in a better way. In Proverbs it states, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). The same idea is found in Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8). As President Wilford Woodruff said, "We should begin to understand that God's ways are infinitely superior to our ways, and that His counsels, though they may seem to call for sacrifice, are always the best and the safest for us to adopt and carry out."ⁱⁱⁱ3

What we desire in righteousness is often what the Lord desires, although His method in achieving that desired outcome is often different from what we would expect. When tensions ran high in Missouri in 1834, various Saints in Kirtland and surrounding areas joined in the march of Zion's Camp in order to give relief to Saints in Zion and to help restore their property. The command of the Lord fueled their cause: "Behold, I say unto you, the redemption of Zion must needs come by power" (D&C 103:15). In the aftermath of several months of arduous and painful events, some would conclude that Zion's Camp was unsuccessful. The distressed Saints in Zion were relieved to some extent, but the issue of lands being recovered was not resolved at that time. Was Zion's Camp a failure? To those who understand "the Middoni principle" it was not. As

President Wilford Woodruff later explained:

We gained an experience that we never could have gained in any other way. We had the privilege of beholding the face of the prophet, and we had the privilege of travelling [sic] a thousand miles with him, and seeing the workings of the Spirit of God with him, and the revelations of Jesus Christ unto him and the fulfilment of those revelations. And he gathered some two hundred Elders from throughout the nation in that early day and sent us broadcast into the world to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Had I not gone up with Zion's Camp I should not have been here to-day, and I presume that would have been the case with many others. ... By going there we were thrust into the vineyard to preach the gospel, and the Lord accepted our labors.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ⁴

Elder Orson F. Whitney understood this principle as well. Concerning the redemption of Zion by power he stated: "The redemption of Zion is more than the purchase or recovery of lands, the building of cities, or even the founding of nations. It is the conquest of the heart, the subjugation of the soul, the sanctifying of the flesh, the purifying and ennobling of the passions."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ⁵ Interestingly, a revelation regarding the land in Zion states: "In time ye shall possess the goodly land" (D&C 103:20). It is apparent that the Lord's plan for the redemption of Zion is different than what was expected by some of the Saints.

Similarly, many Jews at the time of Christ failed to recognize the promised Messiah, not because of lack of expectation, but due to their incorrect understanding of what type of Messiah would come. The Jews expected a political leader to free them from Roman oppression, not a suffering servant to free them from sin. When we lean on our own understanding and forget to trust in the Lord we are inherently insisting that our wisdom is above the Lord's. Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote:

When we are unduly impatient with circumstances, we may be suggesting that we know what is best—better than does God. Or, at least, we are asserting that our timetable is better than His. Either way, we are questioning the reality of God's omniscience as if, as some seem to believe, God were on some sort of post-doctoral fellowship, trying to complete His understanding and, therefore, needing to use us as consultants.^{vvvv6}

"The Middoni principle" entails more than mere obedience. It involves "intelligent" obedience, coupled with the knowledge that although the Lord may often want what we want, his method for realizing those wants is not always identical with our methods. Not only are his methods often different from ours, they are superior as well. "Obedience [is

not] a mindless shifting of our personal responsibility," Elder Maxwell declared. "Instead, it is tying ourselves to a living God who will introduce us—as soon as we are ready—to new and heavier responsibilities involving situations of high adventure. Obedience, therefore, is not evasion; it is an invasion—one that takes us deep into the realm of our possibilities."^{vvv7}

Notes

1. Harold B. Lee, *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1962, 742.
2. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 256.
3. James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 3:145.
4. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards & Sons, 1851-86), 13:158.
5. *The Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 65.
6. Neal A. Maxwell, *Notwithstanding My Weakness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981), 59-60.
7. Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980), 127.

The Personal Name 'Alma' at Ebla

Terrence L. Szink

Critics of the Book of Mormon have often claimed that the personal name Alma is a cultural anachronism. Some have contended that Alma is a feminine, Latin-based name and that its appearance in the Book of Mormon demonstrates that the book is not what Joseph Smith claimed it to be. This challenge was answered in 1973 when Hugh Nibley pointed out that in one of the Bar-Kokhba documents, dated to the second century A.D., a lease written in Hebrew contains the name "Alma ben Judah."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ¹ Recently, Paul Hoskisson, professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University, examined this document and concluded that 'Im' or 'Imh, (as it is also spelled in the document) is a common Hebrew masculine name with a possible meaning of "lad of God."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ² Additionally, in the archive of Ebla, the personal name "Alma" is found at least eight times in six separate documents dated to the end of the third millennium B.C. (On two of the tablets the name occurs twice.) In cuneiform the name is written al₆-ma. Initially there was uncertainty on the part of some scholars about the reading of the first sign al₆ (this is reflected by the sign being rendered AL₆ in the transliterations of texts 1, 2 and 7 below). However, the reading al₆ has now been established at Ebla.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ³ Furthermore, scholars have understood and transliterated this name as Semitic (indicated by the name being written in italics in the transliteration), meaning that it is in the same basic language family as Hebrew. At the end of this article I have included a transliteration and translation of each of the passages in which the name is found.

These documents are all administrative in nature with the person Alma involved in various types of transactions. In several of the texts (5, 6 and 8), the name Alma is associated with the ancient city of Mari. In text 8, Alma is referred to as a "merchant" (lu-

kar) from Mari. It is not certain whether one individual is being referred to a number of times or if there are different people, each named Alma.

Of course, the occurrence of the name "Alma" in sources outside of the Book of Mormon does not necessarily prove that the book is true, especially since the time separating the texts in which the name is found is very great. However, the fact that Alma at Ebla and Alma in the Bar-Kokhba letters brackets the time Lehi left Jerusalem certainly allows the possibility that the name could have been part of the cultural tradition that Lehi and his family took with them to the new promised land. At the very least the claim by Book of Mormon critics that Alma is a feminine, Latin-based name which Joseph borrowed is greatly weakened. If Joseph was familiar with the name, he most likely knew it as a feminine name. That being the case, why would he have used the name for a male character? The fact that we now know that Alma is a good Semitic masculine name, which Joseph could not have possibly known, is further evidence that the Book of Mormon is exactly what Joseph Smith claimed it was.

Occurrences of Alma at Ebla

- 1) *Archivi Reali di Ebla, Testi VII* 16 (TM.75.G.1368) r. V-5 tar bar₆:ku / AL₆-ma -
"Alma received thirty shekels of silver."
- 2) *Archivi Reali di Ebla, Testi VII* 16 (TM.75.G. 1368) r. VIII 3 -10 gin DILMUN bar₆
:ku / AL₆-ma - *"Alma received 10 'Dilmun' shekels of silver."*
- 3) *Studi Eblaiti IV* p. 155 (TM.75.G.1559) r. I 6 - 10 gin DILMUN bar₆:ku / al-ma -
"Alma received 10 Dilmun shekels of silver." [p.55]
- 4) *Studi Eblaiti IV* p. 155 (TM.75.G.1559) v. IV 4 1 - GIS-su bar₆:ku / 5 ma-na bar₆:ku /
2 ku₆ zabar /1 aktum-TUG 1 ib-sa₆-TUG 1 nig-la-gaba /1 nig-la-sag /1 gir mar-tu KA/
alma I nig-AN.AN.AN.AN / ga-suf1 - *"Alma offers (a variety of objects) to the gods
of Gasur."*
- 5) *Mari Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires 4* p. 76 (TM.75.G.2277) v. IX 18 -
(2+2 garments) NE-NE a/₆-ma su-du₈ ma-r/*1 - *"PN and Alma deposit 2+2 garments as
a pledge at Mari."*
- 6) *Mari Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires 4* p. 78 (TM.75.G.2507) r. XIX *-19 -
20 gin DILMUN bar₆:ku nig-ba en-na-dda-gan ma-/*1 10 gin DILMUN bar₆:ku nig-ba
a/₆-ma ma-/*1 - *"20 Dilmun shekels of silver are the gift of PN, 10 Dilmun shekels of
silver are the gift of Alma of Mari."*
- 7) *Orientalia 54* p. 13 (TM.75.G.2542) r. II6-14 - sa-pi bar₆:ku nig-ba a-zi AL₆-ma -
"2/3 of a mina of silver are the gift of PN and Alma."
- 8) *Mari Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires 4* p. 78 (TM.75.G.2644) r. VIII 10 -
(4+4+4 garments.) PUZUR₄.RA-dUTU ma-as-da-su a/₆-ma bu-da-dda-gan lu-kar ma-r[^]
"(4+4+4 garments) for PN, PN, Alma, and PN, merchants of Mari"

Notes

1. Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, ed. John Welch, vol. 8 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. and F.A.R.M.S., 1989), 281-82.
A photograph of the first part of this document and a partial translation can be found in Yigal Yadin, *Bar Kokhba* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 176.

2. Paul Hoskisson, "Alma as a Hebrew Name," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, 72-73. This article includes a fine color photograph of the entire document.
3. On the reading al_6 see Joachim Krecher, "Sumerogramme und Syllabische Orthographic in den Texten aus Ebla," *La Lingua di Ebla*, Series Minor XXII, ed. Luigi Cagni (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, 1981), 142.

The Message of Nicodemus

Keith J. Wilson

A common error of New Testament readers is to approach the four Gospels as a historical text. While it is true that these books contain much history, they were not written with that as their primary purpose. Instead, the four Gospels were written to persuade various audiences that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah and the literal Son of God, and each author endeavored through his perspective to present the case for the divine Jesus. The Gospel of John is a straightforward example of persuasive writing. John the Beloved writes with the express purpose, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31), which is certainly a statement of strong predisposition or mindset. Additionally, the Prophet Joseph Smith changed the very title of the "Gospel of John" to read the "Testimony of John." A testimony seems to have a much smaller circumference than a gospel. For most people a testimony is bearing witness of a specific experience or truth. The same holds true for the apostle John. As he writes, he presents his prophetic witness of selected truths about the Savior, which he desires to impress upon all who will listen to his words. With the idea in mind that John is intentionally selecting certain historical facts to support his prophetic account, it is intriguing to examine a prominent individual who is exclusive to the New Testament record of John. Nicodemus, whose name means "conqueror of the people" in Greek, surfaces three times in the Gospel of John. The first mention of Nicodemus comes in the well-known exchange with Jesus about the doctrine of spiritual rebirth. The other two appearances are relatively brief, yet nonetheless, significant. Considering his stature, it seems odd that the other evangelists would fail to mention Nicodemus. Yet perhaps Nicodemus was not so much a synoptic omission as he was a Johannine inclusion. Apparently John sees a message in the man that the others overlook, one which allows him to testify, to instruct, and to lead all believers through his account of the man Nicodemus.

The fact that Nicodemus surfaces in just one account out of four is strong evidence that John may have caught and preserved some things which others did not. But this isolated testimony also presents a challenge within its very singularity. Is John's purpose for his presentation of Nicodemus abundantly clear or is there room for ambiguity in the Nicodemus message? I suggest that the answer is that John's presentation of Nicodemus' motives and actions yields considerable ambiguity.

Contemporary interpretations of Nicodemus generally separate into two areas of thought. One camp views Nicodemus as a cautious convert who grows more courageous as time passes and eventually shows himself as a devoted disciple. The second interpretation of Nicodemus posits that Nicodemus represents a reluctant witness who feels drawn to

accept the Savior's message but lacks the internal strength to fully commit. These two interpretations pose an interesting case of contrasts. Furthermore, it is difficult to find much common ground between the two perspectives. What then is the scriptural support for each position?

Nicodemus a Courageous Convert

The first reference to Nicodemus in the Gospel of John comes in John 3:1-15. In this most notable of the Nicodemus passages the Savior instructs Nicodemus about the concept of physical and spiritual rebirth, the visitation of the Spirit, and the image of the brazen serpent on the pole as a representation of Christ. Those who champion the converted Nicodemus interpretation attach several meanings to the respective scriptural passages. Nicodemus was a ruler of Jews, which suggests he belonged to the Jewish Sanhedrin (v. 1). It is possible he came to Jesus by night (v. 2) for multiple reasons. First, during the day he was so busy that he could not free himself from his pressing leadership responsibilities. Second, at nighttime he could find uninterrupted time with Jesus. Third, it conformed to a rabbinic custom of staying up at night to study the law.^{xxxx}1 During the visit he calls Jesus "Rabbi"—a term of respect, worthy of a superior teacher. Then with his mention of Christ's miracles, Nicodemus refers to Jesus as a prophet (v. 2). In the remainder of this passage Jesus makes it very clear that Nicodemus must make more than just superficial changes. He must experience a comprehensive spiritual transformation. The Savior concludes his instructions with the invitation to look to the cross or "the pole" for salvation (vs. 14-15). Even though no other conversion clues appear evident in this chapter, proponents of this idea suggest that the developmental process had commenced within Nicodemus.

The second encounter of Jesus with Nicodemus is recorded in John 7:45-52, where the Sanhedrin attempts to arrest Jesus without a cause. When the Pharisees ridicule the soldiers as well as the common people for not knowing the law and being "duped" by Jesus, whom they considered a Messianic imposter (v. 49), Nicodemus boldly raises the question whether or not the Sanhedrin has the right to overlook due process. Ironically, the Sanhedrin then accuses Nicodemus of sympathizing with Jesus, and perhaps even being one of his disciples. The narrative ends there. For those who place Nicodemus with the believers this exchange is courageous. Quoting the Johannine scholar, Jon Paulien, "His reaction to the council's desire to arrest Jesus was boldly calculated to bring out the irony of their lawless act at the very moment in which they were ridiculing the lawless behavior of the 'crowd.'"2 To those who favor this interpretation it seems Nicodemus was now willing to risk his professional standing.

The final episode between Nicodemus and Jesus is the account of Jesus' burial recorded in John 19:38. In this account Nicodemus joins with Joseph of Arimathea to wrap the body in a large quantity of burial spices and then place it in the new sepulcher. Those who see these actions as evidence of Nicodemus' belief in Jesus point to two aspects in this account. First, they identify Nicodemus as a wealthy man who brought a hundred pounds of costly spices, equal to that given to deceased royalty.ⁱⁱ3 Second, Nicodemus was willing to step forth when all the Savior's chosen disciples had deserted in fear. For them this Nicodemus is no timid devotee. He reflects the literal meaning of his name as he conquers spiritual darkness. Thus Nicodemus stands for many as a courageous convert who had overcome the stifling traditions of Judaism.

The historical Christian tradition for the converted Nicodemus motif has also been popular through the years. Legend has it that Nicodemus testified in favor of Christ at the trial before Pilate, was expelled from his position by the ruling Jews, and was eventually baptized by Peter and John. The apocryphal writing known as "The Acts of Pilate" was renamed the "Gospel of Nicodemus" in the fourteenth century and has retained that designation in the Latin Christian tradition.ⁱⁱⁱ⁴ Even though this "Gospel" adds no new information about Nicodemus, it is a reminder of the groundswell favoring the converted Pharisee position. **The Hesitant Follower**

On the other hand, a very different view considers the three scriptural accounts of the Johannine Nicodemus and concludes that here is a man who felt drawn to the Savior and his message, but who was never able to totally and unconditionally follow the Lord. This group challenges all to consider Nicodemus as a hesitant follower.

The bulk of evidence for the hesitant-follower interpretation of Nicodemus comes from the John 3 passage. These verses begin with Nicodemus, a member of the powerful Sanhedrin coming to the Savior at night. A significant issue here is why he comes after hours. The hesitant interpretation suggests that Nicodemus fears for his social and political position and seeks to avoid any negative repercussions by visiting him at night. Yet another point in the argument for hesitancy comes as Nicodemus addresses Jesus with the title, "Rabbi." Even though he is not a rabbi per se, Jesus was regarded as a learned, esteemed teacher in the community.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ⁵ Nicodemus shows this respect with the subsequent phrase, "a teacher come from God" (v. 2). However, these expressions stop short of total respect, and Nicodemus fails to move to the next level by addressing Jesus as "prophet" or "Messiah."

Yet another layer of the hesitancy argument comes in Nicodemus' use of the plural subject, "We know that thou art a teacher—come from God." There is no evidence that Nicodemus brought anyone else with him that night. His use of the plural pronoun "we" makes his inquiry less personal. The fact that he may not be taking direct responsibility for his question further supports the claims for his timidity.

Without further formality, Jesus replies by cutting right to the issue of spiritual rebirth. He declares it to be total and to include both water and spirit. Nicodemus' rejoinder, "can he enter into his mothers womb," (v. 4) borders on either the ridiculous, the insulting, or the incredulous. With the exception of his introductory query about salvation, Nicodemus presents throughout the remaining dialogue a proud, resistant disposition rather than a humble, inquisitive one.

There is yet more support for the position of Nicodemus's hesitancy. When Jesus expounds the doctrine of spiritual rebirth both physically and spiritually and also attributes it all to the "wind" or will of God, Nicodemus bluntly confesses his lack of understanding, to which the Savior returns a very terse question, "Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?" (v.10) "Master" can also be translated "the teacher of Israel." Considering Nicodemus' use of the "teacher come from God" this rejoinder has some sting to it. Jesus then levies sharp criticism by saying that Nicodemus has not accepted his witness and as a result will not be able to understand spiritual phenomena (v. 11). These statements do not reflect a gentle coaxing by a master teacher. Rather, they are filled with directness meant to expose the erudite attitude of a haughty Jew. Those who favor a hesitant Nicodemus note that John's record in chapter 3 does not refer to Nicodemus again, resulting in a lack of formal closure to the episode.

The second reference to Nicodemus in John cited by those favoring the hesitancy theory comes during the Feast of Tabernacles in chapter 7. Here the Pharisees accuse their soldiers of not understanding the law and sympathizing with Jesus. Nicodemus steps forward, posing the question, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" (v. 51) They reply, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (v.52). In this passage the supposedly hesitant Nicodemus appears to experience a rush of confidence. At first glance he seems to be confronting the entire Sanhedrin. However, his courage seems tentative at best. Note how he avoids a categorical defense of Jesus. Instead he raises a rhetorical question about their lack of due process, conveniently leaving himself a quick escape route. The response of the Pharisees confirms their vindictiveness as they scorch Nicodemus with a provincial slur (v. 52). He retreats without even so much as a word. All this when it was obvious both from Jewish traditions and scriptures that some noteworthy prophets were indeed from Galilee (2 Kings 14:25). In this incident Nicodemus quickly concedes the argument and wilts under pressure.

The final appearance of Nicodemus comes after the crucifixion. Joseph of Arimathea whom John identifies as a disciple of Jesus approaches Pilate and has the body of Jesus released to him. This he does secretly "for fear of the Jews" (John 19:38). Thereafter Nicodemus comes with the hundred pounds of spices. He teams with Joseph and they wrap the body with the prepared spices and place it in the sepulcher.

In this exchange John places Nicodemus in a supportive role with Joseph taking the lead. Even so, Joseph is described as fearful and cautious. To those favoring the hesitancy theory, this relegates Nicodemus to an even more hesitant, timid posture. If Nicodemus had committed to follow Christ would not there have been strength in numbers as they appeared before Pilate? Since Nicodemus occupied a position of leadership in the Sanhedrin would not he have been an asset in appearing before Pilate? These questions buttress the interpretation of Nicodemus as a hesitant follower. John consistently shares details about Nicodemus which portray him as quietly sympathetic but openly hesitant. These overviews constitute the two major approaches to understanding Nicodemus. For those who favor a committed convert the following is significant:

1. Nicodemus is a powerful "ruler" but he still comes. (3:1)
2. He comes at night to receive quality, uninterrupted instruction. (3:2)
3. Nighttime was a traditional time for deep study. (3:2)
4. Nicodemus' reference to Christ is very close to a "prophet." (3:2)
5. Nicodemus boldly and publicly defends Jesus before the Sanhedrin. (7:51)
6. He shows symbolic respect by anointing Jesus with a regal portion of spices. (19:39)
7. Nicodemus makes his discipleship public as he assists Joseph of Arimathea with the burial. (19:39)

On the other hand, there are some persuasive arguments for Nicodemus as a hesitant, non-committal type:

1. Nicodemus comes after dark to protect his social/political position. (3:2)
2. His use of the title Rabbi shows respect but stops short of worship. (3:2)
3. He refuses full responsibility for his question by addressing Jesus with a plural subject. (3:2)
4. His questions to the Savior are blunt, defensive, and resistive. (3:4, 9)

5. Jesus' statement to Nicodemus is terse and condemns him for a lack of faith. (3:11)
6. Nicodemus questions the Sanhedrin in a bold move, but then he backs down even after they give a flimsy answer. (7:52) [p.65]
7. He teams with Joseph of Arimathea in a secretive manner to give the body of Jesus a proper burial. (19:38-39)

Each of these positions seems to offer plausible reasons to interpret Nicodemus in opposite ways. Is it possible that John purposefully presented Nicodemus as an enigma? Probably not. This conclusion seems out of character with other Johannine declarations. John has a forceful purpose in his writing as attested to by his statement, "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). His intent is not to create literal or figurative ambiguity. There must be more to consider. To this point we have focused on magnifying each verse within the three Nicodemus passages. Perhaps a macro analysis of all three encounters would assist in discerning John's perspective. The first look might be directed to repetitive textual symbolisms. One of John's most notable symbols is light and darkness. He employs these symbols repeatedly in his account. For example, he records Jesus describing himself as "the light of the world" during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 8), wherein traditionally the giant temple candelabra were lit. He heals the man born blind, restoring him from physical darkness back to light, and then he restores him from spiritual darkness to spiritual light (John 9). As Jesus discourses in John 3:19-21, he compares his ministry as light to the world, while those who hate truth move from light to darkness. This light/darkness symbolism pervades much of John's writing.

Against this backdrop shines a fascinating shadow. Every time John mentions Nicodemus he makes reference to Nicodemus' first visit *at night*. With his strong penchant for using this symbol negatively, he must be reinforcing his perspective of Nicodemus. Why else would he repeat it in all of his accounts?

Another observation that combines various scriptural texts focuses on the contradictory descriptions of Joseph of Arimathea. In Luke's Gospel he credits Joseph with openly opposing the Sanhedrin (23:51) and Mark states that he "went in boldly unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus" (15:43). These accounts differ somewhat from John's portrayal of Joseph as a disciple who came secretly for "fear of the Jews" (19:38). Why did John see Joseph as walking in the shadows to avoid detection? John treats Joseph and Nicodemus together whereas the others only describe Joseph. When Nicodemus is not a part of the equation then Joseph is a bold, courageous Pharisee. When Nicodemus is included then he tilts John's perception to a negative attitude of fear and secrecy. The difference seems to be Nicodemus.

An additional passage in John 12 appears to support this Nicodemus interpretation without specifically mentioning him by name. Beginning with verse 42 John writes: "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue." Then the Evangelist summarizes his comment with the next verse. "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." In this observation John identifies a considerable group of leaders in the Jewish Sanhedrin who quietly accepted Jesus and his message.^{vvv6} Yet they walked in fear of excommunication and losing their position of authority. John minces few words over this group as he forcefully denounces them for placing worldly

concerns ahead of commitment to God. Given the fact that Nicodemus was squarely within this body of rulers and that he was sympathetic to Jesus' message, it seems reasonable that John is using this reference to identify both Nicodemus and others who were touched but hesitated to fully follow Christ.

A final issue deals with the conclusions of each Nicodemus passage. There is scarcely any closure whatsoever to any of the Nicodemus episodes. In John 3 the Savior's discourse gradually moves away from direct conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus and seems to conclude as a monologue. Chapters 7 and 19 have a slightly stronger ending, but Nicodemus still is left hanging. Had John seen a change in Nicodemus' heart certainly he would have highlighted it for all to see. Instead, the lights dim on Nicodemus almost as quickly as when they illuminated him. This could possibly be John's way of leaving his readership hanging. Since Nicodemus never breaks out of his hesitant posture John never gives closure to his portrayal.

An LDS Interpretation

Considering these reasons, it appears that John sides with the hesitant Nicodemus adherents. Yet for inquiring LDS minds there is an additional source of information concerning the Nicodemus quandary. What have modern prophets written and stated about this individual? How have they characterized him? Latter-day prophets have shown some diversity in their pronouncements. There have been references to Nicodemus as "a busy man" which necessitated a nighttime visit.^{v7} But the majority of comments have sided firmly with the hesitant interpretation.¹⁸

One of the most forceful LDS presentations that utilized the Nicodemus theme was given by Spencer W. Kimball in general conference, April 1958. Elder Kimball's talk addressed the process of obtaining spiritual knowledge. For his text he recreated the entire Nicodemus conversation in John 3. He opened with little doubt as to his interpretation:

Eternal life is the greatest gift. To obtain it is not easy. The price is high. Nicodemus of old inquired the price. The answer perplexed him. Let us interview that good man who came so near and yet evidently missed the mark.

Your name is Nicodemus? You are a member of the powerful sect of the Pharisees?

It is night now. You have not been seen. You are addressing our Lord.

After rehearsing the entire dialogue Elder Kimball summarized his point with this piercing conclusion:

My heart weeps for you, friend Nicodemus. You seem such a good man, philanthropic, kind, generous. You could have been such a power in the Lord's kingdom. You had a spark of desire. It could have been kindled into a living flame. You might have been one of his seventies, ...an apostle, or even the President of His Church. ...How little we realize the doors of opportunity which we often close with one wrong decision.

Then Elder Kimball finished his talk with a personal plea: "If any of you, my listeners, is a modern Nicodemus, I beg of you to grasp the new world of truths. Your Lord Jesus Christ pleads with you."²⁹

There was little doubt in Elder Kimball's mind about John's perspective of Nicodemus. The issue for Elder Kimball was that John is teaching about the cost of discipleship. Will

a true disciple respond to the coaxing of the Spirit and fully follow Christ, or will there be hesitation?

President Gordon B. Hinckley has centered many of his discourses on this topic of committed discipleship. In some of his comments, he has quoted directly from the Nicodemus accounts. In April 1998 he declared:

This thing which we call testimony is the great strength of the Church. It is the wellspring of faith and activity. . . . The Lord described it when he spoke to Nicodemus and said, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'

He continued,

Personal testimony is the factor which turns people around.... This is the element which motivates. . . . This is the quiet, encouraging voice which sustains.

... It is of the very essence of this work. It is what is moving the work of the Lord forward.... It impels to action. It demands that we do what we are asked to do. It brings with it the assurance that life is purposeful, that some things are of far greater importance than others.

It is this element . . . which moves every investigator in the direction of conversion.³¹⁰

His message closely parallels the scriptural account of the hesitant Nicodemus. He obviously is admonishing all Latter-day Saints to stand up and be numbered in the cause of Christ. His voice seems to echo the scriptural message of Nicodemus in the Gospel of John—namely, exposure to truth is not enough. The real issue centers in the courage to follow. That is the message of Nicodemus.

In summary, the Gospel of John is a testimony from John the Beloved about discipleship. Of all the gospel writers only one tells of the man named Nicodemus. Through thoughtful analysis of the text, the common synoptic threads, and the Johannine symbolism, it seems most reasonable that Nicodemus was included to teach all about the covenant to follow Christ. Even though this process requires certain costs and sacrifices, it returns a life which is eternal. **Notes**

1. Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 124.
2. Jon Paulien, "Nicodemus," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1105.
3. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 729-30.
4. Paulien, 4:1106.
5. Morris, 187-88, 137-38.
6. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John 1-XII*, The Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 483-84.
7. David O. McKay, Conference Report, April 1959, 48.
8. For other examples of the 'hesitant interpretation,' see the following: *The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 93. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt

Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1962), 163. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1976), 1:141.

9. Conference Report, April 1958, 13-17.

10. *Ensign*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, May 1998, 69-70.

The Fatherhood of Christ and the Atonement ⁴1

Paul Y. Hoskisson

While having lunch one day in the BYU cafeteria with a former student, our conversation turned to Mosiah 15:1-8, one of the more puzzling sections of Abinadi's speech before King Noah and his court of priests. It occurred to me on that occasion, as it never had before, that Abinadi was not giving a discourse on the Godhead, but rather he was discussing the Atonement. Specifically, as part of his defense before Noah's court and at the same time as part of his responsibility to deliver his prophetic message to Noah's people, Abinadi was explaining the role that Christ would play and the reason that he could perform the Atonement. In the course of this discourse, Abinadi also explained why Christ would be called the "Father"⁵2 and the "Son," and what the relationship is between his fatherhood, his sonship, and the Atonement.

Abinadi's explanation of the Atonement was prompted when one of his interrogators, near the beginning of his trial, posed the question, "What meaneth the words which are written" by Isaiah when he said, among other things, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings?" (12:20-21).⁶3 In order to answer the question, Abinadi reminded Noah and his priests that all the prophets had declared that "God himself should come down among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth" (13:34). Then, after quoting Isaiah 53 which explains through the Suffering Servant motif what will befall God during his sojourn on the earth, Abinadi bore his own personal witness that "God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people" (15:1).

What follows next, in verses 2-8, is a succinct and sublime exposition of why Christ, the God who will "come down among the children of men," was capable of atoning for "their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice" (15:9). Because Abinadi uses expressions that can easily be misunderstood, for clarity's sake it will be helpful to fill out the following table, based on 15:2-8.

Christ's dual titles:		
Christ's parentage:		
Christ's dual nature:		
Christ's dual capacity:		

This God, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, will be called the Father and the Son (15:2). He will be called the Son "because he dwelleth in flesh" (15:2) and because he "subjected [that] flesh to the will of the Father" (15:2). When Abinadi mentions the Father and the Son in verse two he is quick to forestall any misunderstanding that he is talking about different members of the Godhead by immediately stating that the personage of whom he is speaking, namely, the Messiah, is "the Father and the Son" (15:2). Thus the first row of the table can be filled in as follows.

Christ's dual titles:	Father	Son
Christ's parentage:		
Christ's dual nature:		
Christ's dual capacity:		

Abinadi explained that the Savior is called "the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God" (15:3), that is, the title "Father" was given to Christ because he was begotten of God the Father.⁷⁴ He is called "the Son, because of the flesh" (15:3), that is, the title "Son" was given to him because he was conceived by Mary. And thus the Messiah, or the Savior, became "the Father and Son" (15:3). Luke phrased it only somewhat differently in his gospel, "And the angel answered and said unto [Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).⁸⁵

Abinadi wanted there to be no confusion that, when he used the titles "Father" and "Son," he was talking, almost exclusively, about only one member of the Godhead. And just to make sure there was no confusion, he again stated that the single person he was talking about and who carries the titles "Father" and "Son" "was one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth" (15:4). Thus, the table can be expanded in the following manner:

Christ's dual titles:	Father	Son
Christ's parentage:	Begotten by God	Conceived by Mary
Christ's dual nature:		
Christ's dual capacity:		

The Messiah was called the "Son of God," because he "dwelleth in flesh" (15:2). This aspect of Christ's nature allowed him to be a part of mortality in every way that we are a part of it, suffering "temptation," though he did not yield "to the temptation" (15:5). He even "descended below all things" (D&C 88:6)⁹⁶. In order for Christ to accomplish the Atonement he had to "subject the flesh to the will of the Father," that is, he had to overcome the mortal nature he inherited from Mary by submitting that mortal nature to the will of his divine nature which he inherited from God the Father. Using a tidy little couplet, Abinadi paralleled the "flesh" with the "Son," and the "spirit" with the "Father," i.e., "The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh" (15:3). This allows the chart to be filled in as follows.

Christ's dual titles:	Father	Son
Christ's parentage:	Begotten by God	Conceived by Mary

Christ's dual nature:	Spirit ¹⁰⁷	Flesh
Christ's dual capacity:		

Though Abinadi does not explicitly draw the following conclusion concerning Christ's dual abilities, the conclusion nevertheless can be extrapolated from his short treatise. Because Christ was begotten by God and conceived by Mary, he also inherited the abilities he would need to perform the Atonement. Through his mother, Mary, he inherited all the abilities of mortality, including the possibility of dying. Through his Father, Elohim, he inherited many traits of divinity, including the possibility of not dying. The first ability is one that he shares with all mankind (see especially Alma 7:10-13);¹¹⁸ the second ability is unique to himself. Thus, his ability to die and his ability not to be subject to death, make him unique among all those born on the earth. Truly, he is the only person born into this life who could choose whether or not he would die. As Christ himself expressed it, "No man taketh [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18).¹²⁹ Thus the chart may be completed:¹³¹⁰

Christ's dual titles:	Father	Son
Christ's parentage:	Begotten by God	Conceived by Mary
Christ's dual nature:	Spirit	Flesh
Christ's dual capacity:	He did not have to die.	He could die.

This God, who is called the Father and Son, "shall come down among the children of men" (15:1) and dwell on the earth. He will suffer "temptation" but will not yield "to the temptation" (15:5). He will allow himself, as the "Suffering Servant" passage prophesied, "to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people. And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain" (15:5-7).

In this final act of self-sacrifice, in allowing himself to "be led, crucified, and slain," when at any moment he could have walked away from it, he made the ultimate submission. He subjected the "flesh" (which he inherited from Mary) "even unto death." In so doing, "the will of the Son" (the mortal desire to live) became "swallowed up in the will of the Father" (in the will of the Savior's divine spirit, 15:7, which he inherited from his Father). Thus he completed the temporal requirements of the Atonement. That is, as the final act of the earthly Atonement, Christ, who did not have to die, freely and voluntarily offered up his life on the cross¹⁴¹¹ so that we might also, after our inevitable temporal death, be raised to everlasting life with him. "The death of Christ," as Amulek concisely put it, "shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death" (Alma 11:42).

In summary, Abinadi's unique and beautiful explanation of the Atonement may be outlined as follows:

- 1) God himself will come down and live on the earth. He will be tempted but will yield to no temptation, and in the process he will be mocked, oppressed, scourged, etc., and eventually crucified.
- 2) Christ inherited from his mother, Mary, the same mortal nature that all the children of Adam possess, including the ability to die.
- 3) Christ inherited from his Father, Elohim, a divine nature that no other children of Adam possess, including the capability of not dying.

4) On the cross Christ freely chose to submit his mortal self to his immortal self; that is, of his own free will he subjected himself to death and accomplished the Atonement. Just as Adam made death possible for all of Heavenly Father's children by freely submitting to the conditions that brought about mortal life, so Christ, by freely submitting to mortal death, brought about the conditions that made everlasting life possible for all of God's children.

Certainly, many of the prophets knew the doctrine that Abinadi taught.¹⁵ 12 But no other scripture combines these elements together the way Abinadi did. There can be no doubt that Abinadi knew the Savior, that he knew about the Savior, and that he understood the unique role and nature of the Savior many years before Christ would condescend to be born among the children of Adam.

I cannot leave the subject of Abinadi without making one more observation. It seems to me that Abinadi must have been aware of some partial but commanding parallels between himself and the Savior. Like Christ, Abinadi experienced much of the same rejection and persecution expressed in the "Suffering Servant" motif of Isaiah 53 (see also Mosiah 14). For example, nowhere in Abinadi's speech does he mention the fact that Christ succeeded in converting anyone during his time on the earth. In fact, several of the statements from Isaiah quoted in Mosiah 14 could be interpreted to mean that Christ would have little or no success in converting people during his mortal ministry. For example, "He is despised and rejected of men; ... we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (verse 3); "we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God" (verse 4); and "all we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (verse 6). Abinadi must have wondered if he also would be killed without achieving even modest success. Indeed, as far as his finite knowledge was concerned, he could easily have thought that he had not succeeded in converting a single person.

Like the Savior, Abinadi was executed by people unworthy to sit in judgment on him. And yet, it seems likely that he was aware that he would be executed when he returned the second time to preach to Noah and his people. During the course of his trial Abinadi stated, in order that "ye may know of [the] surety [of the words I have spoken concerning this people], I have suffered myself that I have fallen into your hands. Yea, and I will suffer even until death, and I will not recall my words, and they shall stand as a testimony against you. And if ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood" (17:9-10). It would appear that Abinadi, in a manner not unlike his Savior, also freely chose to expose himself to temporal death, thereby sealing "the truth of his words" (17:20). Abinadi was, as almost all prophets have been, a type and shadow of the path the Savior would tread.

This powerful testimony of Abinadi, given as it was to an apostate and wicked people, contains information about the Savior expressed in a way like no other passage in scripture. Truly, how beautiful upon the mountains were the feet of Abinadi.

Notes

1. This is a reduced version of a presentation I gave to the faculty of Religious Education in September 1996. I had circulated written versions of the presentation as early as May 1996 among colleagues for their comments.
2. Traditionally, as Elder McConkie in *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 130, has stated, there are three reasons that Christ the Son also bears the title Father: 1) He is the "Creator... of the heavens and of the earth," 2) "He is the Father of all those who are born again," and 3) He is the Father because of "divine

investiture." See also the important and more thorough statement dated 30 June 1916 by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles recorded in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 5:25-34.

Sometimes I have heard a fourth reason (similar to Elder McConkie's second reason), that Christ is the Father because he is the Father of the Atonement, just as George Washington is the Father of the United States. The reason Abinadi applied the title Father to Christ in this passage is different than these four, making this a fifth reason. This paper will make the fifth reason clear.

3. This and all subsequent scriptural references refer to Mosiah in the Book of Mormon, unless specifically noted otherwise.

4. For other references to Christ as the Only Begotten Son of God see Jacob 4:5 and 11; John 1:14 and 18. [\[p.79\]](#)

5. See also D&C 93:4, where Christ states that he is "the Father because he 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."

6. See also *Lectures on Faith*, 5:2. Christ "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."

7. "Spirit" here does not refer to the spirit person that we were in the premortal life. It refers rather to a characteristic or an aspect of Christ's divine nature which he inherited as the Only Begotten. Another way of stating this would be "spiritual nature" versus "mortal nature." This distinction is obvious for "spiritually" versus "naturally" in Moses 3:5. Compare Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 756-761; and Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 14th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 432.

8. That is why Amulek could say "there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice" (Alma 34:10). Christ, if he were only a mortal like all other mortals, could not have performed a sacrifice to atone for mankind. It was because of his immortal nature that his sacrifice was infinite and eternal.

9. A colleague in Religious Educational Brigham Young University, reminded me of this passage. Note also Christ's words on the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46).

10. For a similar listing see Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 192.

11. The Atonement, if it is to be effected by a valid sacrifice, must be freely given (as all sacrifices must be freely given to be valid). If the Savior's life could be taken from him by force, then his death would be involuntary and not a sacrifice. Thus he said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17). It was not enough that he had the ability to simply walk away from captivity and death. It was not enough that he allowed himself to be placed in the hands of the executioners. He also had to choose, he had to will, temporal death. For this reason, crucifixion, though we are repulsed by the vile aspects of this form of execution, was probably the only type of execution that gave the Savior the choice of whether to die

or not to die. To the casual observer, it would have appeared that Christ had been executed by crucifixion. However, to those like Abinadi who understood the nature of Christ's sacrifice, his death on the cross was an act of his own will and not of the executioners. This recognition is hinted at in Mark 15:39 for the Roman centurion attending the crucifixion, when he stated, "Truly this man was the Son of God." There may be other forms of execution that would fulfil the requirements just outlined, but I am unaware of any.

12. See King Benjamin's delivery of the words of an angel of God on the Atonement in Mosiah 3. Verses 8 and 9 especially reveal a knowledge of the doctrine Abinadi taught. See also Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11, Alma's speech in Alma 7, Amulek's understanding in Alma 34:9-10 and Alma's explanation of the atonement to his son in Alma 42, especially verse 15. It should be noted that Abinadi may not have had access to any of these discourses, with the exception of 1 Nephi 11. But he could have drawn upon the same source of inspiration for this doctrine that was available to Alma and Amulek.

"I Want To Pay Tribute": Heber J. Grant Gives Thanks to Departed Saints

Paul H. Peterson

"I cannot sit down without paying a tribute to Erastus Snow, [of] whom I know of no more devoted servant of God, and no man more interested in the work of the Latter-day Saints," observed President Heber J. Grant in 1931. "More than all the rest of the General Authorities of the Church I am indebted to him for an individual interest and for the teachings, advice, and counsel he gave to me."¹⁶¹ In paying tribute to Elder Snow, President Grant was only doing what he had been in the habit of doing for over forty years—thanking Saints for devoted, hallowed service to the Church and to the Lord. Born in 1856, President Grant's eighty-eight year life span stretched from the Civil War era to the closing months of World War II, from handcarts and wagon trains to automobiles and airplanes. Called as an apostle by President John Taylor in 1882, President Grant was intimately acquainted with three (or even four) generations of Church members. As a young man, President Grant knew Brigham Young and was well-acquainted with the colonizing exploits of that second generation of Saints, who at President Young's direction, settled the dusty, barren outreaches of the Great Basin. He witnessed the construction of the historic tabernacle (completed in 1869) and was present when President Wilford Woodruff dedicated the Salt Lake Temple in 1893. By his mid-years, after stints of mission service in Japan and Europe, Elder Grant was familiar with the realities of performing missionary work in difficult and sometimes hostile environments. He also knew firsthand of the difficulties and financial burdens the Saints faced during the numbing depression of the 1890s.

In his elderly years President Grant experienced the vicissitudes of two horrific world wars and another even more severe depression. On a happier note, he witnessed the dawning of a new age for the Church, an age when Latter-day Saints were no longer singled out and ridiculed for their differences, but respected and even admired—admired for their progressive health code called the Word of Wisdom, admired for their extensive welfare operation which enabled Saints to take care of themselves during challenging times, and admired for the attention and concern they gave their youth.

More than most, President Grant understood that people were larger than the events they created or were involved with, that amid every challenge or tragedy and behind every accomplishment, were men and women, ordinary in so many ways but heroic in dimensions that they themselves scarcely realized. It was ordinary people with extraordinary devotion who colonized much of the Intermountain West; it was ordinary people with remarkable loyalty who spent fifteen, twenty, or more years serving missions in foreign lands; it was faithful, disciplined, regular people, as Elder Grant freely confessed, who were called to serve as Church leaders.

President Grant knew such people, thousands of them, and he never forgot their sacrifices, their contributions, their dedication. A brief sampling of President Grant's general conference talks makes it clear that the older he grew, the more difficult it became for him to give a talk in which he did not pay tribute or give thanks to those who devoted their energies and sometimes their very lives to the kingdom. Often, but not always, the Saints that President Grant chose to acknowledge were those who had passed away since the last general conference of the Church. Often, but not always, he would begin his moment of praise by saying, "I would like to pay tribute to . . ." or "I would like to express gratitude for. . ."

In October general conference of 1907, for example, Elder Grant paid tribute to recently-departed fellow apostle, George Teasdale. "... I was called to the Apostleship upon the same day as Elder Teasdale, and I labored with him, in season, and out, for twenty-four and a half years," Brother Grant told the Saints. "I ever found him full of humility, full of love of his fellows. I never saw him angry; I never heard an unkind word fall from his lips. I always found that his heart was full of love; that he reached for the benefit, uplifting, and betterment of humanity; and it seemed to me that he was in very deed an ideal servant of God, a preacher of the plan of life and salvation."¹⁷²

Ten years later in 1917, Elder Grant memorialized the late Elder Francis M. Lyman, President of the Council of the Twelve. It was not easy for President Grant to part with his predecessor, father figure, and Word of Wisdom mentor. "He is gone from us," Brother Grant solemnly declared. "I have been almost as intimately associated with him as a boy is with his father, for thirty-six years—two years in Tooele and thirty-four years in the Council of the Twelve, and upon all occasions, in public and in private, at home and abroad, he was always full of the spirit of teaching and admonition and showed forth a good example to the people." President Grant concluded his tribute to his beloved friend by telling Saints who chose to emulate President Lyman's highly-principled lifestyle, that "I can promise you that when the battle of life is ended, and you have the privilege of meeting President Lyman, beyond the veil, you will have that same joy when he welcomes you, which you have experienced here on earth when he put his arm around you and said, 'God bless you, my brother,' or 'my sister.'"¹⁸³

President Grant's circle of praise extended far beyond his General Authority associates. In April general conference of 1922 he noted the death of William W. Riter, chairman of the Church Auditing Committee. President Grant told the Saints that Brother Riter, "religiously, once a year, read the Book of Mormon through."¹⁹⁴ Two years later in October 1924, President Grant commented on the passing and made mention of the service and generosity of Stake President Andrew Kimball of Thatcher, Arizona, and Elizabeth C. McCune of Salt Lake City.²⁰⁵ In 1928, he noted with sadness the death of *Improvement Era* editor, Edward H. Anderson, and commented that, "no more capable,

faithful, diligent, God-fearing man has ever been engaged in the service of the Lord in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."²¹6 One year later, President Grant announced that Idaho Falls Stake President Fred L. Caine, who had labored with President Grant in the Japanese mission, had passed away. "I wish to bear witness," Brother Grant stated, "that it has not been my privilege to ever be associated with a more sincere, God-fearing, capable, faithful man than was Brother Fred A. Caine."²²7 Throughout his ministry, President Grant evidenced a strong appreciation for those who temporarily (or sometimes almost permanently) renounced earthly concerns to preach the gospel. In 1913 he praised beloved missionary Ben E. Rich. "I would like to pay . . . tribute to the memory of one who spent fully one-half of his mature years in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ," President Grant said to assembled Saints. "Both by tongue and with his pen, this man has brought many, many souls to a knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God bless his memory."²³8 Seven years into his presidency, in 1925, he lauded the loyalty of President Charles W. Penrose. "He spent nearly twenty years of his life as a missionary in his native land," President Grant observed. "We mourn his loss, but we rejoice in the wonderful record of labor and service that he made in the spread of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ at home and abroad."²⁴9 Four years later, in April conference of 1929, President Grant noted the dedication of President Joseph Wilford Booth, who had recently died of a heart attack in Syria after spending nearly eighteen years as a missionary in the Near East. Of Brother Booth President Grant noted that "no more faithful, God-fearing, humble, splendid man have we had pass away in the mission field."²⁵10

Oftentimes during President Grant's lifetime, married men served as missionaries. And, most often their wives remained at home. In 1931 President Grant made reference to "the marvelous labors" of pioneer wives. "They had the burdens to bear. The wives stayed at home while the men went out into the mission field, but theirs was the greatest labor."²⁶11

Never a scholar in the strict academic sense, President Grant always admired gifted Church members who plied their talents in the interest of the Church. In October conference of 1933, he sadly noted the passing of apostle-theologian, James E. Talmage, and prominent historian and First Council of Seventy member, B. H. Roberts. Regarding authors Talmage and Roberts, President Grant said, "I know of no one of our general authorities who has studied more or was better posted—I know of no one of them who has been a greater promulgator of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, than were the two men who were with us six months ago . . . who have since passed away. They will go on progressing beyond the grave," he promised, "and using that marvelous store of knowledge and information that they had gained. We miss them, the whole Church will miss them."²⁷12

Perhaps more than any single group, President Grant praised the contributions of Church musicians. Not endowed with musical gifts and unable to hold a tune without difficulty, President Grant memorized scores of Latter-day Saint hymns in his lifetime. Frequently, during bouts with insomnia, he would hum the melodies and review the lyrics in an effort to go to sleep. He loved the hymns and he frequently quoted from them in Church addresses. In general conference of October 1933 (the same conference where he praised Elders Talmage and Roberts), after announcing that the choir would sing "Song of the Redeemed" by Evan Stephens, President Grant observed that three years previous,

Brother Stephens, after having led the choir in this very selection, returned to his home, became ill and passed away soon thereafter. "We owe a very deep debt of gratitude to Brother Evan Stephens, Brother George Careless, Brother Ebenezer Beesley, Brother Joseph J. Daynes, and many others for the marvelous music they have composed."²⁸¹³ Every few conferences President Grant expressed heart-felt gratitude for those who had assumed the prophetic mantle before him. In October conference of 1935, for example, he told of his recent privilege of dedicating the statue of Moroni at the Hill Cumorah. After three days of meeting dignitaries and frequenting with the Saints he was tired and decided not to speak at yet another engagement. "But as I listened to President McKay bearing witness of the divinity of this work," President Grant said, "I could not resist the urgent desire to stand up and pay a tribute to Joseph Smith,... who in the providences of God was the instrument in the hands of our Lord and Savior of establishing again upon the earth the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I could not resist the temptation to pay my tribute of respect to Brigham Young, to John Taylor, to Wilford Woodruff, to Lorenzo Snow, and to Joseph F. Smith, who have stood at the head of this church from the time of its organization."²⁹¹⁴

From prophets to pioneer women, from prominent Saints to lesser-known Church members, from non-member Salt Lake Tribune editors to Roman Catholic Church officials, President Grant expressed gratitude—sincere gratitude for their accomplishments or their kindnesses.³⁰¹⁵

To the end of his administration and through his declining years, President Grant gave thanks to good people who performed good deeds. Limited in his strength and ability to speak after a severe stroke in 1940, he gave his last conference address in April 1942.³¹¹⁶ But, eighteen months later, as President David O. McKay reminded Church members in general conference in October 1943, President Grant retained the spirit of gratitude. On this occasion, the concluding afternoon session of Sunday general conference President Grant was at home, resting and listening to conference proceedings on the radio. President McKay, then second counselor in the First Presidency, and himself a man who frequently spoke on the virtues of gratitude, quoted the essayist Carlyle: "In this world there is one Godlike thing, the essence of all that ever was or ever will be of Godlike in this world—the veneration done to human worth by the hearts of men."

President McKay told the Saints this passage

came to my mind this noon when our beloved President suggested that something should be said in this conference by way of appreciation and tribute to two... General Authorities who, since our last Conference, have passed to the other side—President Rudger Clawson and Elder Sylvester Q. Cannon. [p.88]

"President Grant is one of the most thoughtful men in the world,"

President McKay went on to say. "This request is typical of him; his mind was on an appreciation of services rendered by these two men who associated with him so many years."³²¹⁷

"I want to pay tribute to ...," "We owe a debt of deep gratitude to ... ," "I want to express heartfelt thanks to ... ,"—these simple but reverential expressions rolled spontaneously and sincerely from the mouth of President Heber J. Grant, as naturally as water follows a stream bed. They were the manifestations of a deep-seated piety, the reflections of a humble

heart, of a man who well understood that thankfulness is a divinely sanctioned and universally appropriate gesture.³³18

Notes

1. *Deseret News Church Section*, 1 August 1931, 4, as cited in G. Homer Durham, (comp.) *Gospel Standards*, (1976), 229.
2. Conference Report, October 1907, 25.
3. Conference Report, October 1917, 26.
4. Conference Report, April 1922, 15.
5. Conference Report, October 1924, 5-6.
6. Conference Report, April 1928, 5.
7. Conference Report, October 1929, 3.
8. Conference Report, October 1913, 87-88.
9. Conference Report, October 1925, 3.
10. Conference Report, April 1929, 88; Daniel C. Peterson, *Abraham Divided* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1992), 331-39.
11. *Deseret News Church Section*, 1 August 1931, 4, as cited in *Gospel Standards*, 152-153.
12. Conference Report, October 1933, 9-10.
13. *Ibid.*, 99.
14. Conference Report, October 1935, 11.
15. Conference Report, April 1930, 183, October 1934, 6. President Grant thanked Tribune writers for their fair and comprehensive coverage of the Church on its centennial anniversary. He thanked Roman Catholic officials for their tributes to counselor Anthony W. Ivins and for tolling the bells of the splendid Cathedral of the Madeleine as the funeral cortege of Elder Ivins passed by. Graciously, Roman Catholic officials also tolled the Cathedral bells during President Grant's funeral procession. See Francis M. Gibbons, *Heber J. Grant: Man of Steel, Prophet of God* (1979), 231-32.
16. Gibbons, 227.
17. Conference Report, October 1943, 125.
18. In April 1990 general conference, President James E. Faust observed that "the expression of kindness is universally appropriate." See *Ensign*, May 1990, 86.

The Little, Narrow Prison of Language: The Rhetoric of Revelation

Richard Lyman Bushman

I want to raise an old question about Joseph Smith's revelations, one that came up early in Church history when plans were first being made to publish the compilation of revelations called the Book of Commandments.³⁴1 The question is about the language of the revelations. Joseph noted in his history that at the November 1831 conference in Kirtland where publication was approved "some conversation was had concerning revelations and language." This was the occasion when William E. McLellin, apparently the leading critic of the language, was challenged to make a revelation himself, and failed. Joseph said the Elders at the conference all watched while McLellin made "this vain attempt of a man to imitate the language of Jesus Christ," noting that "it was an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord."³⁵2

My interest in the language of the revelations differs from McLellin's who apparently thought the writing was unworthy of Jesus Christ. I do not want to open myself to the criticism, as Joseph said of McLellin, that he had "more learning than sense."³⁶³ I am less interested in the quality of the language than in its structure: how are these revelations put together? Rather than feeling they fall below a suitable rhetorical standard, I am impressed with how effective the revelations are and would like to know how they work rhetorically to achieve their impact on believing readers.

Consider section 4 of the current Doctrine and Covenants, (possibly the revelation McLellin tried to imitate). He had been challenged to "seek ye out of the Book of Commandments, even the least that is among them," and try to better it (D&C 67:6). Section 4 fills less than half a page and runs to just seven verses, making it a logical choice. Yet in that brief space, the revelation interweaves phrases from eight scattered biblical passages—Isaiah, Mark, Corinthians, John, 2 Peter, Matthew, Luke, James—blending them together into a single energetic call to the latter-day work, beginning with words from Isaiah, "Now behold a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men." It is a piece of writing not easily tossed off even by an experienced hand.

The problem of language becomes more complex when we keep in mind that to some extent the revelatory language was confined to the vocabulary of Joseph Smith. Joseph's comments in the history speak of the "language of Jesus Christ," and writing "in the name of the Lord," as if the revelations were transcripts from heaven. Yet at the same time, the preface to the Book of Commandments says that the commandments were given to the Lord's servants "in their weakness, after the manner of their language" (D&C 1:24). The revelations were given in English, not Hebrew or reformed Egyptian. The vocabulary shows few signs of going beyond the diction of a nineteenth-century American common man. The revelations from heaven apparently shone through the mind of Joseph Smith and employed his language to express the messages.

The principle of working "after the manner of their language," meaning the language of the Lord's weak servants, put fairly severe limitations on the rhetoric of the revelations. Joseph had no grounds for claiming special powers of language. He lacked all formal training, of course, having attended school a few months at best. Emma said that he could scarcely write a coherent letter when she married him. Nor had he been exposed to literature—none of the classics of antiquity, no Shakespeare or Pope, likely no Jefferson or Franklin. We know he at least consulted the Bible, but his mother said he had not read it through before he translated the Book of Mormon. We have no glimpses of him, like the young Abraham Lincoln, reading a book by firelight. Manchester did have a lending library, but the Smiths are not known to have patronized it. He is more likely to have read newspapers and almanacs than any other kind of writing. He doubtless heard sermons, though the family did not attend church regularly. The dominant source of Joseph's language must have been the speech of family and neighbors. Speech is not a shallow well of language, as the rich speech of societies with thin printed resources demonstrates; and the Smiths were a verbal family, if Lucy's later autobiography is any indication. But overall the sources within Joseph's reach were not plentiful. The plain language available for Joseph's revelatory rhetoric would necessarily ascend to its greatest heights in the words of the English Bible.

Joseph recognized the limits of his language in a November 1832 letter to W. W. Phelps, the editor of the Church newspaper in Missouri. Joseph ended the letter with a prayer for the time when the two of them should "gaze upon eternal wisdom engraven upon the heavens, while the majesty of our God holdeth up the dark curtain until we may read the round of eternity." Then at last, he hoped, they might be delivered "from the little, narrow prison, almost as it were, total darkness of paper, pen and ink;—and a crooked, broken, scattered and imperfect language."³⁷4 The words suggest that Joseph envisioned more than he could express and wanted language that was straight and whole rather than crooked and broken. He seemed to feel the same constraints as Moroni who said the Nephites stumbled "because of the placing of our words" (Ether 12:25, see also vv. 23-24). The revelation to the elders at the November 1831 conference when the question of Joseph's language was raised said "his language you have known, and his imperfections you have known," not denying Joseph's imperfections in writing, but only rebuking the elders for looking upon them (D&C 67:5).

Joseph Smith, then, was no Shakespeare or Dickens; he admitted his own limitations and section 67 implicitly acknowledges them too. Yet the revelations convinced the elders at the November 1831 conference that "these commandments were given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for all men, and are verily true."³⁸5 Given the circumstances of their composition, the revelations are surprisingly effective down to this day, making the question of the revelations' rhetorical structure all the more interesting.

The revelations compiled into the Doctrine and Covenants take many forms—excerpts from letters, reports of visions, prayers, items of instruction, formal statements of the Church. I wish to deal with only one type, the classic revelations that begin with an address from the Lord to a listening audience—an individual, a group of elders, or the Church and world at large—like the opening line of section 1, "Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high." Most of the early revelations before 1837 take this form of direct address from God to the people.

What I mean by the structure of these revelations, the center of my interest, can be understood by considering a physical analogy. The classic revelations can be thought of as constructing a rhetorical space comparable to the physical spaces where talk takes place. All writing implicitly organizes the source of the words—the writer—and the intended readers or listeners into a relationship, forming a kind of space that can be compared to actual physical spaces, as a way of identifying the character of the writing. We all know the difference between talking across the kitchen table and meeting around a table in a corporate board room. Sports shirts and slacks are suitable for the kitchen versus blue suits in the board room; flowery wallpaper in one and walnut paneling in the other; gossip and personal stories compared to stock buy backs and downsizing. The circumstances set up quite different relationships among speakers and listeners in the two settings. The place where talk takes place always makes a difference. Think of the differences between a college class room or a bus stop, a dance floor or the coach's bench on a basketball floor. Each situation sets up roles for the speakers and listeners, prescribes modes of appropriate speech, and establishes relationships among the people in the space. Whoever we may be in other environments, these settings mold our conduct to suit the location.

In the same manner, writing sets up rhetorical spaces wherein the relationship of writer (or speaker) and the reader (or listener) are fixed by the writing itself. Although without

the stage props of a board room table or a blue suit, the writing assigns roles and establishes relationships. An IRS tax form establishes itself as the purveyor of rules which we all are to obey. An autobiography turns readers into intimate acquaintances who are to learn the writer's secrets. A newspaper article brings us dispatches from the front, the reporter assuming that his or her readers want to know everything that is happening in the world.

Thinking in this vein, we can ask what kind of rhetorical space do the revelations construct? What relationship do they set up between reader, speaker, and the writer who is Joseph Smith? The striking feature of Joseph Smith's classic revelations is the purity of God's voice coming out of the heavens and demanding our attention. The first verse of section 1 speaks with this crystalline clarity: "Hearken, O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say: Hearken ye people from afar; and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together." In that passage and through this entire revelation, the Lord alone is speaking, and all readers and hearers are called upon to give heed. Listen, hearken, hear are the words with which the classic revelations open, and then the voice of God comes right out of the heavens into our ears. From the first word, a relationship is put in place: God speaks to command or inform; we listen.

The voice is pure in that God alone is speaking; Joseph Smith whom we know actually dictated the revelation is totally absent from the rhetorical space. One relationship prevails in these revelations: God speaking to his people. In Isaiah or most of the other Old Testament prophets, the prophet himself keeps intervening to mediate between the Lord and the people. When we come to passages that begin "thus saith the Lord," then we hear God Himself, but before long Isaiah comes back in as commentator and teacher, explaining to readers what the Lord implies. Isaiah is our companion and teacher, never far out of the picture, in the Book of Mormon and New Testament, God himself rarely speaks in a first person voice all by Himself. Most of the scriptures are sermons or letters by one of the prophets, with only occasional interjections of God's own words spoken in his first-person voice. In the Book of Mormon we come closest to the unmediated word of God during Nephi's lengthy revelations of world history; yet even here Nephi is reporting on what he sees. His person plus the attending angel do most of the talking rather than the Lord Himself.

These guides and mediators disappear in Joseph Smith's revelations. The Lord speaks directly to His audience, whether one person or the whole world. "Hearken, my servant John," is the message in section 15 to John Whitmer, "and listen to the words of Jesus Christ, your Lord and your Redeemer" (D&C 15:1). That is the interpersonal structure of the rhetoric: the Lord addresses the reader or listener without any intervening presence. "Heark," the reader is told, and then the words come head on. "F. behold I speak unto you with sharpness and with power, f mine arm is over all the earth" (D&C 16:1-2).

Joseph Smith's authorship, Mole as revelator, is obliterated entirely from this rhetoric, en though the recipient of the revelation may have actually heard the words come from Joseph's mouth. Though Joseph was the author in the naturalistic sense of the word, the voice in the revelation is entirely separated from Prophet, fact when Joseph figures in the revelation's rhetorical space he is placed among the listeners. When rebukes are hand out, he is as likely as anyone to be the target. The first revelation to be written down, so far as can be told, the current section 3 in the Doctrine and Covenants, was directed entirely

against Joseph Smith. Given in July 1828, after the loss of the 116 pages of Book of Mormon manuscript, the revelation had no public venue at the time. There was no Church and virtually no followers save for Joseph's own family members and Martin Harris. In section 3 he stands alone before the Lord to receive a severe tongue-lashing.

Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men;

For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he boasts in his own strength, and sets at naught the counsels of God follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him (D&C 3:3-4).

I consider this revelation extraordinary rhetorical performance. Joseph, probably alone, writes a revelation spoken purely in the voice of God directed entirely at Joseph himself, rebuking him mercilessly for his weakness: "For thou hast suffered the counsel of thy director to be trampled upon from the beginning" (D&C 3:15). The prophet creates *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, a rhetorical space in which God addresses Joseph as an entirely separate being, and we can only imagine young Joseph, new and inexperienced in his calling, cowering before an angry voice, originating entirely outside of Joseph's mind. All that happens inside the rhetorical space formed by the revelation.

This rhetorical construction of two distinct persons—the Lord and Joseph Smith—is so real we are inclined to think a Being must have stood before Joseph Smith to deliver the scolding. In fact, the structure of rhetorical space in the Doctrine and Covenants has, I believe, affected the Latter-day Saint tradition of religious painting. When Latter-day Saint artists portray God revealing himself to humanity, they choose different occasions than other Christian artists. The most commonly depicted revelation in the Christian tradition, judging from my informal survey of the art in a few of our major museums, is Gabriel before Mary announcing her calling as the mother of Jesus. In these scenes Gabriel speaks while beams of golden light radiate from heaven on Mary. Less common are representations of the Old Testament prophets or of the authors of the four Gospels which show them writing while an angel speaks in their ears. Angels are common mediators in all these scenes, or a stream of light pours out of heaven on the revelator. Latter-day Saint artists are more likely to select scenes where another kind of revelation occurs. Although Joseph received most of his revelations through the Holy Ghost, Mormon artists most often choose the First Vision as their archetypal revelation. God and Christ are present in person in these scenes, in radiant glory, heads turned toward a kneeling Joseph who hears the words directly from their mouths. They speak to him, not through him as the angels speak through the Gospel writers. There are no mediators working from God through the angels to the prophet and then to the people. In Latter-day Saint paintings, God personally does the speaking, and the prophet is the hearer. We favor this scene, I believe, because of the way rhetorical space is formed in all the classic revelations, where God speaks directly to his people. Because of our familiarity with rhetorical space in the Doctrine and Covenants, Latter-day Saints imagine revelation as God addressing his Prophet or his people in a pure first-person voice.

The purity of God's voice in the classic revelations makes a second feature of the revelations' rhetorical space all the more startling: the insertion of mundane matters into the exalted revelations on the doctrine and plans of God. Critical commentators, such as

Fawn Brodie, have made fun of the way business details on the Nauvoo House mingle with high religious language about spreading the gospel to the four corners of the earth. In another example of this mixture, Section 93 offers a long meditation in the spirit of the first chapter of John, beginning "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," and going on to declare that "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:2,29). These are among the most provocative and mysterious of Joseph Smith's teaching, and yet within a few verses the revelation rebukes Frederick Williams for letting his children get out of hand, and Sidney Rigdon and Joseph are admonished for not keeping their houses in order (D&C 93:41-50). Some revelations are long lists of missionary assignments about who is to accompany whom and where they are to go (D&C 52). In many the Lord seems to micro-manage the everyday affairs of the Church with all sorts of specific instructions or admonitions to this brother or that, scarcely in keeping with the booming voice of the mighty God. We are tempted to ask: What is that exalted being doing in a revelation to John Whitmer on keeping a history (D&C 47:1), or to Edward Partridge on deeding land to the Saints (D&C 51:3)?

That rhetorical incongruity which offends some religious sensibilities is, in my view, one source of the revelations' effectiveness. The very ease with which the revelations sweep through time and space, forecasting calamities and revealing the depths of God's purposes, and then shedding light upon some named individual with a particular assignment makes the revelations work. Those humdrum, everyday details of managing the Church are absorbed right into the same rhetorical space where God is steering the world toward the Second Coming. In the revelations we go back in history to Adam, Enoch, Moses, we are carried into deep space where worlds are being created, and then we move forward in time to the descent of Enoch's city. Into this world where God rules and God speaks are brought John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Lyman Wight, Jared Carter, Thomas Marsh, and all the other specific individuals who were being mobilized for the latter-day work. The lives of plain people were caught up in the same rhetorical space where God's voice spoke of coming calamities and the beginning of the marvelous work and a wonder. The revelations create a rhetorical world in which the Almighty God and weak and faltering men work together to bring about the divine purposes. Such language, in my opinion, has the power to change mundane existence into a sacred mission.

Considering that this space is merely constructed by words on a page, why should anyone believe the revelations? Besides considering the purity of God's voice in the classic revelations, and the mingling of the mundane with the sublime in these rhetorical spaces, we must ask about the authority of the heavenly voice. How does the speaker in the revelations persuade us to believe? Writers who create other types of rhetorical space use various devices to establish credibility. Novelists usually rely on the verisimilitude of their characters and scenes; they describe a believable world in concrete detail and after winning their readers' confidence in the reality of the story, carry them off on fantastic adventures. The agricultural experts of the Prophet Joseph's day claimed they were reporting actual experiments in planting corn or working with improved plows, and urged their readers to try the new methods for themselves, making experimentation the basis of their credibility. Evangelical preachers proved their doctrines from the scriptures, relying on the authority of an accepted divine text. Out of all the possible means for establishing

credibility, what reasons did the speaker in Joseph Smith's revelations give for believing in His voice?

The answer is the voice gave no reasons at all. In one unusual passage the Lord does speak about reasoning as a man, but then after a few verses returns to the usual declarative mode (D&C 50:10-22). From the pages of the revelation, the voice commands us to hearken and then proceeds to the message. Authority comes almost entirely from the force of the words themselves. Do they sound like the voice of God heard in the Bible? Is this the way we imagine God speaking? People who listened to the early Mormon missionaries may have measured the message against the standard of the New Testament and judged whether or not the teachings conformed to scripture. Many conversions must have come only after rational evaluation and a comparison of Mormon doctrine with prior beliefs. But none of that reasoning comes from the revelations themselves. The voice of the Lord does not urge people to compare the words of the revelations with biblical teachings or to submit them to any rational test whatsoever. There are no proof texts and only now and then a presentation of evidence. The Lord speaks and demands that people listen. They must then decide for themselves to believe or not, without reference to any outside authority—common sense, science, the opinions of the educated elite, tradition. Within the rhetorical space of the revelation, the hearer is left alone, facing the person behind the pure voice, with the choice to hearken or turn away.

Though forced to choose on their own, without the benefit of outside help, those who did believe and became Mormons granted great authority to the revelations. They called them commandments—hence the title *The Book of Commandments*—and depended on them for a lead whenever a decision was to be made. In March 1830, when Martin Harris was disillusioned by the slow sales of the *Book of Mormon*, he told Joseph in a panic, "I want a Commandment." Joseph tried to calm him, but Martin insisted "I must have a Commandment."³⁹6 He meant that he wanted a revelation from God to reassure him about the future success of the book. Whenever there was uncertainty, people came to Joseph with the same request: get a commandment, they said, meaning a revelation. The Prophet had to tell them, as he told Martin, that they should live by what they had received; it was not a light matter to trouble the Lord for new revelations. Ezra Booth, the apostate who wrote in detail about his six months sojourn as a Mormon, said the Church was governed by Joseph's commandments—not his commands, but the commandments, meaning the revelations he received about governance of the Church.⁴⁰7

That confidence attests to the power of the rhetorical space formed by the revelations. The people accepted the voice in the revelation as coming directly from God, investing the highest authority in the revelations, even above Joseph Smith's counsel. In the revelations, they believed, God himself spoke, not a man. Although the believers trusted and loved the Prophet, the request for a commandment shows they believed in the revelations even more. In them they heard the pure voice of God speaking, not just the voice of Joseph their President and Counselor. They had, in other words, accepted the terms of the rhetorical space formed by the revelation. Within that space God spoke directly and forcefully from the heavens with the Prophet himself absent from the space. The believers heard that voice and believed it; in times of stress they wanted to hear it again. In the bleak fall of 1833, when news of the expulsion from Jackson County was filtering into Kirtland, Frederick G. Williams reported sadly that though Joseph was

giving counsel they had not received any revelations for a long time.⁴¹⁸ They depended on those powerful words for sustenance and guidance and during a drought longed for them to come again.

We can wonder how Joseph learned to write these revelations in the pure voice of God without pretending to give reasons or depend on outside authority. Whence the certainty of attack in the opening words of the first written revelation? The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated, neither can they come to naught (D&C 3:1). How did Joseph learn to speak that way at age twenty-two? A few years ago, while visiting my daughter-in-law's family in England, the father of the house mentioned Charlotte Bronte's almost miraculous composition of *Jane Eyre* without any prior training as a novelist, and I thought at once of the parallel to Joseph Smith. Could a young genius simply turn out an original and powerful literary production without preparation? I asked if I could look at a biography of Charlotte Bronte and fortunately their library had one. In the account, I learned that Charlotte, the daughter of a country cleric, began writing stories and essays when she was nine, and she and her sisters put on dramas of their own composition all through their teen-age years. Although untrained and certainly precocious, Charlotte had been writing for a decade before the publication of *Jane Eyre*. We find none of that run up to Joseph Smith's literary productions. At most we have Lucy Smith's report on a few weeks of storytelling in the fall of 1823 when Joseph amused the family with tales about ancient America. None of the neighbors who later reported on Smith family character mentioned Joseph's writing or religious speech. In fact, they gave no explanation for the Book of Mormon and the early revelations at all. Like the Book of Mormon, the revelations came out of the blue.

The early revelations present a problem to cultural historians who want to understand Joseph Smith's works as historical productions. They present another kind of problem to today's readers who, like the first readers of the Book of Commandments, are asked to decide. Will we enter into the revelations' rhetorical space and hearken to the voice of God—or will we turn away and lead our lives in other spaces, heeding other voices than the God of the revelations?

Notes

1. This paper was first given at the Conference on Ancient Scriptures and Modern Revelations, Brigham Young University, 7 June 1997. [p.104]
2. Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1 vols., ed., B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), 1:224,226.
3. Ibid., 226.
4. Ibid., 299. The prayer echoed the regrets of Moroni that the Nephites were not "mighty in writing"; "when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words" (Ether 12:24-25; cf. 2 Nephi 33:1). Moroni spoke for every writer in every age, but most poignantly for the prophets who had to bridge the gulf between divine vision and human language.
5. Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:226.
6. Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 111.
7. Ezra Booth in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled; or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, From its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville: Printed and published by the author, 1834), 177, 181.

8. Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:417.

Homesteading

Laura D. Card

I spring from our dugout door,
shovel blade raised,

Thrust

to sever fangs from coils;

Leap

Two feet further

to snatch infant Lydia in

quaking aspen arms

from Payson dust,

then stagger

into our one chair.

Last night a mouse

ran cross my face,

then James'.

Not one week since

four-year-old Moroni

presented a tarantula

on a juniper branch.

James shook

green scorpions from his

boot this morning

before plowing,

not the first.

There was not such

in all green England

where we owned naught.

Here we own

faith

and 160 acres.

Writing Lesson, 1874, Great Basin

No Paper

Laura D. Card

Charcoal twigs

scrape across small palms—

letters

copied from torn scraps

of *Deseret News*

pasted with flour and water
onto slabs of wood.

The Garden of Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich

Laura D. Card

The call goes out to England,
"Bring seeds of snowball
and potato,
celery and hedgerow,
plum,
as seems you good."
"We have
5,000 peach seedlings
ready to set out."
Yet not one rose,
until she coaxed
Californian cuttings
into bud.
Laura D. Card

Autumn, Olives and The Atonement

Andrew C. Skinner

Autumn is a magnificent time of the year in the Holy Land for many reasons. The intense heat of summer begins to dissipate. Anticipation of change permeates the air. In a normal year, the first or "early" rains usually come in September or October and bring with them the promise of desperately needed, life-sustaining moisture which come from the "regular" rains that fall November through March. With the early rains also comes the season of the olive harvest. And it is this intense activity centering on the olive harvest and oil production that points our minds and hearts to Him who is symbolized by olive culture. The autumn season of harvest, no less than the spring season of Passover, is a graphic reminder of the truth declared by Nephi that all things given of God are a typifying of Christ (2 Ne. 11:4).

The cultivation of olive vineyards and the production of olive oil have a long and honorable history in the Holy Land among all groups of Abraham's posterity. In ancient times, olive trees and olive oil played a significant role in Israel's daily life. (In more modern times, the same could also be said of Ishmael's posterity.) Evidence indicates that olive trees were even more abundant in the Holy Land in Jesus' day than today⁴². The olive tree acted as both a religious and a national symbol for the people of Israel, and its fruit became one of the most important domestic and exported products in the biblical period. In Old Testament times, most houses and virtually every village had a small oil press to supply families with the necessities of life deriving from olive cultivation. By New Testament times stone olive crushers and lever presses were also quite plentiful throughout the land.

In ancient Israel, the olive tree was supreme among all others, as is reflected in scripture. First mentioned in connection with the great flood, the dove released by Noah is described as returning to the ark with an olive leaf in her mouth, signifying that the waters were abating (Gen. 8:11). Thus, by the appearance together of these two symbolic objects, the dove and olive leaf, the promise of continuing life on earth and peace with Deity were assured. Later in the Pentateuch, olive trees are mentioned in the early descriptions of Canaan, signifying both that the land was a holy land of promise given by Deity to Israel, and that the olive tree itself was a gift from God.

And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full (Deut. 6:10-11).

In the Temple built by Solomon, the cherubim placed within the Holy of Holies were made of olive wood (1 Kgs. 6:23). This was the very seat of God's presence, the place of his earthly dwelling, and the connection between Deity and the olive tree surely did not go unnoticed. In both the Tabernacle and the Temple, only "pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always" (Ex. 27:20) was permitted to be used. Furthermore, the entrance or doors to the inner sanctuary of the Temple were constructed of olive wood, as were the jambs to the entrance of the main hall of God's house (1 Kgs. 6:31-33). Olive branches were also used in the construction of booths for people to dwell during the mandated Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8:14-15).

Jeremiah 11:16 indicates that even Israel itself was called by Jehovah "a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit." Later rabbinic commentary expounded on this: "Israel was called 'an olive tree, leafy and fair' because they [Israel] shed light on all" (*Shmot Raba* 36,1).⁴³ This imagery undoubtedly came from the coloration of the olive leaf itself (as well as the fact that the oil was burned for light).

The underside of the olive leaf is covered with miniature whitish scales, while its upper side is dark green. This contrast of shades produces a unique silvery sheen when the wind rustles the leaves of the olive tree. The outer branches, moving in the breeze, expose the silver-colored underside of their leaves, in contrast to the dark green top side of the leaves of the motionless inner branches. These silver clouds of light seem to leap from tree to tree as the wind stirs the leaves, olive tree after olive tree.⁴⁴³

It is not simple happenstance that when Gideon's youngest son, Jotham, climbed Mount Gerizim and proclaimed a parable to the citizens of Shechem, the olive tree was given pride of place.

And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you.

The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us.

But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And

the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? (Judges 9:7-9)

As reflected in this passage, one of the reasons the olive tree was foremost among all others was because it was used to worship God as well as to sustain man. The olive tree and its oil were unequivocally regarded as one of the necessities of life. In fact, nothing from the olive tree went unused in the daily life of Israel. The oil from the fruit (the olives) was used for cooking, lighting, medicine, lubrication, and anointing. Those olives not crushed and pressed were pickled in brine and spices, and then eaten. The wood of the olive tree was not only used in constructing buildings, but also in making furniture, tools, and carvings, and even in crafting the shepherd's crook or staff. In turn, one may truly say that the olive tree was (and continues to be) a staff of life in the Middle East.

Oil Production

Techniques of olive oil production in more modern times suggest the way olives were cultivated, harvested, and processed in ancient times. Olive trees do not mature quickly, and the best yields come only after twelve or more years of patient care—a circumstance that presupposes a certain degree of settlement and peace. But with only a little attention given, an adult olive tree will continue to produce heavily (usually every other year) for many hundreds of years. Yield from a good tree was expected to be anywhere from ten to fifteen gallons of oil each season.⁴⁵

Interestingly, olive trees do not produce the best yields if they are given too much water during the year. Olive trees are hardy and survive—sometimes even thrive—under tremendous stress. Severe frost is harmful to them, but they can withstand long and intense periods of drought. Though it might sound effusive to say so, it is nonetheless true that when one sees an ancient olive tree, gnarled and bent and weather beaten, one feels a certain sense of reverence in the presence of a living thing that has endured so much travail in a hard land. Reputable studies have shown some of the olive trees on the Mount of Olives and in the Garden of Gethsemane to be between 1,800 and 2,300 years old.⁴⁶

Anciently, oil production was a significant and time-consuming undertaking. It consisted of six basic steps or procedures.

1. **Harvesting** the olives, of course leaving some for the poor, the fatherless, the widow, or the sojourner as specifically commanded in scripture (Deut 24:19-21; Leviticus 19:9-10; Ruth 2:2-3). Olives in ancient times were harvested during the period from September to late October, right after the first rains—which signaled the time for the harvest to begin (as they still do according to growers in the Holy Land today). In fact, the cycle of the fanning year is portrayed in one of the oldest, non-biblical, Hebrew inscriptions from the Holy Land, which dates to about the time of King Solomon (tenth century B.C.). It is called the Gezer Calendar and bears the resemblance of a child's ditty to help one remember the months of the agricultural year (similar to our own "Thirty days hath September . . ."). It begins with the olive harvest:

His two months are (olive) harvest,
His two months are planting (grain),
His two months are late planting;
His month is hoeing up of flax,

His month is harvest of barley,
His month is harvest and *feasting*;
His two months are vine-tending,

His month is summer fruit.⁴⁷ 62. **Separating** the olives into two groups—those for pickling and those for crushing.

3. **Crushing** the olives singled out to produce oil so as to make them into a pasty, oily, mash or pulp—pits and all. In Old Testament times, the crushing was usually done either through the use of a millstone, or by pounding from human feet in a rock-hewn press, even a wine-press (Deut. 33:24; Micah 6:15). By New Testament times, crushing was accomplished in a specially designed, carved rock basin called a *yam*. A crushing wheel made of stone was fitted snugly inside the stone basin and was either pushed around the interior of the basin by a strong man or pulled around by a beast of burden.

4. **Gathering** up the crushed pulp from the *yam* and placing it into several flat, round, woven baskets. The baskets, usually about two feet in diameter and three to four inches high, were then stacked, two or three at a time, under one of two traditional kinds of presses—either a lever press or a screw press. The lever press consisted of a long heavy wooden beam with huge stone weights attached to the opposite end of the beam from where the woven baskets were placed. Use of the lever press can be dated to the early Iron Age period (10th century B.C.). However, the screw press is not known to have been used until the late Hellenistic period (first century BC - first century AD).

5. **Pressing** the olive pulp. When pressure was applied to the olive mash located in the woven baskets stacked under the press, the oil then oozed out of the baskets and ran down a shallow channel into a collection pit. To facilitate the flow of the oil, hot water could be poured over the baskets being squeezed. Unlike the production process involving modern hydraulic presses, the pressing procedure in ancient times took many hours, even days, with pressure constantly having to be increased.

6. **Refining** the oil by allowing it to sit for several days in the collection pit before using it. When the oil flowed into the collection basin, it actually consisted of two liquids: the pure olive oil and a heavier, watery, sediment-filled liquid called the "dregs." When the two liquids were allowed to set up or settle, the pure oil rose to the top of the collection pit and was either skimmed off by hand or allowed to spill over into another collecting vat where the settling process was repeated, further refining the oil.

Symbolism

While olive cultivation and oil production inform our understanding of daily life and religious worship in biblical times, there is another aspect of olive culture which gives pause for deeper reflection on the meaning of the olive culture for us today. As Latter-day Saints know, all things testify of the Savior (Moses 6:63). And this is nowhere better demonstrated (or even as well for that matter) than with the cultivation of olive trees and the process of olive oil production. We are taught powerful and lasting lessons about the Savior's life and ministry. For the olive tree and its products, especially the pure oil, are the great symbols of Jesus the Messiah and his Atonement! And when we witness priesthood holders anointing family members and friends, the sick and afflicted, and even those who worship in temples of the Most High, we know to whom those anointings point, and to whom the olive oil points, and to whom the very olive trees point. Anyone who has been in the Holy Land during autumn will likely never forget the unmistakable connections between olives and the Savior. The following are some of the symbolic

relationships: 1. Olives are one of the seven native fruits indigenous to the Holy Land (Deut. 8:8), just as Jesus was a native of the Holy Land. The ancient rabbis likened Judah—the lineage of Jesus—unto the olive tree (Babylonian Talmud, Menahoth, 53b).

2. At least one strand of Jewish tradition identifies the tree of life as the olive tree,⁴⁸⁷ just as the Book of Mormon equates Jesus Christ with the tree of life and identifies his Atonement as the reality behind the symbol of *the fruit* of the tree of life in Lehi's dream (1 Ne. 11:21-22,25-33).

3. Just as Jewish tradition consistently refers to the olive tree as the tree of *light* (*Shmot Raba* 36,1) and a symbol of "light to the world" (*Tankhuma Tzave* 5,1), so too Jesus is *the* "Light of the World" (John 1:4-5, 8:12, 9:5, D&C 11:28). "The *menorah* was lit with 'pure oil of pounded olives'—'not with walnut oil or radish [seed] oil, but only with olive oil which is **a light unto the world.**' However, it is not only the olive oil which gives forth light, but also the olive tree itself."⁴⁹⁸ Among eastern Jews today, olive oil is still the only oil permitted for the eternal lamp in the synagogue. Anciently, Rabbi Tarfon had similarly declared that only pure olive oil could be used for the Sabbath lamps (Mishnah, *Shabbat*26a).⁵⁰⁹

4. Just as the branches that bear the olives have been regarded from earliest times as a universal symbol of peace, so too Jesus is the Prince of Peace whose recognition will someday be universal (Romans 14:11). This is the message of Doctrine and Covenants 88, which "was designated by the Prophet as the 'olive leaf . . . plucked from the Tree of Paradise, the Lord's message of peace to us.'" (See D&C 88 heading.)

5. Just as olives are best picked individually so as not to damage the tree (ideally the olives are not to be stripped from the branches!), so too Christ's love is individual. If one uses alternative methods of harvesting the olives, such as stripping the branches or beating the tree (Deut. 24:20) in order to finish the harvest more quickly, the tree may be damaged⁵¹⁰. As with olives, so too with souls; it takes time and effort on an individual basis to effectively harvest both. But even the process of "beating" the tree is itself a symbol of the atoning act of the Savior (Isaiah 53:4-5), and perhaps that is why it is permitted in the scriptures as a harvesting technique.

6. One of the places Jesus most often visited in Jerusalem was the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:2). It was the place he went with his disciples during the last hours of his life. The name Gethsemane is a contraction of two Hebrew words (*gath* and *shemen*) and literally means "oil press"—or, practically speaking, *olive* oil press since that is the kind of oil that was produced in Gethsemane, which sits at the base of the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39). The connection between the name of the place Jesus went often, what was done there agriculturally, and what he would ultimately do there in the last hours of his mortal life is inescapable.

7. Just as olives were harvested and then bruised and crushed in the *yam*, and the life-fluid of the olives was pressed out under intense pressure in the place called "the oil press," so too the goodness and perfection of Jesus' life was "harvested" in Gethsemane. There *he* was "bruised" (Isaiah 53:5), and there *his* life-fluid, his blood, was pressed out by the crushing weight of sin and the extreme pressure of agony in the garden of the "oil press" (Mark 14:33-35; Luke 22:44).

8. Just as the actual bitter taste of the natural olive pulp is removed or "pressed out" with the pressing process (olives straight from the tree are exquisitely bitter), and the remaining oil actually retains a kind of sweet flavor, so too the bitterness of mortal life,

brought on by both sin and the other effects of the Fall of Adam, was removed or "pressed out" by Christ's Atonement (D&C 19:16-19). As a result of the Atonement both physical death and life beyond the grave become sweet (D&C 42:46). For example, nothing was so "sweet" to Alma as his joy over being redeemed through the Atonement of Christ (Alma 36:19-21).

9. Just as the first hues or color-tones of the oil from the best olives initially run red in the crusher and under the press, so too the perspiration of the best, finest, purest being on earth turned red as he began to bleed from every pore (Luke 22:44). Pure, fresh olive oil is the perfect symbol of Christ's blood which heals our wounds caused by sin, sickness, and death. Those who have been privileged enough to witness a first pressing of the season, when the oil initially flows over the limestone channel on its way to the collection vat, can testify that the color indeed runs red initially—a truly arresting, even chilling, sight. Such imagery turns our thoughts not just to the Savior's first coming, but also to his Second Coming as taught in the scriptures:

And it shall be said: Who is this that cometh down from God in heaven with dyed garments; yea, from the regions which are not known, clothed in his glorious apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?

And he shall say: I am he who spake in righteousness, mighty to save.

And the Lord shall be red in his apparel, and his garments like him that treadeth in the wine-vat....

And his voice shall be heard: I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me (D&C 133:46-48, 50).

The connection in ancient times between oil pressing and ancient wine presses was a real one. Wine presses were sometimes used as oil presses to crush olives when they were trodden out with the feet (Micah 6:15), and thus were regarded as interchangeable.

10. Just as the pressure on the olives under the press became more intense with each passing second, and thus resulted in the olives exuding more of their oil as more pressure was applied, so too the pressure on the Savior in the Garden became more intense over time and put him under greater and greater stress the longer he was in the place called the "oil press" (Luke 22:39-44; Matt. 26:36-45).

11. Just as pure olive oil was used as a great healing agent for the physical body in the ancient world (a concept that the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches in a profound way [see Luke 10:34]), so too the Atonement—the product of the "pressing" process in Gethsemane—is *the* greatest healing agent in all the universe, "worlds without number" (D&C 76:42-43). Christ is truly the "balm of Gilead."

12. Just as the finished product of the olive-pressing process yields the purest and brightest burning of the vegetable oils (a fact known in ancient Israel—Ex. 27:20), so too the pressing process in Gethsemane involved the purest and brightest, even brightest-burning (in terms of eternal glory) of the Father's children.

13. Just as the refined product of bruised, crushed, and pressed olives, *i.e.* pure olive oil, is set apart to consecrate the sick in order to foster healing, so too the purest of God's children was consecrated and set apart in premortality to be bruised, crushed, and pressed for our "sicknesses" and "pains" as well as our sins (Alma 7:11-12) so that we can be healed on the inside as well as the outside.

14. Just as pure olive oil was used in the temple in ancient times for anointing (Lev. 8:6-12), so it is similarly used in the Lord's temples—in those buildings which teach us the most about *the* "Anointed One." Every aspect of LDS temple worship ultimately centers on, is grounded in, and points us to the Savior and his Atonement.

15. In ancient times, Israel anointed her prophets, priests, and kings with olive oil (see as examples Exodus 30:30; 2 Samuel 2:4; 1 Kings 19:16). This was done as a type and foreshadowing of *the* Anointed One to come (Hebrew, *mashiach* or "Messiah"), who was also the true Prophet, Priest, and King of all eternity—as testified of in song ("I know that my Redeemer lives.... He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King," *Hymns*, 136). Jesus was anointed to be the Redeemer (D&C 138:42).

16. Just as Deuteronomy 21:23 foreshadowed the death of the Messiah upon a "tree," so too history and geography (unlike art) teach that Roman crucifixion crosses in Palestine were often solidly rooted olive trees with their excess branches removed, and a crossbar (Latin, *patibulum*) attached. This is the image presented by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians on the merits and mercies of Christ (Gal. 3:13); ironically he describes Jesus—who is symbolized by the olive tree—as being crucified *on* an olive tree.⁵²11

17. In ancient times, olive oil was kept in a horn, the well-recognized and suitable repository for the anointing agent. "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16:13). In ancient Israel anointing with olive oil was linked to the Messiah. And the Hebrew idiom, "horn of salvation," signified the Messiah's great power to judge and save (1 Sam. 2:10; 2 Sam. 22:3; Psalm 18:2, and Psalm 132:17). So too Jesus is symbolized by the "horn"—which represents his power. We note what Zacharias said about the Messiah at the time his own son, John the Baptist, was born: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.

And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (Luke 1:68-69).

18. Just as we, like the ancients, cannot anoint and consecrate ourselves with olive oil in order to perform ordinances on ourselves (we can only anoint and consecrate others), so too only another, the Anointed One, could make an infinite and eternal atonement for us (Alma 34:9-15). As we serve others by anointing them, we imitate the Messiah, who served *not* himself by consecrating his life, but, rather, served us and our needs.

19. Just as the prophets Zenos and Jacob (like Paul in Romans) symbolized the scattering and gathering of Israel through the image of the tame and wild olive trees, so the Book of Mormon teaches that the actual scatterer and gatherer of Israel is Jesus Christ himself, "and all the people who are of the house of Israel, will / gather in, saith the Lord, according to the words of the prophet Zenos" (1 Ne. 19:16, emphasis added). Israel is gathered first and foremost to the Person of Jesus Christ.

20. Just as putting "oil in the lamp" was a common, everyday necessity in the ancient world, so too "oil in the lamp" has become a powerful metaphor signifying faithfulness and readiness for the time of the Anointed One's Second Coming (Matthew 25:1-13). "Wherefore, be faithful, praying always, having your lamps trimmed and burning, and oil with you, that you may be ready at the coming of the Bridegroom" (D&C 33:17; 45:56-57). Metaphorically, we must constantly strive to burn as brightly as though we were vessels containing pure olive oil. **Conclusion**

As those who have lived in or visited the Holy Land know, a person cannot escape the image of the olive tree. Olive vineyards and ancient olive presses seem to be everywhere, and one's heart and mind become acutely attuned to their existence. Especially after witnessing an autumn olive harvest, some of us will never look at olive trees the same way again. We will never regard them as we might have in the past, never view them as being common or an ordinary part of the landscape.

Olive trees are not ordinary; they are extraordinary in an extraordinary land. They are part of the landscape of belief. It is not by accident that we anoint those seeking a blessing with olive oil. Olive trees and the oil derived from them are the most powerful and plentiful symbols in the Holy Land of Jesus Christ—the master healer, one who was born into a land with abundant reminders of his divinity. Olive trees are witnesses of his and his Father's love. Just as olive trees and olive oil were regarded as gifts from God (Deut. 6:10-11; 11:14), so too we realize that the Savior is our greatest gift from God (John 3:16). Just as the olive tree and olive oil sustained life, so the Savior sustains us. In the place called the "(olive) oil-press," Gethsemane, the Savior became like the olive.

Notes

1. At least two major episodes in the history of the Holy Land witnessed the wholesale destruction of olive trees—from which the region never fully recovered. The first occurred during the First Jewish Revolt (a.d. 66-70) when the Roman legions cut down trees all around Jerusalem to fuel the fires which burned the city and destroyed the temple. The second was the period of the so-called "tree-tax" imposed by the Ottoman Empire (ad 1517-1917) in Palestine.
2. Quoted in Nogah Hareuveni, *Nature in Our Biblical Heritage*, trans. Helen Frenkley (Kiryat Ono, Israel: Neot Kedumim, 1981), 139.
3. Ibid., 139.
4. John C. Trevor, "Olive Tree," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed., George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3:592, 596.
5. The following note comes from "Gethsemane's Ancient Olive Trees," *Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 40, No. 2 (May, 1977):50. "Tour guides are inveterate romantics so it is not surprising that the guides to Gethsemane maintain that its grove of olive trees sheltered Christ. They may, in fact, be right. Carbon-14 tests on roots from the trees show that they are 2,300 years old. Such dating is notoriously flexible, but the antiquity of the trees is also supported by Prof. Shimon Lavi, director of the Orchard Department of the Volcani Institute, who estimates that they are between 1600 and 1800 years old, but possibly more."
6. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed., James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 320.
7. Louis Ginsberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), 1:93, 2:119. See also the apocryphal writing *Apocalypse of Moses* 9, 12 where the tree of life is associated with the olive tree.
8. Hareuveni, 134. Bolded words appear in the quotation.
9. "Oil," eds., R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 509.
10. In speaking with "old-timers" in the Holy Land today who know olives, they almost unanimously and emphatically say that the tree should *not* be beaten.

11. Research collected by the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Jerusalem, Israel, and available in their brochure describing their biblical gardens.

¹ *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970), 58.

¹ *Ibid.*, 126-28.

¹ 3. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1 vols.*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), 6:608.

¹ *Ibid.*, 6:244.

¹ *Ibid.*, 5:402.

¹ "A Dedication—to Faith," *1969 BYU Speeches of the Year* (Provo: Brigham Young University Publications, 1969), 6.

¹ Conference Report, April 1971, 94.

¹ Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, April 1998, 31.

¹ See, for example, Neil Postman, *Technopoly* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 42.

¹ "Pedagogy of the Distressed," *College English*, vol. 52 no. 6 (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1991), 654.

¹ This relationship is detailed in a study of leading and guiding in Matthew O. Richardson, "The World Perspective and its Impact on Leadership Conceptions" (Ed.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1996), 101-106.

¹ *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980), 136.

¹ Spencer W. Kimball, "Men of Example," *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 45.

¹ Boyd K. Packer, "The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect," *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981-82), 34. See also D&C 19:22.

¹ Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, Co., 1975), 154.

¹ Elder Holland's full quotation is as follows: "Are we really nurturing our youth and our new members in a way that will sustain them when the stresses of life appear? Or are we giving them a kind of theological Twinkie—spiritually empty calories? President John Taylor once called such teaching 'fried froth,' the kind of thing you could eat all day and yet finish feeling totally unsatisfied." Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, April 1998, 32.

¹ Harold B. Lee, "Loyalty," *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981-82), 64, emphasis in original.

¹ Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 2.

¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹ Ezra Taft Benson, "The Gospel Teacher and His Message," *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981-82), 48.

¹ Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1975, 65.

¹ See, for example, Palmer, 116.

¹ Conference Report, April 1997, 12.

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- ¹ J. Reuben Clark, Jr. "The Charted Course of the Church in Education," in *Charge to Religious Educators*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 7.
- ¹ *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, ed. Cory Maxwell (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997), 338.
- ¹ Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 446, 449-50, emphasis added.
- ¹ Boyd K. Packer, *That All May Be Edified*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 339-40, emphasis in original.
- ¹ *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 138, emphasis added.
- ¹ Unpublished address delivered in Los Angeles, California, 2 January 1969, 9, as cited in *Testimony*, comp. H. Stephen Stoker and Joseph C. Muren (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 139, emphasis added.
- ¹ "Eternal Investments," address given to CES personnel, Salt Lake City, 10 February 1989, 3, emphasis in original.
- ¹ *Teach Ye Diligently* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1975), 275.
- ¹ *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 313.
- ¹ *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971), 205-6.
- ¹ See *Gospel Ideals: Selections from the Discourses of David O. McKay* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953), 21-22.
- ¹ *Matthew Cowley Speaks: Discourses of Elder Matthew Cowley of the Quorum of the Twelve of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971), 298-99.
- ¹ Conference Report, April 1970, 113.
- ¹ Bruce R. McConkie, Conference Report, October 1972, 21.
- ¹ Bruce R. McConkie, Conference Report, April 1985, 12.
- ¹ Harold B. Lee, *Improvement Era*, Oct. 1962, 742.
- ¹ Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976), 256.
- ¹ James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-75), 3:145.
- ¹ *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards & Sons, 1851-86), 13:158.
- ¹ *The Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 65.
- ¹ Neal A. Maxwell, *Notwithstanding My Weakness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981), 59-60.
- ¹ . Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980), 127.
- ¹ Hugh Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, ed. John Welch, vol. 8 in *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. and F.A.R.M.S., 1989), 281-82. A photograph of the first part of this document and a partial translation can be found in Yigal Yadin, *Bar Kokhba* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 176.

¹ Paul Hoskisson, "Alma as a Hebrew Name," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, 72-73. This article includes a fine color photograph of the entire document.

¹ On the reading al₆ see Joachim Krecher, "Sumerogramme und Syllabische Orthographic in den Texten aus Ebla," *La Lingua di Ebla*, Series Minor XXII, ed. Luigi Cagni (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, 1981), 142.

¹ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 124.

¹ Jon Paulien, "Nicodemus," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1105.

¹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 729-30.

¹ Paulien, 4:1106.

¹ Morris, 187-88, 137-38.

¹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, The Anchor Bible Series (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 483-84.

¹ David O. McKay, Conference Report, April 1959, 48.

¹ For other examples of the 'hesitant interpretation,' see the following: *The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 93. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1962), 163. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1976), 1:141.

² Conference Report, April 1958, 13-17.

³ *Ensign*, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, May 1998, 69-70.

⁴ This is a reduced version of a presentation I gave to the faculty of Religious Education in September 1996. I had circulated written versions of the presentation as early as May 1996 among colleagues for their comments.

⁵ Traditionally, as Elder McConkie in *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 130, has stated, there are three reasons that Christ the Son also bears the title Father: 1) He is the "Creator... of the heavens and of the earth," 2) "He is the Father of all those who are born again," and 3) He is the Father because of "divine investiture." See also the important and more thorough statement dated 30 June 1916 by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles recorded in James R. Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 5:25-34. Sometimes I have heard a fourth reason (similar to Elder McConkie's second reason), that Christ is the Father because he is the Father of the Atonement, just as George Washington is the Father of the United States. The reason Abinadi applied the title Father to Christ in this passage is different than these four, making this a fifth reason. This paper will make the fifth reason clear.

⁶ This and all subsequent scriptural references refer to Mosiah in the Book of Mormon, unless specifically noted otherwise.

⁷ For other references to Christ as the Only Begotten Son of God see Jacob 4:5 and 11; John 1:14 and 18.

⁸ See also D&C 93:4, where Christ states that he is "the Father because he 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."

⁹ See also *Lectures on Faith*, 5:2. Christ "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."

¹⁰ "Spirit" here does not refer to the spirit person that we were in the premortal life. It refers rather to a characteristic or an aspect of Christ's divine nature which he inherited as the Only Begotten. Another way of stating this would be "spiritual nature" versus "mortal nature." This distinction is obvious for "spiritually" versus "naturally" in Moses 3:5. Compare Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 756-761; and Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 14th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 432.

¹¹ That is why Amulek could say "there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice" (Alma 34:10). Christ, if he were only a mortal like all other mortals, could not have performed a sacrifice to atone for mankind. It was because of his immortal nature that his sacrifice was infinite and eternal.

¹² A colleague in Religious Educational Brigham Young University, reminded me of this passage. Note also Christ's words on the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46).

¹³ For a similar listing see Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 192.

¹⁴ The Atonement, if it is to be effected by a valid sacrifice, must be freely given (as all sacrifices must be freely given to be valid). If the Savior's life could be taken from him by force, then his death would be involuntary and not a sacrifice. Thus he said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again" (John 10:17). It was not enough that he had the ability to simply walk away from captivity and death. It was not enough that he allowed himself to be placed in the hands of the executioners. He also had to choose, he had to will, temporal death. For this reason, crucifixion, though we are repulsed by the vile aspects of this form of execution, was probably the only type of execution that gave the Savior the choice of whether to die or not to die. To the casual observer, it would have appeared that Christ had been executed by crucifixion. However, to those like Abinadi who understood the nature of Christ's sacrifice, his death on the cross was an act of his own will and not of the executioners. This recognition is hinted at in Mark 15:39 for the Roman centurion attending the crucifixion, when he stated, "Truly this man was the Son of God." There may be other forms of execution that would fulfil the requirements just outlined, but I am unaware of any.

¹⁵ See King Benjamin's delivery of the words of an angel of God on the Atonement in Mosiah 3. Verses 8 and 9 especially reveal a knowledge of the doctrine Abinadi taught. See also Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11, Alma's speech in Alma 7, Amulek's understanding in Alma 34:9-10 and Alma's explanation of the atonement to his son in Alma 42, especially verse 15. It should be noted that Abinadi may not have had access to any of

these discourses, with the exception of 1 Nephi 11. But he could have drawn upon the same source of inspiration for this doctrine that was available to Alma and Amulek.

¹⁶ *Deseret News Church Section*, 1 August 1931, 4, as cited in G. Homer Durham, (comp.) *Gospel Standards*, (1976), 229.

¹⁷ Conference Report, October 1907, 25.

¹⁸ Conference Report, October 1917, 26.

¹⁹ Conference Report, April 1922, 15.

²⁰ Conference Report, October 1924, 5-6.

²¹ Conference Report, April 1928, 5.

²² Conference Report, October 1929, 3.

²³ Conference Report, October 1913, 87-88.

²⁴ Conference Report, October 1925, 3.

²⁵ Conference Report, April 1929, 88; Daniel C. Peterson, *Abraham Divided* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1992), 331-39.

²⁶ *Deseret News Church Section*, 1 August 1931, 4, as cited in *Gospel Standards*, 152-153.

²⁷ Conference Report, October 1933, 9-10.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

²⁹ Conference Report, October 1935, 11.

³⁰ Conference Report, April 1930, 183, October 1934, 6. President Grant thanked Tribune writers for their fair and comprehensive coverage of the Church on its centennial anniversary. He thanked Roman Catholic officials for their tributes to counselor Anthony W. Ivins and for tolling the bells of the splendid Cathedral of the Madeleine as the funeral cortege of Elder Ivins passed by. Graciously, Roman Catholic officials also tolled the Cathedral bells during President Grant's funeral procession. See Francis M. Gibbons, *Heber J. Grant: Man of Steel, Prophet of God* (1979), 231-32.

³¹ Gibbons, 227.

³² Conference Report, October 1943, 125.

³³ In April 1990 general conference, President James E. Faust observed that "the expression of kindness is universally appropriate." See *Ensign*, May 1990, 86.

³⁴ This paper was first given at the Conference on Ancient Scriptures and Modern Revelations, Brigham Young University, 7 June 1997.

³⁵ Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1 vols., ed., B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), 1:224,226.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 226.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 299. The prayer echoed the regrets of Moroni that the Nephites were not "mighty in writing"; "when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words" (Ether 12:24-25; cf. 2 Nephi 33:1). Moroni spoke for every writer in every age, but most poignantly for the prophets who had to bridge the gulf between divine vision and human language.

³⁸ Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:226.

³⁹ Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 111.

⁴⁰ Ezra Booth in Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled; or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, From its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville: Printed and published by the author, 1834), 177, 181.

⁴¹ Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:417.

⁴² At least two major episodes in the history of the Holy Land witnessed the wholesale destruction of olive trees—from which the region never fully recovered. The first occurred during the First Jewish Revolt (a.d. 66-70) when the Roman legions cut down trees all around Jerusalem to fuel the fires which burned the city and destroyed the temple. The second was the period of the so-called "tree-tax" imposed by the Ottoman Empire (ad 1517-1917) in Palestine.

⁴³ Quoted in Nogah Hareuveni, *Nature in Our Biblical Heritage*, trans. Helen Frenkley (Kiryat Ono, Israel: Neot Kedumim, 1981), 139.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁴⁵ John C. Trevor, "Olive Tree," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed., George A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 3:592, 596.

⁴⁶ The following note comes from "Gethsemane's Ancient Olive Trees," *Biblical Archaeologist*, vol. 40, No. 2 (May, 1977):50. "Tour guides are inveterate romantics so it is not surprising that the guides to Gethsemane maintain that its grove of olive trees sheltered Christ. They may, in fact, be right. Carbon-14 tests on roots from the trees show that they are 2,300 years old. Such dating is notoriously flexible, but the antiquity of the trees is also supported by Prof. Shimon Lavi, director of the Orchard Department of the Volcani Institute, who estimates that they are between 1600 and 1800 years old, but possibly more."

⁴⁷ *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed., James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 320.

⁴⁸ Louis Ginsberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), 1:93, 2:119. See also the apocryphal writing *Apocalypse of Moses* 9, 12 where the tree of life is associated with the olive tree.

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⁵⁰ "Oil," eds., R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 509.

⁵¹ In speaking with "old-timers" in the Holy Land today who know olives, they almost unanimously and emphatically say that the tree should *not* be beaten.

⁵² Research collected by the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Jerusalem, Israel, and available in their brochure describing their biblical gardens.