

THE 2020 SIDNEY B. SPERRY SYMPOSIUM

How and What You Worship

Christology and Praxis in the Revelations of Joseph Smith

Call for Proposals

On 6 May 1833, Joseph Smith received a revelation which clarified Johannine teachings about Christ. It taught truths meant to help early Church members “understand and know how to worship and know what [they] worship” (D&C 93:19). This revelatory reworking of the Prologue of John (John 1:1–18) shed light on both the subject of worship as well as the process of how to worship that subject. Although the immediate context of the revelation remains obscure, it uncovered truths about the nature of Christ, who “continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness,” and linked those truths to the process of worship by instructing its audience to keep Christ’s commandments, which would allow them to “receive grace for grace.” In addressing both the who and the how of worship, the revelation deals with concepts that scholars term christology and praxis. Christology has to do with the study of the nature and mission of Christ. In light of Joseph Smith’s revelations, this study necessarily involves attention to the spiritual and intellectual quest (D&C 88:118) to “know” the Savior (John 17:3). That the revelation should insist on the “how” of worship indicates that praxis is inseparable from the knowledge of Christ: as King Benjamin taught, it is a mark of discipleship, the outward manifestation of knowledge (Mosiah 5:15). This relationship is emphasized throughout scripture, and the revelations of Joseph Smith constitute a unique scriptural setting to analyze the relationship between knowledge and practice. With this in mind, the 2020 Sperry Symposium, which will be held at Brigham Young University October 23–24, 2020, will focus on both the person of Christ and the practice of worshiping him as outlined in the revelations of Joseph Smith. For the purpose of this symposium, “the revelations of Joseph Smith” will be understood as modern revelations received by the prophet. Strong proposals will make such revelations the central focus of their arguments, without necessarily excluding the dialogic nature of such revelations with other scriptures or the precisions they bring. More specifically, this symposium and the anticipated volume seek to understand Christ in the revelations to the first prophet of the restoration, and elucidate the practices—understood both as ordinances and daily attitudes—required of those who worship a being who grew “from grace to grace.”

Authors of Sperry papers are encouraged to find the appropriate balance between responsible scholarship and the interests of nonspecialists who are looking for accessible and engaging substance with a believing dimension. See the reverse side for a list of suggested topics. Proposals should take the form of an abstract of no more than 300 words containing all of the following: (1) the main thesis of your paper/presentation, (2) a brief outline of the components supporting your main thesis, (3) a summary of your methodology as well as the primary and secondary sources you will consult as evidence and support, and (4) a brief statement concerning how your study will make a significant contribution to previous scholarship on the work of worship and the person of Jesus Christ in Joseph Smith’s revelations. Following the abstract, please include a short separate statement (25–50 words) outlining your background, qualifications, or preparation so far to address this subject (you should already have completed some research in preparation for writing the proposal).

Please include the following information in the heading of your proposal: name, address, phone number, email address, and a working title for your paper. Proposals must be submitted electronically, as an attached Word or PDF document, to Beverly Yellowhorse at beverly_yellowhorse@byu.edu on or before **February 4, 2019**. Each submitter will be notified of his or her proposal’s status by **March 4, 2019**. Those whose proposals are accepted for presentation at the symposium must submit final papers, ranging between 15 and 25 pages in length (double-spaced) by **September 2, 2019**. All papers will receive blind peer review by two external reviewers and will be read by the Sperry Symposium Committee. Based upon review, papers will be (1) accepted, (2) accepted with revisions, or (3) rejected. Some of the selected papers will also be featured in the symposium publication, to be released prior to the conference. Proposals and papers must be consistent with the doctrines and practices of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Potential paper topics could include but are not limited to

1. Christ as Creator
2. The mortal Christ
3. The rejected Christ
4. The suffering and descending Christ
5. The resurrected Christ
6. Jesus as the Son of God and the Son of Man
7. Jesus as Mediator and Advocate
8. Jesus as Savior and Redeemer
9. Jesus as Judge and King
10. Jesus as Alpha and Omega
11. Christ and consecration
12. Divine embodiment
13. Soteriology
14. Imitatio Christi (deification, divinization, theosis)
15. Christ as chastizer and comforter
16. Christ as a being who grows “from grace to grace”
17. Christ, ecclesia, and ecclesiology (or Christ and ecclesia)

Questions can be addressed to members of the 2020 Sperry Symposium Committee:

Rachel Cope, chair
rachel_cope@byu.edu

Carter Charles
carter_charles@byu.edu

Jordan Watkins
jordan_watkins@byu.edu

Beverly Yellowhorse
beverly_yellowhorse@byu.edu