

"THY WILL BE DONE": THE SAVIOR'S USE OF THE DIVINE PASSIVE

Matthew L. Bowen

A salient stylistic feature of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' use of a verbal construction known as the "divine passive" or "theological passive." In these cases no subject is identified in the sentence. For example, in Matthew 5:4, Jesus declares, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." In this statement we learn that the mourners will be comforted, but we are not told who will do the comforting. Use of the divine passive makes the declaration ambiguous. Some in the past have thought the divine passive was used to avoid the frequent repetition of the name of God. Today many scholars do not believe this to be the case.¹ Rather, the scriptures use the divine passive to add depth and richness to a passage. The ambiguity of the divine passive allows readers to recognize multiple actors: God the Father, the Savior himself, and our own participation to bring about their purposes.

This chapter argues that Jesus employs these passives for three important reasons. First, he uses the divine passive to announce the good news of his imminent Atonement. Second, using this old poetic, prophetic

Matthew L. Bowen is a PhD candidate at the Catholic University of America.

style, he draws connections with Mosaic celebrations such as the Jubilee celebration and Day of Atonement to help his audience understand who he is and what his mission entails. These connections would have been much more apparent to ancient rather than modern readers. Third, the Savior's use of divine passives does not merely reflect a "God . . . behind the scenes" paradigm,² but rather one in which "the Lord of the vineyard labor[s] also with" his servants (Jacob 5:72). Thus Jesus uses divine passives because they afford him a succinct poetic means of describing aspects of the "atoning" work delegated to him by the Father that he himself is bringing to pass. At the same time the divine passive impresses upon his disciples the importance of *their* participation in many aspects of that work.

"THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED" (MATTHEW 5:4)

As Benedictine T. Viviano notes, many of the reward clauses in the Beatitudes are "divine" or "theological" passives.³ The first instance of the divine passive in the Sermon on the Mount occurs in the second beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn: for *they shall be comforted* [*paraklēthēsontai*]" (Matthew 5:4). Who shall comfort them? The divine passive would imply that God is the agent "comforter," but this appraisal may be incomplete.

This beatitude alludes to Isaiah 61:1–4, which speaks of comforting those who mourn and introduces us to the broader concept of the Jubilee celebration:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; *to comfort all that mourn*;

To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, *that he might be glorified* [compare Moses 1:39].

And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. (Isaiah 61:1–4; emphasis added.)

Speaking in the first person, the prophet here describes himself as an “anointed” figure, but Jesus also quoted this passage in the synagogue at Nazareth and proclaimed, “This day is this scripture fulfilled your ears” (Luke 4:18–19, 21).⁴ Thus Jesus identified himself as the one who would comfort all that mourn. Yet Isaiah 61 shows that this attribute was only one of the responsibilities of the anointed one. He would also preach good tidings, bind up the broken hearted, and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Sharon Ringe notes that Jesus’ quotation of Isaiah 61:1–2 is “the clearest reference to any of the Jubilee texts [Leviticus 25:9–54; 27:17–24; Isaiah 61:1–5; Jeremiah 34:8–17; Ezekiel 46:17] in the Synoptic gospels.”⁵ Established under the Mosaic law, the Jubilee was observed and celebrated every fifty years.

And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.

Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile[e] to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, *in the day of atonement* shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land.

And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, *and proclaim liberty throughout all the land* unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile[e] unto you; and *ye shall return* every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. (Leviticus 25:8–10; emphasis added; see also 27:17–18; Numbers 36:4)

As part of the celebration there was a mandated “release” of debts—called “the LORD’s release” and Israel was required to reach out to the poor (Deuteronomy 15:1–6). In addition, the fiftieth year was to be a year of “return” (compare Heb. *šûb*) in which everyone returned to the land of their inheritance. This Jubilee year—“the acceptable year of the Lord”—began on the Day of Atonement.⁶

In his hometown synagogue, Jesus declared himself Messiah—the messenger of the Jubilee—the one sent to usher in the “the acceptable year of the Lord” or “the year of the Lord’s will” who would proclaim the

good news, proclaim liberty and comfort all that mourn. In this larger context, Jesus is the agent of the divine passive in Matthew 5:4. However, Isaiah 61:1–4 describes not only the restorative or “atoning” work of this “anointed” figure but also his empowering of those whom he heals to complete this work (“they shall build, . . . raise up, . . . repair” [Isaiah 61:4]), an important dimension of the Atonement to which Elder David A. Bednar has recently drawn attention.⁷ Those who would follow Jesus, the great messenger of the Jubilee, must also actively participate in his Jubilee work of “comfort[ing] those who mourn,” working *with* the Lord of the vineyard such as the servants in the allegory of Jacob 5. Thus the divine passive in Matthew 5:4 suggests that the agent of comfort is ultimately God, but his work is carried out through his Son and all those who covenant to follow him.

“THEY SHALL BE FILLED” (MATTHEW 5:6)

The Savior affirms the happy state of those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” with the promise that “they shall be filled [*chortasthēsontai*, i.e., sated]” (Matthew 5:6). Filled with what? The version of the sermon given to those at the temple in Bountiful answers this question: “They shall be filled with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:6). The Savior’s declaration “they shall be filled” also has sacramental overtones. We find a near-identical form of this divine passive in 3 Nephi 20:8, where Jesus promised his Nephite and Lamanite followers as he instituted the sacrament among them: “He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, *but shall be filled*” (emphasis added). The divine passive reward clause, “They shall be filled with Holy Ghost,” is essentially synonymous with the reward clause in 3 Nephi 18:7 (“Ye shall have my Spirit to be with you”), the same promise that stands at the end of the Nephite—and our modern—sacrament prayers (see Moroni 4:3, 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79). Jesus placed on his disciples the responsibility for administering this Atonement-commemorating and “atoning”⁸ ordinance (3 Nephi 18:5–6, 11).

Jesus’ statement also suggests the millennial feast in Revelation 7:15–17: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among

them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne *shall feed them*, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (emphasis added; compare Isaiah 25:6–8). Through the divine passive, "they shall be filled," Jesus proclaims that this world's injustices will eventually be righted through his imminent Atonement.

"THEY SHALL BE SHOWN MERCY" (MATTHEW 5:7)

The third divine passive is obscured in the KJV: "Blessed are the merciful [*elēmōnes*], for they shall *obtain* mercy [*eleēthēsontai*]" (Matthew 5:7; emphasis added). The underlying Greek verb, rendered here as an active verbal construction, "obtain mercy," is actually a passive verb form. Thus this beatitude might be more accurately rendered: "Blessed are the merciful for *they shall be shown mercy*."

The play on *eleēmōnes* and *eleēthēsontai*, two words from the same root, is a rhetorical device called *polyptoton*. In this instance, it stresses the relationship between deed and reward. To be sure, one should understand the reward clause as a promise that God will show mercy on the merciful at the last day. However, it may also suggest that he influences humans to show mercy to those who are merciful. This is the Savior's first articulation of the Golden Rule, which some have called the capstone of the Sermon:⁹ "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

In proclaiming divine mercy, Jesus invites his disciples to participate in it, both as its recipients and its dispensers, and in this way to diffuse it throughout the earth. In the millennial perspective, this is how mercy can and will eventually "claim her own" (Alma 42:22–24) and prevent the earth from being "utterly wasted at his coming" (D&C 3:2, 138:4; Malachi 4:6; Joseph Smith—History 1:39). It is this very principle that stands behind missionary and temple work.

"THEY SHALL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD" (MATTHEW 5:9)

The final divine passive in the beatitudes is perhaps the most significant: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called [*klēthēsontai*]"

the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). The reward clause, “they shall be called the children of God,” is conceptually tied to the reward clause of the previous beatitude: “Blessed are the pure in heart *for they shall see God*” (Matthew 5:8; emphasis added). It is also tied to the reward clause of the last beatitude, “For theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10).

The promise of becoming a child of God in the scriptures must be understood in a more nuanced fashion than the broader concept taught in the Primary song “I Am a Child of God.” In the latter, everyone is designated as a child of God, whereas in the scriptures individuals *become* children of God. In Israelite tradition the king could become a son of God. For example, when David consolidated his kingship over Israel, the Lord said of him, “I will be his father and he shall be my son” (2 Samuel 7:14; see 1 Chronicles 17:13). The same formula is also later applied to Solomon: “He shall be my son, and I will be his father” (1 Chronicles 22:10). These declarations are often referred to as royal adoption formulas.

In the ancient Near East, to be called a child of a deity was, in some instances, to become a deity or to be identified in some way with the divine realm. In Mesopotamian legal texts, the adoption formula “You are my son” or “You are my daughter” established an individual’s sonship or daughterhood.¹⁰ The addressee then became a legal heir of the adoptive parent. This is the conceptual framework behind several of the reward clauses of the beatitudes: “they shall *inherit* the earth” (Matthew 5:5), “*theirs* is the kingdom of heaven” (5:3, 10), “they shall *be called the children of God*” (5:9). The peacemakers are called the children of God and thus become “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

This process of *becoming* a child of God is also taught in the Book of Mormon. At the coronation of his son Mosiah—perhaps at or near the time of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement¹¹—King Benjamin addresses his Nephite audience at the temple in Zarahemla using the Israelite royal adoption formulas of Psalm 2:7 and 2 Samuel 7:14: “And now, because of the covenant which ye have made *ye shall be called the children of Christ*, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you [i.e., through the Atonement]; for ye say that *your hearts are changed* through faith on his name; therefore, *ye are born of him* and have become his sons and his daughters. And under this head *ye are made free*, and there is no other head whereby *ye can be made free*” (Mosiah 5:7–8;

emphasis added). Both King Benjamin and Jesus use royal Israelite adoption formulas in the divine passive in reward clauses. Also, significantly, King Benjamin blends legalistic terminology with language akin to Jubilee language ("under this head ye are made *free*").¹² King Benjamin uses several additional divine passives ("your hearts *are changed*, . . . ye *are born*, . . . ye are *made free*, . . . ye can *be made free*"), which all describe effects of the Atonement.

Seeing the Savior in vision at the right hand of the Father, the Prophet Joseph Smith testified that "by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof *are begotten* sons and daughters unto God" (D&C 76:24). Joseph Smith, like King Benjamin and the Apostles Paul and John, knew that the opportunity to become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" is available only to those who receive the full blessings of Christ's Atonement—a royal adoption (see Romans 8:15–17; Galatians 4:15). John saw that "he that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7; compare Deuteronomy 14:1–2).

Paul also saw liberation imagery—and possibly even millennial Jubilee imagery¹³—in this "adoption" (*huiōthesia*, Romans 8:15) when he declared that all creation anxiously awaited the "manifestation [*apokalypsin*, revelation] of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19) and that, at that time, all creation "shall be delivered [*eleutherōthesetai*, be made free] from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty [*eleutherian*] of the children of God" (Romans 8:21). Jesus' use of the divine passive in the seventh beatitude reminds us that the peacemakers *become* children of God through the Atonement and also that they have responsibility to be the instruments of the Savior's peace in the world, to invite others to participate in the blessings of the Atonement. As they do so, they become "children of God," heirs to all blessings God has to bestow. Thus the divine passive again reminds us of the dual nature the reward clause: while God is the ultimate agent of this liberation, it is often through those who are called to be his sons and daughters that the blessings of the Atonement are made available.

"HALLOWED BE THY NAME" (MATTHEW 6:9)

The divine passive is not only found in the Beatitudes but also in other places in Matthew's account. During the Lord's Prayer we find two additional examples: "hallowed be [*hagiasthētō*] thy name" (Matthew 6:9), and "thy will be [*genēthētō*] done" (Matthew 6:10).

The word translated as "hallowed" in verse 9 can also be translated as "to be made holy or sacred." Thus the Savior instructs his disciples to pray that the Father's name be made holy (*hagiasthētō*). The Semitic equivalent of the Greek term, *qdsh* ("holy, sacred, set apart"), is the same as the term describing the temple in the Hebrew Bible. Who is to "hallow" the name of the Father? As the divine passive suggests, the answer involves many nuances.

On the one hand, it is the Father and the Son who hallow or make the Father's name holy. Oracular speeches attributed to the Lord in Leviticus 10:3 and Ezekiel 28:22 suggest some equivalence between the terms "sanctify" (i.e., to make holy) and "glorify."¹⁴ In some places we can substitute the word "glorify" with "sanctify" or "make holy" without adversely affecting the meaning of a scriptural verse. For example, when Jesus declared, "Father, glorify thy name," and the voice from heaven responded with "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (John 12:28), we may understand it to be a dialogue about sanctifying or making the Father's name holy. Likewise when, in the Book of Mormon, Moroni says that Jesus "glorified the name of the Father" (Ether 12:8), in effect Jesus was sanctifying the Father's name (see 3 Nephi 9:15; 11:7; 23:9). These passages, then, suggest that both the Father and the Son work to sanctify or make holy the name of the Father.

On the other hand, numerous scriptures suggest it also is the responsibility of the Lord's people to sanctify or hallow the divine name. For example, in Amos 2:6–7, the Lord chides Israel for "profaning [his] holy name," that is, making it unholy. He declared that the profanation of his holy name consisted of mistreatment of the poor and the meek (i.e., the humble) as well as sexual immorality. Therefore, the reverse would also be true: we sanctify the divine name as we look after the poor and meek and live chaste lives. In addition, Isaiah foresaw a time when Israel would "sanctify" the divine name and thus "sanctify the Holy One of Jacob" (Isaiah 29:23).

An additional nuance may be suggested by Fitzmyer's proposal that Jesus' wish in the Lord's Prayer "probably echoes the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:22–28,"¹⁵ where the Lord declares, "I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them, and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord . . . when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" (Ezekiel 36:23). The next part of this prophecy describes the Lord gathering Israel and performing an atonement rite: "I will take you out from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean" (Ezekiel 36:24–25). Israel is further promised "a new heart" and a "new spirit" that will enable them to do the will of God (Ezekiel 36:26–27; compare Mosiah 5:7). The final part describes the healing (i.e., the atoning) of the land (see Ezekiel 36:28–38; Deuteronomy 32:43; D&C 88:17–20). Thus the hallowing of the divine name connotes the gathering of Israel, Israel's reception of the blessings of the Atonement, and the healing of the land.

The language used by Ezekiel, the temple priest and prophet of the exile, recalls the priestly legislation of Leviticus governing temple rituals, including atonement rites. His prophecy may allude to Leviticus 22:32: "Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the Lord which hallow you" (compare 22:2). Fitzmyer asserts that the directive in Leviticus 11:45, "ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy," articulates Israel's "basic dedication" that underlies the prophecy in Ezekiel 36,¹⁶ and Jesus' wish "hallowed be thy name." Thus the hallowing of the divine name is also the hallowing of Israel (see Leviticus 22:32),¹⁷ and the divine passive "hallowed be thy name" is a plea that God will hallow Israel and that Israel will hallow its God—a true *at-one-ment*.

With this idea in mind, scriptural statements about "bearing" the divine name and injunctions against taking on oneself the divine name in vain or lifting it up to vanity become more poignant.¹⁸ If the hallowing of the divine name is the hallowing of Israel, we also better understand why God commands his people to build temples and cities (see D&C 109:58) to his "holy name" (see I Chronicles 22:19, 29:16; D&C 124:39). In addition to being the work of the Father and the Son to sanctify the Father's name, this task is also the work of his covenant people.

"THY WILL BE DONE" (MATTHEW 6:10)

The plea of the Savior in the Lord's Prayer that "thy will [*thelēma*] be done" (Matthew 6:10) is repeated in Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:42). In Gethsemane the divine passive indicates of the Savior's submission to the Father's will. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus encourages his disciples to submit likewise. Ever devoted to the accomplishment of the Father's will,¹⁹ Jesus speaks of his family as consisting of those who "do the will of God" (Mark 3:35). Toward the end of the sermon he emphasizes that entry into the kingdom of heaven is reserved for the one "that *doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21; emphasis added).

As noted previously, Isaiah 61:2 accentuates the importance of the "will of God" to the Jubilee via the phrase "the acceptable year of the Lord" or "the year of the Lord's will." *Raṣah* was the Hebrew technical term that denoted God's "accept[ing] with pleasure" the atoning sacrifices.²⁰ This word may stand behind the Lord's declaration: "I will accept none of your sacrifices and burnt offerings. And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:9–10).

Thus the Savior's plea "thy will be done" expresses the intimate connection between doing the *will* of God and offering an *acceptable* sacrifice as taught to ancient Israel.²¹ Jesus teaches this principle elsewhere,²² but he particularly alludes here to Psalm 40:8, "I come . . . I delight to do thy will [*rās'onekā*], O my God" or "It is my will (desire) to do thy will."²³ As Margaret Barker notes, "The Psalms were the hymns of the temple, and some of them indicate sacrifice as their original setting."²⁴ Psalm 40 would have been recited in the temple possibly by the king, the high priest, or the worshipers themselves. The Savior's instruction to pray "thy will be done" challenges the disciples to offer true sacrifice: to do the will of Father, even if a broken heart and a contrite spirit are required in the utmost sense of that description, just as he had done. (Matthew 26:38; John 19:30–34; compare Psalm 51:16–17).

In the divine passive "thy will be done," Jesus also acknowledges the imminence of his Atonement as described in the servant song(s) of Isaiah 52:13–53. He would fill the role of "servant," through whose suffering divine justice would be "satisfied" and in whose hand the divine will would ultimately "prosper."²⁵ Ambiguities within this text have allowed for wide-ranging interpretations.²⁶ For example, the description of the

servant in the divine passive, "he shall be exalted . . . extolled [*nissa'*, i.e., 'lifted up']" (Isaiah 52:13), can be interpreted in a triumphant sense, or in the same sense as John 3:14: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."²⁷

The description of the atoning servant's suffering (Isaiah 53:4–8) is punctuated in Isaiah 53:10 with the declaration, "It pleased the Lord to bruise [crush] him"—alternatively rendered, "It was the Lord's will that he be crushed."²⁸ In other words, this suffering was a part of the divine plan. Abinadi gives this phrase a christological interpretation: he describes the servant (Christ) as "having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:2).

Abinadi further interplays imagery from Isaiah 25:8—a text that may also contain a divine passive if we follow the reading, "Death shall be swallowed up in victory"²⁹—with a series of divine passives "*the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father*" (Mosiah 15:7; emphasis added).³⁰ The eventual triumph of the will of the Father is the inevitable outcome of the Son's Atonement. This event in the meridian of time will bring to pass the perfection of the whole creation. And yet, as we have seen with the interpretation of other divine passives, the participation of the Lord's people is essential.

Zenos's allegory of the olive trees beautifully illustrates this. This story notes how servants performed horticultural techniques (grafting, transplanting, and so forth) to accomplish the Lord's will in his vineyard (Jacob 5:8–14).³¹ It is significant that the Lord's involvement in clearing up his vineyard is described as neither passive nor behind-the-scenes: "And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their might; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them; and they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things" (Jacob 5:72). At the end of the allegory the Lord of the vineyard pronounces his work complete: "I have done according to my will" (Jacob 5:75).

"ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU" (MATTHEW 6:33)

The Savior's charge to "seek . . . first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33) is, according to Viviano, "the climactic verse of the whole chapter."³² It is nothing less than a call to a total reorientation of former priorities. One not only prays "thy kingdom come" but

actively seeks to build it up on earth. The reward clause, again phrased in the divine passive, is “all these things *shall be added* [*prostēthēsetai*] unto you.”

The JST rendering of this verse gives a clearer picture of the relationship between the Atonement and God’s providence: “*Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*” The immediate context of this verse indicates that the “these things” which are promised refer to the material things necessary to sustain mortal life such as food and water (6:25–26) and clothing (6:28–31). But the divine passive may also suggest those things that are necessary to sustain the spiritual life. As Elder Bednar has explained, “The enabling and strengthening aspect of the Atonement helps us to see and to do and to become good in ways that we could never recognize or accomplish with our mortal capacity.”³³

The Atonement actually makes it possible for us to “lay aside the things of this world, and seek for the things of a better” (D&C 25:10). There is a great difference between the “bondage” or “servitude” that the world imposes and the service or work that the Lord would have us do (see 2 Chronicles 12:8). Like the Israelites of the Exodus, the Lord redeems us from the “hard labor” or “bondage” (*‘abodah*) of Egypt (the world)³⁴ to do the “service” or atoning “work” (*‘abodah*) of the temple (see Exodus 30:16, 39:42).

During his lifetime, Jesus demonstrated that this kind of providence was possible. “When I sent you without purse or scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything?” Jesus asked his disciples, and they answered, “Nothing” (Luke 22:35). Like the Israelites of the wilderness period, the disciples “lacked nothing” (Deuteronomy 2:7). All things necessary to bear the kingdom off triumphantly are added to Jesus’ disciples by virtue of the Atonement and their faith in him.

“THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED” (MATTHEW 7:1–3)

The divine passive promise “all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33) is followed almost immediately in the text by another string of divine passives in set reward clauses: Judge not, *that ye be not judged*. For with what judgment ye judge, *ye shall be judged*: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be *measured to you again* (Matthew 7:1–2; emphasis added).

The range of meaning for the Greek verb here rendered judge (*krinein*) includes the sense "condemn."³⁵ Thus we can render Matthew 7:1 more precisely: "Condemn not that ye be not condemned." Viviano observes that "this verse liberates us from the need to be everyone's conscience or censor, but it does not free us from all need for judgment."³⁶ As Elder Dallin H. Oaks notes, people must make intermediate judgments, but final judgment belongs to God alone.³⁷

The kind of polyptoton that Jesus uses in the Beatitudes ("blessed are the *merciful* . . . for they be shown *mercy*") is revived here. Again, the rhetorical strategy is to place great emphasis on the genetic relationship between deed and reward: where being merciful begets being shown mercy, condemning begets being condemned, measure for measure. The proximity of the passive reward clauses to the active verbs that front them suggests a temporal immediacy of the reward (cause and effect): condemn not and you shall not be condemned by your fellowmen. However, these should also be understood as divine passives with an eschatological dimension: if we judge righteously and refrain from passing final judgment on our fellow beings, we can expect to one day "have a righteous judgment restored to [us] again" by God (Alma 41:14).

The Savior's admonition on condemnation is an invitation to participate in divine forgiveness: "For 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 Day of Atonement, Israel was forgiven its sins (see Leviticus 16), and every seventh year there was to be a release or a forgiveness (LXX *aphesis*) of debts, culminating in liberty or a forgiveness (LXX *aphesis*) from all debts.³⁸

We hear strong Day of Atonement and Jubilee echoes in the plea, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" (6:12). Jesus is proposing a perpetual Jubilee in which forgiveness—like justice and righteousness—flows like a perennial stream (compare Amos 5:24). Failure to forgive others frustrates the spirit and intent of the Jubilee, the Sabbath, and the Day of Atonement. Similarly, to presume to pass final judgment is an affront to the one to whom final judgment properly belongs.

"IT SHALL BE GIVEN. . . . IT SHALL BE OPENED
UNTO YOU" (MATTHEW 7:7-8)

A final flourish of divine passives in the sermon occurs in the Jesus' triadic exhortation to make requests of God. The "request" verbs occur in order of increasing intensity: "ask, . . . seek, . . . knock." The reward clauses are also in order of increasing intensity: "Ask, and *it shall be given you*; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and *it shall be opened* unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh *it shall be opened* (Matthew 7:7-8; emphasis added).

The Greek verbs meaning "ask" and "seek" correspond to the Hebrew verbs *sh'l* and *bqsh*, which were used to describe "asking for" or "seeking" a divine revelation, often in a temple setting. Welch detects a further temple echo in "knock,"³⁹ which should resonate with Latter-day Saints. The two divine passive reward clauses "it shall be given you" and "it shall be opened to you" also may suggest a temple situation with Jesus as "keeper of the gate."⁴⁰

These suppositions are supported by Nephi's assertion, "if ye cannot understand, . . . it will be because ye ask not, neither do ye knock; wherefore, *ye are not brought into the light*, but must perish in the dark" (2 Nephi 32:4; emphasis added). A person's being "brought into" a place seems to imply the presence of a keeper-of-the-gate figure or *paralempstor*, as when Jesus promised the disciples, "I will come and receive [*paralēmpsomai*] you to myself" (John 14:3). The "light" would then be that part of the temple, where God's full presence shines as represented by the Holy of Holies, the Menorah, and so forth. Granted, there are additional senses in which one might understand this reward clause. However, if the temple is the locus par excellence of inquiring, asking, and seeking revelation from the Lord (see Psalm 27:4), then the divine passive to be "brought into the light" probably connotes being brought into the light of the Lord's countenance (see Numbers 6:24-27), a full reception of the blessings of the Atonement or the royal "adoption" (Romans 8:15-23), the greatest possible "revelation."⁴¹

CONCLUSION

The Savior's use of the divine passive in the Sermon on the Mount is a reminder that, while he has wrought out a perfect Atonement, the

work to see its effects fully realized is ongoing and that we must play an active role in it. Perhaps we should see something of a Jubilee image in the artistry that stands atop most of our temples: an angel (messenger) with a trumpet like the ram's horn on the Day of Atonement, "fly[ing] in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6). This is the atoning work—the *'abodah*—in which the Savior calls us to participate, throughout our mortal lives and beyond (see D&C 138:30–31).

Nephi knew that our collective and individual success in bringing heaven down on earth consists in reconciling ourselves "to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh" and remembering "after [we] *are reconciled to God*, that it is only in and through the grace of God that [we] *are saved* (2 Nephi 10:24; emphasis added).⁴² Our being reconciled to God and saved through his grace (note the divine passives) is contingent on our reconciling ourselves to, or becoming at one with his will even as Jesus did. That responsibility remains with us. As with Abraham, this will prove our greatest sacrifice, but as the Apostle John promised, "He that *doeth the will of God* abideth forever" (1 John 2:17; emphasis added).⁴³

Being reconciled to the "will of God" will unlock for us the power of Christ's Atonement (grace) that will enable us to complete his work, thus answering what Wright calls the "question of how God is going to redeem and renew his *creation through human beings* and how he is going to rescue those humans themselves as part of the process."⁴⁴ All creation anxiously waits for the sound of the trump of God⁴⁵ to signal the great day of the Lord—the Day of Atonement, and permanent Jubilee—when "the great Jehovah shall say the work *is done*."⁴⁶

NOTES

1. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 438.

2. "That God is behind the scenes is self-evidently part of the world view of the NT writers," (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 438).

3. Benedictine T. Viviano, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 640.

4. He alludes to his fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1–4 elsewhere when convincing the disciples of John (the Baptist) of his messiahship: “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matthew 11:5; see also Luke 7:22). Interestingly, he follows this declaration with a “beatitude”: “And blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me” (Matthew 11:6; Luke 7:23).

5. Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 36.

6. Jeremiah 34:8–22 cites Israel’s failure to observe the Jubilee prior to the exile as a primary cause of the exile. Jeremiah 31:10–14 foresees God himself bringing a Jubilee remedy.

7. David A. Bednar, “In the Strength of the Lord,” *Ensign*, November 2004, 76–78.

8. 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 suggests that this ordinance had this function for the early Christian community. The “one bread” made them “one body,” the “body of Christ.”

9. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew: Volume 1, Chapters 1–10* rev. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975), 315.

10. Akkadian *mārūtu*[m]; compare Greek *huiiothesia* (literally, “son-making”) in Romans 8:15, 9:4; Galatians 4:9; Ephesians 1:5.

11. Terrence L. Szink and John W. Welch, “King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech*, 184–86.

12. Szink and Welch have amassed internal evidence from King Benjamin’s speech that suggests that the Nephites did know some form of a Jubilee and that King Benjamin’s sermon and Mosiah’s coronation may have taken place on this occasion (see “King Benjamin’s Speech in the Context of Ancient Israelite Festivals,” 193–99).

13. It sometimes assumed that Paul imports Greek notions of liberty and freedom in his use of *eleutheria* here. However, the context of divine liberation suggests that Paul he is alluding to the exodus or the Jubilee. Paul’s eschatological view suggests that may be thinking specifically in terms of the latter, since hope for an eschatological Jubilee was running high in the Judaism of that milieu (see John Sietza Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation* [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 298–300). Forms of *eleutheros* are used with reference to slaves “going free” at the Jubilee in LXX Jeremiah 41:8–17.

14. In Leviticus 10:3 the two terms are used in parallel cola: “Through those who come unto me I will be sanctified / and before all the people I will be glorified” (translation mine). Synonymy between the two terms is also evident in Ezekiel 28:22: “I am upon you, O Zidon, I will be glorified in your midst . . . when I perform judgments upon her [Zidon], I will be sanctified amid her” (translation mine).

15. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV* (AB 28A; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 898.

16. Fitzmyer, *Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, 899.

17. When, just previous to the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus commanded “Be ye therefore perfect [*teleios*], even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect [*teleios*]” (Matthew

5:48) he may have been paraphrasing the legislation of Leviticus 11:45, "ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy (*qādōš*)," and Leviticus 20:26, "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy (*qādōš*)" (see also Leviticus 20:7–8). Thus we might extrapolate from Jesus' paraphrase a possible correlation between the Greek terms *teleios* ("perfect," "complete," or in a ritual sense "fully initiated," [into the mysteries]) and *hagios* that usually translates the Hebrew word *qādōš* ("holy," "hallowed," "sacred, set apart," or in a ritual sense "consecrated" for temple service). See entry for *teleios* in Fredrick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 995–96 (hereafter cited as BDAG).

18. Thus expressions involving "praising" God's holy name (see Psalm 106:47; 145:21; 2 Nephi 9:49, Alma 26:8), "calling" on his holy name (see 2 Nephi 25:13; Alma 13:28; Alma 34:17; Helaman 3:7; D&C 65:4; 138:24) "glorying" in his holy name (see 1 Chronicles 16:10) and "giving thanks" to his holy name (see 2 Nephi 9:52; 1 Chronicles 16:35) also must not be considered trite.

19. Latter-day revelation informs us that Savior's commitment to accomplishing the Father's will in the premortal existence was not less than in mortality: "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). This declaration happens to include three important aspects of the Lord's Prayer: addressing God as Father (see Matthew 5:9), the divine passive (see 5:10), and doxology ("For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever" [Matthew 5:13]). *Doxology* derives from *doxos* ("glory") + *logia* ("sayings") and denotes a brief hymn of praise. Notably, the doxology in Matthew 5:13 is missing in the best manuscripts, but it echoes the words of the Only Begotten in Moses 4:2.

20. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *A Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1281; e.g., Leviticus 1:4, 7:18, 19:7, 22:22–27; Amos 5:22; Malachi 1:10, 13; Psalm 51:8; 119:108.

21. Psalm 40:6–8 (compare Hebrews 10:5); Psalm 51:16–19; 1 Samuel 15:22; Hosea 6:6. The story of the "binding" of Isaac (the Akedah) in Genesis 22 is perhaps the most vivid illustration of this connection.

22. In Matthew 9:13 and 12:7, Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6, "For I willed mercy [Hebrew covenant faithfulness] and not sacrifice."

23. Early Christians connected Psalm 40 with the life and mission of Jesus as Hebrews 10:7–9 indicates. The language of this psalm may also be reflected in the announcement to Nephi on the eve of the Savior's birth, "I come . . . to do the will of the Father and the Son" (3 Nephi 1:14), and his declaration to the Lamanites and Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, "I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come, . . . and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:10–11; emphasis added). The same psalm may also be the basis of his statement in John 5:30: "I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

24. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 45.

25. Isaiah 53:11 says, “He [God] shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied.” Abinadi interprets this phrase to mean that Jesus “satisfied the demands of justice” (Mosiah 15:9; compare Alma 34:16). Isaiah 53:10 states, “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” or, alternatively rendered, “The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.”

26. That Isaiah 52:13–15 was seen as a prophecy of a Messiah in early postbiblical Judaism is clear from Targum Jonathan’s rendering of this passage, which adds the title “the Messiah” to “my servant” in 53:15: “Behold, my servant the Messiah, shall prosper.” This text can be, and has been seen as fulfilled in several figures including the Jesus, Israel itself, and Joseph Smith (see 3 Nephi 21:10).

27. Isaiah 52:15 states, in connection with the “lifting up” of the servant, that “He shall *sprinkle* [*yazzeh*] many nations.” As Barker notes, the verb used here, often rendered “sprinkle” (*nzh*) denotes performing the atonement rite on many nations, as in Exodus 29:21; Leviticus 4:6, 17; 5:9; 8:11, 30; 14:7, 16, 27; 16:14; and Numbers 19:4, 18–22 (*The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* [London: T&T Clark, 2003], 53). The JST renders this phrase as “He shall *gather* many nations,” which—though perhaps suggesting a different root—articulates the purpose of the Atonement: to “draw all” unto Christ (John 12:32; 3 Nephi 27:14–15). We recall a similar wordplay in 3 Nephi 27:14: “And my Father sent me that I might *be lifted up* upon the cross; and after that I *had been lifted up* upon the cross, *that I might draw all men unto me*, that as I have *been lifted up by men* even so should men *be lifted up* by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works.”

28. Compare Parry’s translation: “Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him” (Donald W. Parry, *Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Sources* [Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001], 212).

29. This would mean reading the consonants *b-l-ʿ* as a pual (a passive verb form) rather than as a piel (active). This seems to have been precisely what Paul did when he quotes this verse in 1 Corinthians 15:54.

30. He calls the Atonement a “redemption . . . *prepared* from the foundation of the world” (15:19), noting that thereby “the bands of death *shall be broken*” (15:20)—more divine passives.

31. “I will graft them whithersoever *I will*” (Jacob 5:8, 13; emphasis added). The Lord hid the “natural” branches in the nethermost (lowest, outlying) areas “according to his will and pleasure” (Jacob 5:14).

32. Viviano, “The Gospel According to Matthew,” 646.

33. Bednar, “In the Strength of the Lord,” 76–78.

34. See Exodus 1:14; 2:23–25; 6:5–9; 13:3, 14; Deuteronomy 5:6, 6:12, 8:14, 26:6; Joshua 24:17; Judges 6:8.

35. See the entry for *κρίνω* in BDAG, 567–69.

36. Viviano, “The Gospel According to Matthew,” 646.

37. For an excellent treatment of this subject from a Latter-day Saint perspective, see Dallin H. Oaks, “‘Judging Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, August 2007, 7–14.

38. The Aramaic word *h’obā’* or *h’obāh* that probably underlies “debts” in Matthew 6:12 was rendered “sins” in Luke 11:4. According to Marcus Jastrow *h’obā’* (or *h’obāh*) could mean (1) debt or (2) sin, guilt (*A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and*

Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature [New York: Judaica Press, 1996], 429). In the Targums of the Old Testament it is used in both senses. By Jesus' time this economic term had acquired a secondary "theological" sense, as had the Greek words *aphi mi* and *aphesis*. Notably, the atonement language that Paul uses is commercial terminology (e.g., *katallagein*, "reconcile" ❖; "exchange") with a derived theological sense.

39. See John Tvedtnes, "Temple Prayer in Ancient Times," in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 90.

40. 2 Nephi 9:41–42; see John Gee, "The Keeper of the Gate," in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, 233–74.

41. The word "revelation" from Latin *revelatio* originally connoted "a taking away of the veil" (compare Greek *apokalyptein*, "uncover.") This idea is depicted in 2 Corinthians 3:14–18, where Paul connects "liberty" (Greek *eleutheria*; Greek *aphesis*, "release") to revelation and beholding the Lord's glory with "open face" and being transformed into his glory (see 2 Corinthians 3:15–19). We note again Paul's declaration that creation anxiously awaits the "revelation [*apokalypsin*] of the sons of God" and being "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty [*eleutherian*] of the children of God" (Romans 8:19, 21).

42. The Prophet Joseph Smith's prayer at the Kirtland Temple dedication also articulates this idea: "Help thy servants to say, with thy grace assisting them: *Thy will, O Lord, be done and not ours*" (D&C 109:44; emphasis added).

43. Elsewhere the Apostles wrote that Church members were to conform their lives to the will of God, even if that meant suffering (see 1 Peter 4:1–2, 18–19; Romans 12:2, 15:32).

44. N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 185.

45. 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:22.

46. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:540.