



DOCTRINES FROM OUR SAVIOR'S FINAL WORDS

TERRY B. BALL AND NATHAN WINN

The final words of a person nearing death's door typically hold great significance. This is especially true for the statements the Son of God made as He hung on the cross. Each statement He made at Calvary tells us something about what He was thinking and feeling as He finished His atoning suffering. Often our hearts and testimonies are stirred as we contemplate His last mortal words. We marvel at the composure He manifested even as He endured the agony of crucifixion. We are moved by the compassion He expressed for His mother, for the thieves by His side, and even for the Roman soldiers whom some would view as His enemies. We are humbled by His love for us. We truly stand all amazed that He should care for us enough to die for us.

In this particular study of Christ's last words, we would like to consider the doctrines taught thereby. While teaching doctrine may not have been the Savior's primary intent when He made His final statements, we can gather from them a remarkable list of truths fundamental to our

faith. These truths, if understood and accepted today, could resolve much of the doctrinal confusion in contemporary Christianity and help cure much of what ails the world in which we now live.

Statement 1: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Luke records that just before the Roman soldiers who crucified Christ cast lots for His raiment, He petitioned God on their behalf, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). The Joseph Smith Translation adds the parenthetical clarification, “(meaning the soldiers who crucified him)” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 23:35). Several important doctrines of the gospel can be gleaned from these first compassionate words of the Savior at Golgotha.

Jesus is the Son of God. When Christ addressed God as “Father,” we are reminded that not only is He a spiritual son of God but also the “only begotten of the Father” in the “flesh” (John 1:14; see also 1 Nephi 11:18–21; Matthew 1:18–23; Luke 1:30–35). Not only is He *a* son of God, but He is also *the* Son of God in mortality.

Christ is a separate being from the Father with individual will and agency. Christ’s plea to His Father to forgive the Roman soldiers teaches us that He is a separate entity from the Father with individual will and individual agency. The very request suggests that Jesus had already personally chosen to forgive the soldiers. Now He besought His Father to do the same. This was not the first time that Christ, through prayer, demonstrated His individual will, separate from that of the Father’s. In Gethsemane He prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). Although Christ consistently chose to do the will of His Father, these prayers

make it clear that He was indeed a separate entity who maintained His own agency.

Christ is our advocate with the Father. Isaiah prophesied that the Servant, whom we understand to be the mortal Messiah, would make “intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).¹ The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus “ever liveth to make intercession” for us (Hebrews 7:25), and John testified that “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). Christ was acting as an advocate when He pleaded with the Father to forgive the soldiers. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland reminds us that “as our advocate with the Father, He is still making that same plea today—in your behalf and in mine.”²

We should seek forgiveness from God. The principle that we should seek forgiveness from God is so fundamental to the gospel of Christ that we might overlook it as we consider what Christ taught us at Calvary. Latter-day Saints understand, as Alma explained to his wayward son Corianton, that when they knowingly and willingly violate a law or commandment, they are placed in “the grasp of justice” and in a position to be “cut off” (Alma 42:14) from the presence of God, unless they invoke mercy through the process of faith, repentance, and baptism. Through the mercy thus obtained and made available by Christ’s Atonement, the “demands of justice” (Alma 42:15) are appeased, we obtain forgiveness and become candidates for the salvation and redemption prepared for us by our loving God (see Alma 42:14–26). A vital part of the repentance requisite to this process is asking God for forgiveness. King Benjamin put it succinctly, “And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you” (Mosiah 4:10). In the absence of faith and understanding of this principle, the soldiers who crucified Christ, like so

many in the world today, likely would have never considered asking God for forgiveness. That Christ would do so on their behalf points to another important doctrine taught by His first statement on the cross.

Accountability requires knowledge and agency. In a letter written to his son Moroni, the prophet Mormon advised him to teach “repentance and baptism unto those who are accountable and capable of committing sin” (Moroni 8:10). Mormon’s counsel here indicates that sins for which we are not accountable require no repentance.

King Benjamin identified some sins for which we are not accountable. In speaking of the Atonement of Christ, the king warned of “wo” that would befall those who knowingly rebelled against God, declaring that “salvation cometh to none such except it be through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Mosiah 3:12). However, He also testified, “Behold, and also his [Christ’s] blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned” (Mosiah 3:11). Thus in order to receive forgiveness for sins we knowingly choose to commit, we must have faith and repent, but Christ’s blood alone atones for sins committed in ignorance and for transgressions, such as Adam’s Fall, in which we exercised no agency.³

Christ confirmed this doctrine when He asked the Father to forgive the soldiers because they knew “not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Apparently the soldiers lacked sufficient knowledge to be held accountable for their actions. They likely also lacked the agency requisite to accountability. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that in asking for forgiveness of His crucifiers, Christ was not referring to “Judas or Annas or Caiaphas or the chief priests or the Sanhedrin or Pilate or Herod or Lucifer or any who have rebelled against him and

chosen to walk in darkness at noonday. All these are left in the hands of Divine Justice, and mercy cannot rob justice, else God would cease to be God. Jesus is speaking, rather, of the Roman soldiers who have no choice but to do the will of Pilate and those whose minions they are.” Elder McConkie further clarified that Christ was not asking “the Father to forgive them [the soldiers] of their sins and to prepare them, thus, to dwell with clean and pure persons in celestial rest.” Rather He was “simply asking that the deed of crucifixion be not laid at their door; let the responsibility rest with the Jews and with the Procurator of Rome, not with these who are doing—albeit in a gross and cruel manner—no more than they have been commanded to do.”⁴ Because they lacked both the knowledge of the greatness of their offense, as well as the agency to do otherwise, Christ asked the Father to forgive the soldiers who crucified Him, knowing that in such situations His atoning blood would satisfy the demands of justice for them.

We should forgive others. The Lord declared through the Prophet Joseph Smith, “Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:9–10). During His mortal ministry, the Savior taught the same principle: “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14–15). On the cross Christ superbly exemplified this principle He wants each of us to follow. Elder Holland explained it well:

Closely related to our own obligation to repent is the generosity of letting others do the same—we are to forgive even as we are forgiven. In this we participate in the very

essence of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Surely the most majestic moment of that fateful Friday, when nature convulsed and the veil of the temple was rent, was that unspeakably merciful moment when Christ said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” . . . Here, as in all things, Jesus set the standard for us to follow. Life is too short to be spent nursing animosities or keeping a box score of offenses against us—you know, no runs, no hits, all errors. We don’t want God to remember our sins, so there is something fundamentally wrong in our relentlessly trying to remember those of others.⁵

Certainly, none of us have so much deposited in the bank of mercy that we can afford the luxury of being unforgiving.

**Statement 2: “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise”
(Luke 23:43).**

The two malefactors crucified with Jesus were of very different spirits. While one thief challenged Jesus to prove He was the Christ by saving them all, the other confessed his own guilt and then begged of the Savior, “Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42). If not before, then somehow at that moment, this transgressor recognized something divine in Christ that moved him to humility and confession—the beginning of repentance. Again, even in the midst of His own sufferings, Christ showed compassion for another as He promised the penitent man, “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). This assurance reminds us of several fundamental principles and doctrines of the gospel.

There is life beyond the death of the mortal body. When the thief asked Jesus to remember him in the next life, Jesus did not say, “I am sorry, but we are merely biological organisms,

and our death will be the end of our existence.” Rather, the Savior promised that the two of them would continue their existence together, that very day, in paradise.

Christ knew His Father’s plan. Again, when the thief asked Jesus to remember him in the next life, Jesus did not say, “I am sorry, but I cannot make such a promise, for I do not know what will happen next.” Rather, with full confidence in and understanding of His Father’s plan, the Savior assured the man that on that very day, they would be together in the next life. Christ understood perfectly that death is the separation of the spirit and the body and that though the body is placed in the tomb, the spirit lives on (see James 2:26).

There is a place prepared for spirits awaiting the Resurrection. The thief asked simply to be remembered by Christ when he entered His kingdom, but the Savior promised him something else—that they would enter paradise together. The Prophet Joseph Smith clarified that the term translated as “paradise” in the King James Version of the Bible refers to the “world of spirits.”⁶ Latter-day Saints understand that this paradise, or world of spirits, is a different place with a different purpose than the kingdom in which the righteous dwell with God as resurrected beings. Indeed, that Christ had not yet entered that kingdom until at least three days after His death is indicated when He prohibited Mary from touching Him, explaining, “Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17). We understand from the First Epistle of Peter and a revelation given to President Joseph F. Smith that between His death and Resurrection, Christ went to the world of spirits and “among the righteous” there (D&C 138:30), organized the preaching of His gospel in that realm (see 1 Peter 3:18–19; 4:6; D&C 138:28–30). Elder McConkie helps us understand what the Savior was trying to communicate with His promise to the thief. He explained,

“If we had the most accurate possible translation, one that conveyed Jesus’ real intent, his words to his fellow crucifixer would convey this thought: ‘This day shalt thou be with me in the world of spirits. There you can learn of me and my gospel; there you can begin to work out your salvation with fear and trembling before me.’”⁷

Statement 3: “Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!” (John 19:26–27).

As with His first two statements, Christ’s third utterance from the cross likewise was concerned with the welfare of someone other than Himself. In this case He turned His attention to His mother. We can imagine the anguish Mary must have felt as she witnessed the execution of her son. Perhaps as she watched she recalled the aged prophet Simeon’s words given at the temple more than three decades earlier: “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also” (Luke 2:35). We do not know how much Mary understood at that time of the vital role her son’s suffering and death played in God’s plan to redeem and save His children. Perhaps she had some comprehension that would have granted her a degree of comfort and perspective. As He beheld His grieving mother, the Savior’s thoughts turned to her welfare. Many have concluded that Joseph, Mary’s husband, had already passed away.⁸ Jesus’s siblings also seem to have been absent at Calvary. Wanting to assure that His mother would be cared for by one in the household of faith, Jesus looked on Mary and said, “Woman, behold thy son!” Then addressing His beloved Apostle John, who was standing next to Mary, He instructed, “Behold thy mother!” John perfectly understood what Jesus was asking of him, “and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home” (John 19:26–27).

We should care for the welfare of our parents. The principle so well illustrated by this tender exchange is readily apparent—we have a divine mandate not only to honor our parents but also to care for them wherever and whenever there is need or opportunity. In discussing this poignant episode at Calvary, President Thomas S. Monson helps us understand one way in which this principle should find application in our lives:

From that awful night when time stood still, when the earth did quake and great mountains were brought down—yes, through the annals of history, over the centuries of years and beyond the span of time, there echoes his simple yet divine words, “Behold thy mother!”

As we truly listen to that gentle command and with gladness obey its intent, gone forever will be the vast legions of “mothers forgotten.” Everywhere present will be “mothers remembered,” “mothers blessed,” and “mothers loved” and, as in the beginning, God will once again survey the workmanship of his own hand and be led to say, “It [is] very good.”

May each of us treasure this truth; one cannot forget mother and remember God. One cannot remember mother and forget God. Why? Because these two sacred persons, God and mother, partners in creation, in love, in sacrifice, in service, are as one.⁹

Statement 4: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Although Christ experienced unfathomable physical and spiritual pain as He atoned for our sins, Elder Holland suggested that He endured “the darkest moment of them all, the shock of the greatest pain” when He felt “utterly alone,”¹⁰ crying out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

me?” (Matthew 27:46). The primary doctrine taught by this anguished cry is profound.

Christ had to work the Atonement alone. Today, like Christ on the cross, we also wonder why the Father in some way withdrew from His dying Son at Calvary. Prophets and scholars have offered many insights.

President Joseph F. Smith believed that God “left Him to bear the brunt, that He might feel the pain, that He might understand the anguish, that He might comprehend how people feel when they are in sorrow, that He might be touched with a feeling for our infirmities, because He bore the pains of us all.”¹¹

Likewise, Elder McConkie explained that the Father entirely withdrew “his sustaining power” so that Christ “might drink the dregs of the bitter cup to the full.”¹²

Elder Robert D. Hales taught that it was also a matter of agency: “The Savior of the world was left alone by His Father to experience, of His own free will and choice, an act of agency which allowed Him to complete His mission of the Atonement.”¹³

Elder Melvin J. Ballard suggested that “it was not that the Father had forsaken, but that the hour had arrived, which often arrives in our own human experience, an hour when the mother, for example, who cannot any longer stand to bear the sight of her dying child, after the farewell is given, is taken out of the room, not to witness the last dying struggles of her loved one. And so, the Father, taxed to the utmost, had withdrawn, and somewhere was weeping for His beloved Son.”¹⁴

President Spencer W. Kimball saw the Father’s withdrawal as requisite for Christ to be a God: “He was alone among crowds of people. Alone he was with eager angels waiting to comfort him—alone with his Father in deepest sympathy but helpless to bring comfort because that Son must walk alone

the bloody, tortuous path. ‘*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*’ Hast thou also forsaken me? He had been alone in the garden—he had prayed for the strength to drink the bitter cup. How could he be perfect, how could he be a God if help he received, if he received comfort? He *must* be alone. He was alone.”¹⁵

For these and likely for other important reasons, we understand that in some way the Father withdrew from the Son for a time, ultimately preparing Him to declare, “I have trodden the winepress alone; . . . therefore mine own arm brought salvation” (Isaiah 63:3, 5).

Statement 5: “I thirst” (John 19:28).

Shortly before death’s release, Jesus declared, “I thirst” (John 19:28). Remarkably, this is the only mention He made of His physical suffering. Elder Russell M. Nelson put the cry in context: “To a doctor of medicine, this is a very meaningful expression. Doctors know that when a patient goes into shock because of blood loss, invariably that patient—if still conscious—with parched and shriveled lips cries for water.”¹⁶ Elder McConkie understood from John’s account (see John 19:28–29) that at this point the suffering required for the Atonement had been accomplished, leaving Him to face “only the physical agonies of the cross,” so He could “think of his own bodily needs.”¹⁷ Elder James E. Talmage was of the same understanding: “John affirms that Christ uttered the exclamation, ‘I thirst,’ only when He knew ‘that all things were now accomplished’; and the apostle saw in the incident a fulfillment of prophecy.”¹⁸ As He was offered “vinegar to drink mingled with gall” (Matthew 27:34), He indeed fulfilled the Psalmist’s prophecy: “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalm 69:21; see also Matthew 27:48; John 19:28–29). There is irony in that

the source of living water would thirst. The simple declaration supports a truth taught both in the Epistle to the Hebrews and by Alma.

“In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren” (Hebrews 2:17). Throughout His mortal existence, and even on the cross, the Savior made certain that His experiences with pain, suffering, and temptation were such as is common to us all. Though He had power to heal, comfort, and save others from the pain and suffering of mortality, He refrained from using that power to protect Himself from the same. As Alma explained, “And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people” (Alma 7:11–12). A little over a century later, the Epistle to the Hebrews would teach the same doctrine: “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted (Hebrews 2:17–18). Even after He knew “that all things were now accomplished” (John 19:28), He did not use His divine power to slacken His thirst or lessen His suffering. He was a perfect example of enduring to the end, even when it was painful.

Statement 6: “It is finished” (John 19:30).

The Savior recognized the end had arrived when He declared, “It is finished” (John 19:30). The Joseph Smith

Translation of the text includes and expands the statement, reading, “Father, it is finished, thy will is done” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 27:50). Exactly what the Savior meant by “it” has generated considerable discussion. Elder Talmage wrote that Jesus made the statement upon “fully realizing that He was no longer forsaken, but that His atoning sacrifice had been accepted by the Father, and that His mission in the flesh had been carried to glorious consummation.”¹⁹

President Kimball explained, “When the Savior said, ‘It is finished,’ he referred to his mortal experience, for his crucifixion marked but a milepost in his ever-expanding power.”²⁰

President Joseph F. Smith clarified that the statement should not be taken to mean that Christ’s entire work was accomplished. He explained:

The Savior did not finish his work when he expired on the cross, when he cried out, “It is finished.” He, in using those words, had no reference to his great mission to the earth, but merely to the agonies which he suffered. The Christian world, I know, say he alluded to the great work of redemption. This, however, is a great mistake, and is indicative of the extent of their knowledge of the plan of life and salvation. I say, he referred merely to the agonies of death, and the sufferings he felt for the wickedness of men who would go so far as to crucify their Redeemer.²¹

Elder B. H. Roberts made the same observation and further clarified that the statement should not be construed to mean that “the revelation of God to man was finished.”²² Taken together, these statements help us understand another important doctrine of Christ’s gospel.

Christ's Atonement satisfied the demands of justice. While teaching the Zoramites about the purpose of Christ's atoning sacrifice, Amulek explained:

And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal.

And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice. (Alma 34:14–16)

Thus, Latter-day Saints understand that the law of mercy allows Christ's atoning sacrifice to satisfy the demands of justice on behalf of those who exercise faith unto repentance. As Christ declared, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He assured us that He had suffered enough to meet all that justice required. As Isaiah foretold, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11). How fortunate we are—how grateful we should be—that our Savior made certain His atoning suffering was complete, for a partial atonement would have devastated God's work to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39). Amulek referred to Christ's Atonement as something even greater than just complete. He declared, "There can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement

which will suffice for the sins of the world” (Alma 34:12; see also 2 Nephi 9:7; 25:16).

The teaching begs the question, “How can the Atonement be infinite?” Several answers present themselves. The Atonement is infinite in that it was accomplished by an infinite being acting out of infinite love. It is infinite in that it lasts for all time and atones for an infinite number of beings and an infinite number of sins. It must have also involved some kind of infinite suffering. This idea is unfathomable to mortal beings. We marvel how Christ was able to work such an infinite Atonement in a finite period of time. How could He ever be able to truly say the infinite “is finished”? Such is the frustration of creatures bound by a narrow perspective of time when they try to comprehend the timeless. Perhaps it is more helpful for us to focus our attention on the quality of the Atonement rather than on the quantity of it—on its infinite ability to redeem us, with the assurance that as Christ declared it finished, His atoning sacrifice was complete in every way.

Statement 7: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

Only Luke records the final statement attributed to the Savior on the cross: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). As it begins with the appellation “Father,” this prayer echoes the first statement Christ made from the cross and again reminds us that Jesus, as the Son of God, is a separate entity with individual will and agency. Like the second statement, Christ’s final words remind us that there is life for the spirit beyond the death of the mortal body. Elder Hales shares the reaction of children of God to Christ’s death from two perspectives:

On earth there was great sorrow, and those beholding the Crucifixion smote their breasts. However, in heaven a multitude awaited the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world to declare their redemption from the bands of death. Their sleeping dust was to be restored unto its perfect frame. The spirit and the body were to be united, never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of joy. While the vast multitude waited and commenced rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared. He preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and redemption of mankind from the Fall and from individual sins on conditions of repentance.²³

Another significant doctrine can also be found in Christ's final mortal prayer.

Christ had agency over His death. On one occasion as Jesus taught the spiritually blind Pharisees who condemned Him for healing a blind man on the Sabbath, He spoke of the Father's love: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it 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 10:17–18). Christ validated that doctrine as He voluntarily released His spirit from His mortal tabernacle. Elder Talmage summarized the act and the doctrine well: "In reverence, resignation, and relief, He addressed the Father saying: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' He bowed His head, and voluntarily gave up His life. Jesus the Christ was dead. His life had not been taken from Him except as He had willed to permit. Sweet and welcome as would have been the relief of death in any of the earlier stages of His suffering from Gethsemane to the cross, He lived until all things were accomplished as had been appointed."²⁴

Conclusion

The doctrine and principles that can be gathered from the Savior's final words constitute an impressive list of truths and practices fundamental to our faith. His last words remind us that He is the very Son of God, the Only Begotten in the flesh, an entity separate from the Father, with individual will and agency. He knew and chose to follow His Father's plan that required Him to willingly become like us and then suffer alone to atone for our sins, thereby providing the means for mercy to satisfy the demands of justice. He had agency over His death and voluntarily endured in mortality until He had completed that infinite Atonement. He understood that there is life after mortal death—that following death our spirits continue to live in “paradise,” the world where we await the Resurrection. He demonstrated that He is our advocate to the Father and taught us that accountability for sin requires knowledge and agency. He reminded us that we should seek forgiveness from our Heavenly Father and forgive others as well. In the midst of His own unfathomable suffering, He taught us to care for our parents and to have compassion for others. Surely much of what ails the world today and much of what confuses contemporary Christianity could be cured if we would but believe and follow these fundamental doctrines and principles gathered from our Savior's final words.

Notes

Terry B. Ball is dean of Religious Education at Brigham Young University. Nathan Winn is a graduate in English from Brigham Young University.

1. Although this prophecy in Isaiah is in the past tense, that is, He “made intercession for the transgressors,” it should not be understood to be referring to someone who lived before Isaiah or

was contemporary with Isaiah but rather that in referring to Christ, Isaiah used the “prophetic perfect” tense, a literary device often used by prophets when speaking of events that would surely come to pass (see Mosiah 16:6–7).

2. Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, October 1996, 114.

3. See also the second article of faith: “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.”

4. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 4:211–12.

5. Jeffrey R. Holland, in Conference Report, October 1996, 114.

6. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 5:425.

7. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4:222.

8. This conclusion is drawn from Joseph’s apparent absence at Calvary and from the fact that he is not mentioned in the text after Jesus’s experience at the temple as a twelve-year-old.

9. Thomas S. Monson, “Behold Thy Mother,” *Ensign*, January 1974, 32.

10. Jeffrey R. Holland, “He Loved Them unto the End,” *Ensign*, November 1989, 26.

11. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1906, 90.

12. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 530.

13. Robert D. Hales, in Conference Report, April 1998, 98.

14. Melvin J. Ballard, in Conference Report, April 1913, 69.

15. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 21–22.

16. Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, October 1996, 47.

17. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4:227.

18. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ: A Study of the Messiah and His Mission according to Holy Scriptures both Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1962), 661.

19. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 661.
20. Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, April 1946, 49.
21. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, comp. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 449–50.
22. B. H. Roberts, *New Witnesses for God: I. Joseph Smith, the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1911), 1:148.
23. Robert D. Hales, in Conference Report, October 1985, 25; see also D&C 138:16–19.
24. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 661–62.

