



# WHAT WE WORSHIP

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**I**N HIS GREAT Intercessory Prayer, Jesus pleaded with the Father to make his disciples one as they (the Father and the Son) were one. It was earlier in that same prayer that Jesus uttered the following timeless words: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). This is a tremendously important message. In the end, it will matter precious little what we know about a myriad of things if we have not come to know, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the God we worship. This is one of the great purposes of mortality and thus the quest of a lifetime. It is in this life that we prepare to meet God (see Alma 34:32), that we come to know him and thereby

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to grasp what we worship, to comprehend whom we worship (see D&C 93:19).

St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Christian philosopher and theologian, taught that in the long run we cannot really know what God is, only *what he is not*.<sup>1</sup> While I tend to disagree with Aquinas on this—especially in light of the above passage in John 17—it may be just as important to know what the Lord *is not* as to know what he is. In that light, let us consider some things that the Lord Jesus Christ is *not*.

1. *Jesus Christ is not a cosmic errand boy*. I mean no disrespect or irreverence in so saying, but I do intend to convey the idea that while he loves us deeply and dearly, Christ the Lord is not perched on the edge of heaven, anxiously anticipating our next wish. When we speak of God being *good* to us, we generally mean that he is *kind* to us. In the words of the inimitable C. S. Lewis, “What would really satisfy us would be a god who said of anything we happened to like doing, ‘What does it matter so long as they are contented?’ We want, in fact, not so much a father in heaven as a grandfather in heaven—a senile benevolence who as they say, ‘liked to see young people enjoying themselves,’ and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, ‘a good time was had by all.’”<sup>2</sup> You know and I know that our Lord is much, much more than that.

One writer observed:

When we so emphasize Christ’s benefits that he becomes nothing more than what his significance

is ‘for me’ we are in danger. . . . Evangelism that says “come on, it’s good for you”; discipleship that concentrates on the benefits package; sermons that “use” Jesus as the means to a better life or marriage or job or attitude—these all turn Jesus into an expression of that nice god who always meets my spiritual needs. And this is why I am increasingly hesitant to speak of Jesus as my *personal Lord and Savior*. As Ken Woodward put it in a 1994 essay, “Now I think we all need to be converted—over and over again, but having a personal Savior has always struck me as, well, elitist, like having a personal tailor. I’m satisfied to have the same Lord and Savior as everyone else.” Jesus is not a personal Savior who only seeks to meet my needs. He is the risen, crucified Lord of all creation who seeks to guide me back into the truth.<sup>3</sup>

How we view God is critical. As in most areas of our existence, balance is vital. On the one hand, our God is God: he is omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and, by means of his Holy Spirit, omnipresent (everywhere present). At the same time, as Enoch learned so poignantly, he is there when we need him (see Moses 7:30). His infinity does not preclude either his immediacy or his intimacy. One man stated that “I want neither a terrorist spirituality that keeps me in a perpetual state of fright about being in right relationship with my heavenly Father nor a sappy spirituality that portrays God

as such a benign teddy bear that there is no aberrant behavior or desire of mine that he will not condone.”<sup>4</sup>

2. *Jesus was not just a Galilean guru, nor was he a Samaritan Socrates.* It is indeed fascinating to read the New Testament Gospels, looking specifically for such things as what Jesus said, how he said it, how he responded to questions, and how he dealt with criticism and ridicule. To be sure, Jesus Christ was one bright man. He seemed to always have the right answer for the situation. But he was more than a teacher, more than an inspiring teacher, more than a great moral teacher. He was the Son of God, God the Son. That means he was more than a composite of intelligent answers, more than walking wisdom. In him was understanding and insight, but, more important, inside him were the powers of godliness, the powers of immortality.

I have traveled a good deal and met many persons of other faiths throughout the world, as well as many extremely bright and notable personalities who claim to have no faith at all. When the conversation turns to the person and powers of Jesus of Nazareth, too often I have heard what has become to me almost a laughable declaration: “I think Jesus was an extremely intelligent man, a great peacemaker, and a dispenser of gems of wisdom. But I do not believe he was God.” There is a simple syllogism that applies to Jesus. It goes something like this: He was a great moral teacher. He claimed to be the Son of God. He was not the Son of God. Therefore he could not be a great moral teacher. Robert Stein has written:

On the lips of anyone else the claims of Jesus would appear to be evidence of gross egomania, for Jesus clearly implies that the entire world revolves around himself and that the fate of all men is dependent on their acceptance or rejection of him. . . . There seem to be only two possible ways of interpreting the totalitarian nature of the claims of Jesus. Either we must assume that Jesus was deluded and unstable with unusual illusions of grandeur or we are faced with the realization that Jesus is truly One who speaks with divine authority, who actually divided all of history into B.C.–A.D., and whose rejection or acceptance determines the fate of all men.<sup>5</sup>

Stripped of his divinity, his teachings concerning his own Godhood, the performance of miracles, forgiveness of sins, or his actual bodily resurrection, why would Jesus of Nazareth be so controversial? Why would people dislike such a man? Why on earth would he be crucified? I have wondered over the years how so many who read the same New Testament I do could conjure up a Jesus who is basically a simple, non-directive counselor, a sensitive ecologist who came to earth to model quiet pacifism. John Meier has written:

While I do not agree with those who turn Jesus into a violent revolutionary or political agitator, scholars who favor a revolutionary Jesus do have a point. A tweedy poetaster who spent his life spinning out

parables and Japanese koans, a literary aesthete who toyed with first-century deconstructionism, or a bland Jesus who simply told people to look at the lilies of the field—such a Jesus would threaten no one, just as the university professors who create him threaten no one. The historical Jesus did threaten, disturb, and infuriate people—from interpreters of the Law through the Jerusalem priestly aristocracy to the Roman prefect who finally tried and crucified him. . . . A Jesus whose words and deeds would not alienate people, especially powerful people, is not the historical Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

“You can shut Him up for a fool,” C. S. Lewis declared, “you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”<sup>7</sup>

Jesus Christ is our Exemplar, the One identified by Joseph Smith as the prototype of all saved beings.<sup>8</sup> He did come to earth to show us the way, for he is the way (see John 14:6). But he is not just the model citizen. “Holding up Jesus as an example of how to live a moral life,” N. T. Wright explained,

seems rather like holding up Tiger Woods as an example of how to hit a golf ball. Even if I started now and practiced for eight hours a day, it is highly unlikely that I would ever be able to do what Woods

can do; and there are many people out there, younger and fitter than I, who are trying their hardest to do it and still find they can't. Similarly, watching Jesus . . . makes most of us, all but the most proud or ambitious, feel like we do when watching Tiger Woods hit a golf ball. Only more so. . . .

What's more, that we treat Jesus as a moral example can be, and in some people's thinking has been, a way of holding at arm's length the message of God's kingdom on the one hand and the meaning of his death and resurrection on the other. Making Jesus the supreme example of someone who lived a good life may be quite bracing to contemplate, but it is basically *safe*: it removes the far more dangerous challenge of supposing that God might actually be coming to transform this earth, and us within it, with the power and justice of heaven. . . . Jesus as "moral example" is a *domesticated* Jesus, a kind of religious mascot.

Further, Jesus "doesn't go about saying, 'This is how it's done; copy me.' He says, 'God's kingdom is coming; take up your cross and follow me.'"<sup>9</sup>

3. *Jesus is not "religious."* Let me explain what I mean. The Latin word *religio* originally referred to a binding obligation, a rather special obligation. In that sense, religion represents man's effort to apply true principles and doctrines in order to enable people to keep their obligations, their covenants with

the Almighty. You may recognize in the word *religion* the root for another word that we know quite well—the word *ligament*. A ligament is a fibrous tissue that binds or links bone to cartilage or that holds organs in place. Thus the true purpose of God-ordained religion is to link or tie mortal men and women to an immortal, glorified Deity. As the Apostle James taught, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep [oneself] unspotted from the vices of the world” (Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:27). In other words, pure religion deals with two main aspects of our lives: how we treat other people, and to what extent we strive to remain free from sin in a sinful world. In this sense, God clearly is religious.

Too often, however, religion has been separated off from everyday life and simply made into another aspect or dimension of our lives. Thus we speak of our intellectual life, our athletic life, our social life, and our religious life. Religion is thus one of the pieces of the larger pie. Authentic Christianity, Brennan Manning observed, is not “a code of do’s and don’ts, not a tedious moralizing, not a list of forbidding commandments, and certainly not the necessary minimum requirement for avoiding the pains of hell. Life in the Spirit is the thrill and the excitement of being loved by and falling in love with Jesus Christ.”<sup>10</sup> True religion represents our link with God, our tie to the Infinite, and thus should and must inform and impact every other phase of our existence. In other words, religion is not something we do on Sunday, while we go about our business



the other six days of the week. As Latter-day Saints, our religion is life, a 24/7 life.

One of the great challenges we Latter-day Saints face as a Church is a happy challenge—the challenge of Church growth. Not only does this mean we have to prepare more and more young people to serve full-time missions and more new converts to serve as leaders, but we must also see to it that we do not allow the Church or our personal lives to be directed solely by rules and written regulations. This is the Lord’s Church, and he is at the head. Because it is his Church, it is to be conducted according to his plan and under his direction, through the Holy Spirit. If we become so sterile and fossilized in the way we do things in the Church, we may lose that marvelous spiritual spontaneity that should and must accompany the body of Christ (see Moroni 6:9; D&C 46:2). Pure religion is far less concerned with what we do than with who and what we are and what we are becoming.<sup>11</sup> Pure religion is a thing of the heart.

Pure religion is all about worship. Someone has observed that “what we’re ‘here for’ is to become genuine human beings, reflecting the God in whose image we’re made, and doing so in worship on the one hand and in mission, in its full and large sense, on the other; and that we do this not least by ‘following Jesus.’ The way this works out is that it produces, through the work of the Holy Spirit, a transformation of character. This transformation will mean that we do indeed ‘keep the rules’—though not out of a sense of externally imposed ‘duty,’ but out of the character that has been formed within us.” The writer

continues by pointing out that human character “is the pattern of thinking and acting which runs right through someone, so that wherever you cut into them (as it were), you see the same person through and through. Its opposite would be superficiality: we all know people who present themselves at first glance as honest, cheerful, patient, or whatever, but when you get to know them better you come to realize that they’re only ‘putting it on,’ and that when faced with a crisis, or simply when their guard is down, they’re as dishonest, grouchy, and impatient as the next person.”<sup>12</sup>

Archbishop William Temple is reported to have said: “It is a great mistake to think that God is chiefly interested in religion.” In commenting on this statement, Barbara Brown Taylor has written: “What may matter more are the everyday ways we rise to our work, serving one another with gladness and singleness of heart, so that the life we share goes on working, not for any of us alone but for all of us together.”<sup>13</sup>

4. *Jesus is not just my Elder Brother.* Latter-day Saints have insight into our eternal existence that persons of other faiths do not possess. For example, many of the things that happen to us in this life, including traumas and tragedies, are viewed with a more elevated perspective, given what we know about the fact that we lived as spirits before we were born in mortality. In our first estate, our premortal existence, we were taught, trained, and prepared to come to earth and take on a wondrous mortal body, all as a very significant part of the overall plan of salvation. John the Beloved opened his Gospel

with this statement: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1–3). That is, in the premortal life Christ, here designated as the Word, was with our Heavenly Father. In fact, Christ was God in that first estate. As God and leader of the "noble and great ones" (Abraham 3:22; 4:1), he created "worlds without number" (Moses 1:33; 7:30; compare Hebrews 1:1–3). It is theologically appropriate, therefore, to refer to Jesus Christ as our elder brother as pertaining to the premortal life.

It is of great interest to me, however, that of the almost one hundred names given to our Lord and Savior by the Nephite prophets, the phrase "elder brother" is never used once. He is called the Almighty, the Almighty God, Alpha and Omega, Creator, Eternal Father, Eternal God, Eternal Head, Eternal Judge, Everlasting God, Father of heaven and of earth, God, God of Abraham, God of nature, Holy Messiah, Holy One of Israel, Immanuel, Keeper of the Gate, Lamb of God, Lord God Almighty, Lord God Omnipotent, Lord God of Hosts, Mighty One of Israel, Most High God, Redeemer of Israel, Supreme Being, True and Living God, True Messiah, but never "elder brother." In other words, I am convinced that because the Nephites looked upon Christ with such awe and viewed him with such majesty, it may not have seemed appropriate to them to refer to him as elder brother; he was God.

Elder M. Russell Ballard explained:

We occasionally hear some members refer to Jesus as our Elder Brother, which is a true concept based on our understanding of the premortal life with our Father in Heaven. But like many points of gospel doctrine, that simple truth doesn't go far enough in terms of describing the Savior's role in our present lives and His great position as a member of the Godhead. Thus, some non-LDS Christians are uncomfortable with what they perceive as a secondary role for Christ in our theology. They feel that we view Jesus as a spiritual peer. They believe that we view Christ as an implementer for God, if you will, but that we don't view Him as God to us and to all mankind, which, of course, is counter to biblical testimony about Christ's divinity. Let me help us understand, with clarity and testimony, our belief about Jesus Christ. We declare He is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Creator, the Savior, the Captain of our Salvation, the Bright and Morning Star. He has taught us that He is in all things, above all things, through all things and round about all things, that He is Alpha and Omega, the Lord of the Universe, the first and the last relative to our salvation, and that His name is above every name and is in fact the only name under heaven by which we can be saved. . . .

Now we can understand why some Latter-day Saints have tended to focus on Christ's Sonship as

opposed to His Godhood. As members of earthly families, we can relate to Him as a child, as a Son, and as a Brother because we know how that feels. We can personalize that relationship because we ourselves are children, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. For some it may be more difficult to relate to Him as a God. And so in an attempt to draw closer to Christ and to cultivate warm and personal feelings toward Him, some tend to humanize Him, sometimes at the expense of acknowledging His Divinity. So let us be very clear on this point: it is true that Jesus was our Elder Brother in the premortal life, but we believe that in this life it is crucial that we become “born again” as His sons and daughters in the gospel covenant.<sup>14</sup>

5. *Christ is not “my buddy.”* There is a natural tendency, and it is a dangerous one, to seek to bring Jesus down to our level in an effort to draw closer to him. This is a problem among people both in and outside the LDS faith. Of course we should seek with all our hearts to draw near to him. Of course we should strive to set aside all barriers that would prevent us from closer fellowship with him. And of course we should pray and labor and serve in an effort to close the gap between what we are and what we should be. But drawing close to the Lord is serious business; we nudge our way into intimacy at the peril of our souls.

There are a number of gospel ironies in the scriptures. One of them is the irony that only those who lose their lives in service to the Lord find eternal life (see Matthew 16:25–26). Jesus said on one occasion that he came not to bring peace but to bring a sword “to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother. . . . And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household” (Matthew 10:34–36). How odd! Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and everyone knows that he above all would want family members to be close, to be united. He is teaching, however, that sometimes there is a cost associated with receiving and living the gospel, a price that may indeed separate you from those you love most.

Another gospel irony is that the way to get close to the Lord is not by attempting in any way to shrink the distance between us, to emphasize more of his humanity than his divinity, or to speak to him or of him in casual, colloquial language. In fact, as King Benjamin explained, you and I are enabled to retain a remission of sins from day to day by recognizing Christ’s magnificence, majesty, and power and the fact that we are unprofitable servants who are less than the dust of the earth (see Mosiah 2:20–25; 4:11–12). Perhaps the greatest lesson that the mighty lawgiver Moses learned was a lesson that followed a transcendent encounter with Deity and a panoramic vision of God’s creations. “And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this cause I know

that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed" (Moses 1:10).

The scriptures teach that our God is a consuming fire (see Hebrews 12:28–29). "This is no Christ the humanitarian, Christ the master of interpersonal relationships, or Christ the buddy. It is Christ the Lord and Savior who calls us to repent, change our lives, and strike out in a new direction."<sup>15</sup> Those who have come to know the Lord best—the prophets or covenant spokesmen—are also those who speak of him in reverent tones, who, like Isaiah, find themselves crying out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5). Coming into the presence of the Almighty is no light thing; we feel to respond soberly to God's command to Moses: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained, "Those who truly love the Lord and who worship the Father in the name of the Son by the power of the Spirit, according to the approved patterns, maintain a reverential barrier between themselves and all the members of the Godhead."<sup>16</sup>

This is a terribly difficult balance to strike. We want, ever so much, to be close to the Lord. We seek, ever so diligently, spiritual fellowship with the Father and the Son (see 1 John 1:3). And yet we dare not presume upon the dignity and divinity of Deity.

6. *Jesus Christ is not the "god of the gaps."* Several years ago my colleague Stephen Robinson and I were invited to spend the day in conversation with representatives of the Southern Baptist Convention. We talked together for about seven hours that day, and some of the time was pleasant. At a certain point in the conversation, however, one of our Baptist friends made the comment, "But of course you folks do not believe in the grace of Jesus Christ." Steve and I both leaned forward in our chairs and proceeded to try to convince our friend that in fact we did believe in and teach the importance of salvation by the grace of Christ. At that point one of his associates responded: "Yes, we understand, you believe in and worship the god of the gaps." I replied: "I have never heard that before in my life. Who or what is the god of the gaps?" He went on to explain that it was his understanding that Latter-day Saints believed in a kind of works righteousness, that men and women are to do everything they can and expend all of their efforts and then Jesus would fill in the remaining deficit. An hour later, and after seeking again and again to dissuade them from their caricature of Mormonism, we realized that we had failed.

Of course Jesus Christ, the One who makes all the difference in our salvation, will make up the difference at the time of judgment, at least for those who have come to trust in and rely upon him. But too often I fear that Latter-day Saints think that men and women are expected to do their 85 or 90 percent and leave the remainder, a small percentage, for Jesus to handle. This is incorrect and misleading, inasmuch as it causes us to



overstate our own role in salvation and grossly understate the role of him who has bought us with his blood. The scripture that seems to lend itself to this misunderstanding, is, oddly enough, 2 Nephi 25:23: “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.”

I have met members throughout the Church who suppose that this means that Christ can only help us on the Day of Judgment when we have expended our best efforts and done everything we know how to do. First of all, who will have done everything they could have done? Who will have spent every waking hour of every day of every year serving God tirelessly and tenaciously? Only one person fits this bill, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ himself; he was the only one to live a perfectly sinless life. I sincerely believe that what Nephi is trying to teach is that we are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ—his unmerited divine favor, his unearned divine assistance, his enabling power—above and beyond all we can do, notwithstanding all we can do, in spite of all we can do. Too often we are prone to think of grace as the Lord’s final boost into celestial glory hereafter. To be sure, we will need all the divine help we can get in order to qualify to go where God and angels are. But the grace of God is extended to you and me every hour of every day and is not limited to the bar of judgment.

Let me say this another way: If there had been no Atonement of Christ, no amount of good works on our part could ever, worlds without end, make up for the loss. “No matter how hard we work,” Elder Ballard has pointed out, “no matter how much we obey, no matter how many good things we do in this life, it would not be enough were it not for Jesus Christ and His loving grace. On our own we cannot earn the kingdom of God—no matter what we do. Unfortunately, there are some within the Church who have become so preoccupied with performing good works that they forget that those works—as good as they may be—are hollow unless they are accompanied by a complete dependence on Christ.”<sup>17</sup>

Similarly, Elder Dallin H. Oaks observed: “Men and women unquestionably have impressive powers and can bring to pass great things. But after all our obedience and good works, we cannot be saved from death or the effects of our individual sins without the grace extended by the atonement of Jesus Christ. . . . In other words, salvation does not come simply by keeping the commandments. . . . Man cannot earn his own salvation.”<sup>18</sup>

Now having emphasized that one of the burdens of holy scripture, ancient and modern, is that we are saved by merit, but not our own merit; that salvation is free (see 2 Nephi 2:4), that eternal life is a gift, indeed, the greatest of all the gifts of God (see D&C 6:13; 14:7); and that there is consummate peace in trusting in and relying upon the goodness of God our Savior, I hasten to add that one of the scandals of the Christian world, a scandal into which we cannot afford to slide, is a seeming

disregard for the simple statement of the Master: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). In an effort not to supplement in any way the finished work of Jesus Christ, many of our Christian friends have created their own hyperorthodoxy of language and practically outlawed such words as work or labor or obedience or commandment keeping. The result is that the Christian message in the world has become less and less appealing, for the men and women who claim Christian status do not seem to live, on the whole, any differently than worldly people.<sup>19</sup> Their speech is impressive, but their personal lives leave much to be desired. Easy believism and cheap grace have replaced the depth of discipleship demanded by Deity.

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as he finds us, which is (more or less) messy, muddy, and singing out of tune. Even when we have tried to be good, we have often only made matters worse, adding (short-lived) pride to our other failures. And the never-ending wonder at the heart of genuine Christian living is that God has come to meet us right there, in our confusion of pride and fear, of mess and muddle and downright rebellion and sin. That's the point of the Christian gospel, the good news. . . . God's love comes to us where we are in Jesus Christ, and all we have to do is accept it. But when we accept it—when we welcome the new choir director into our ragged and out-of-tune moral singing—we find a new desire to read the music better, to understand

what it's all about, to sense the harmonies, to feel the shape of the melody, to get the breathing and voice production right . . . and, bit by bit, to sing in tune.<sup>20</sup>

Nephi taught that the words of the prophets are “sufficient to teach any man the right way; for the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not; for by denying him ye also deny the prophets and the law. And now behold, I say unto you that the right way is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel; wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul; and if ye do this ye shall in no wise be cast out” (2 Nephi 25:28–29).

We learn from both ancient and modern scripture of the Person and powers of Jesus the Christ: that he was God before he was born (see John 1:1–2); that through a grand condescension (see 1 Nephi 11:16–33) he left his “throne divine”<sup>21</sup> so as to “be like man almost”<sup>22</sup>; that he came into the world to be crucified and to bear the sins of the world (see D&C 76:41); that he received grace for grace and continued from grace to grace until, in the resurrection, he received a fulness of the glory and power of the Father (see D&C 93:16; compare Matthew 28:18);<sup>23</sup> and that as we follow our Lord’s pathway, we too will receive grace for grace, we too will progress from one level of divine acceptance to a higher. We thereby tread on holy ground and emulate the sacred walk of this Prototype of all saved beings.<sup>24</sup> “I give unto you these sayings,” the Savior declared in a modern revelation, “that you may understand

and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness" (D&C 93:19).

Jesus is not only central to the plan of salvation; he is vital. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot earn our exaltation. We cannot exercise the sufficient grit and willpower to do the works of righteousness and battle against Satan on our own. Christ is our Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer, and our King. Through the medium of his Spirit, he is the Agent of the mighty change that comes to those who come unto him. He is the Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Armies, the Captain of our Salvation. He is God, and if it were not so, he could not save us. Without him, we have nothing. With him, we have everything.

## NOTES

1. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Article 10.
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4. Brennan Manning, *Ruthless Trust* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 2000), 107.
5. Robert Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 118–19.
6. John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1:177.
7. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 56.
8. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 7:9.
9. N. T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: HarperOne, 2010); 126–27, emphasis in original.

10. Brennan Manning, *The Importance of Being Foolish: How to Think Like Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 174.
11. See Dallin H. Oaks, "The Challenge to Become," *Ensign*, November 2000, 32–34.
12. Wright, *After You Believe*, 26–27.
13. Barbara Brown Taylor, "Working People," *Christian Century* 127, no. 6 (March 23, 2010): 35.
14. M. Russell Ballard, "Building Bridges of Understanding," *Ensign*, June 1998, 66.
15. Manning, *The Importance of Being Foolish*, 51.
16. Bruce R. McConkie, "Our Relationship with the Lord," Brigham Young University devotional address, March 2, 1982; in *Doctrines of the Restoration: Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, ed. Mark L. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 67–68.
17. Ballard, "Building Bridges of Understanding," 65.
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19. See Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience: Why Are Christians Living Just Like the Rest of the World?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005); Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006); Robert Jeffress, *Grace Gone Wild: Getting a Grip on God's Amazing Gift* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2005).
20. Wright, *After You Believe*, 62–63.
21. "I Stand All Amazed," *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 193.
22. "O God, the Eternal Father," *Hymns*, no. 175.
23. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 2:269; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 339.
24. Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 7:9.