

Jesus Christ: Priest, King, and Prophet

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It is impossible to do justice to what Christ has done for us in His life, His suffering, His death, and His Resurrection, and thus our words are inadequate shadows of the reality that has changed and shaped each of our lives. Inadequate as words may be, we must still use them, for they are the only tools we have with which to share our common faith with one another. How will you know how much Jesus Christ means to me when I use wholly inadequate words to convey and approximate the depth of my faith, trust, and love for Him? How can I tell you how much you mean to me as brothers and sisters in Christ without using inadequate words to express my love for you because of our common love for Jesus Christ?

By exploring many theological avenues we have probed the meaning that the Atonement wrought by Jesus Christ has for each of us. Yet, in the long run, our theologies pale into insignificance before

the awesome majesty of the God who has entered human existence and given His life that we might have life, and that more abundantly. Not one of our theologies will ever save a soul. Not one of our theologies can ever change a life. All they can do is to explain, and then only poorly, the work of the One in whom we all have faith. Our words and our language, spoken as Christians to Christians, would make very little sense to persons who do not know Jesus. The language of faith is a stumbling block and folly to those who do not know the Lord. To those who do know Him, however, our words are an expression of the reality in which we all participate; that is, the reality that our salvation is found in and assured only as we stand in relationship to the Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified and buried and who has been raised from the dead. Hence, salvation is not found in our theologies but rather in our relationship to Jesus Christ. It is this common relationship that we have celebrated these past three days, and it is my hope that the relationships we have established here with one another in Christ will continue through dialogue in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Of course, having said what I just have, I will now speak theologically. For me, as for Jeremiah, the word of the Lord cannot be shut up, for it is as a fire that must be let loose and expressed, or it will burn up its vessel (see Jeremiah 20:9). I have chosen a title that I hope will encompass most of the issues raised during this conference, and I have organized my comments around the framework of Karl Barth, the great Reformed theologian of the twentieth century. I speak as a Latter-day Saint, but it is my hope that by using the Barthian categories and language in many instances, I will be able to bridge what has all too often been a gap of misinformation and misunderstanding between Latter-day Saint Christians and Christians of other traditions.

Barth's doctrine of reconciliation is developed around the three functions of Christ, those of priest, king, and prophet. Volume 4.1 of the *Church Dogmatics* discusses Christ's priestly role; 4.2 His kingly role; and 4.3 His prophetic role. These three cannot be divided, for Christ cannot be divided. Each role and its impact on us must be understood if we are to have a full and complete picture of the redemptive work of the Savior, Jesus Christ. I will draw on broad trajectories, for

many of you have already explored these offices of the Lord in depth. Now I seek to bring the parts together into one whole.

Christ's Priestly Role

Barth begins his treatment of the doctrine of reconciliation with the priestly work of Christ. He says the following by way of introduction: "That Jesus Christ is very God is shown in His way into the far country in which He the Lord became a servant. For in the majesty of the true God it happened that the eternal Son of the eternal Father became obedient by offering and humbling Himself to be the brother of man, to take His place with the transgressor, to judge him by judging Himself and dying in his place. But God the Father raised Him from the dead, and in so doing recognised and gave effect to His death and passion as a satisfaction made for us, as our conversion to God, and therefore as our redemption from death to life."¹

Virtually all of the articles presented in this volume have dealt with this theme of the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead, becoming human that He might remove our sins through His Atonement. Craig Blomberg has dealt with it beautifully in the context of biblical theology, leading us through the New Testament and highlighting the richness of the themes related to Christ's priestly role. Douglas Davies's paper has highlighted it through the concept of mercy as accessed through the sacraments. William Loewe has pointed to it as he led us through the world of story, symbol, theory, and human transformation using Jesus, the New Testament, Irenaus, Anselm, Luther, and Schleiermacher. Stephen Davis has touched on it as he taught us about the Reformed concept of bodily redemption. Robert Matthews has invited us to participate in that priestly work by appropriating it through the ordinances or sacraments of the Church. Robert Millet has focused on it as part of the process of salvation. Roger Olson has considered it as he discussed Arminianism, while Laura Smit has examined it from the standpoint of a Calvinist, albeit with some personal reservations. Kenan Osborne points toward it as he talks about Christ as the sacrament of God. Harry Pappas has illuminated it from the perspective of Eastern Orthodoxy, while John Sanders and David Paulsen have called on us to consider its place in relation to

those who have not heard the gospel in this life. Finally, Andrew Skinner has examined Christ's priestly role in relation to the concept of "rebirth," and Camille Fronk presumes it as she teaches us about the gifts of the Spirit. Each of these papers has pointed toward the center of all of our faiths—the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Given this I would like to make a few comments of my own that I believe are important and arise out of Barth's introductory paragraph.

As a beginning, no one should ever doubt that Latter-day Saints believe Jesus to be wholly God. He is the second person of the Godhead. He is wholly divine, something that can never be said of any other person who has walked the face of this earth. Joseph Smith was absolutely clear on the divine nature of the Son. He said: "I will preach on the plurality of Gods. I have selected this text [Revelation 3:6] for that express purpose. I wish to declare I have always and in all congregations when I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods. It has been preached by the Elders for fifteen years. I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods."²

From the above it is clear that Latter-day Saints do not hold to the traditional Trinitarian formulation, but it should be equally clear that Latter-day Saints perceive the Son to be wholly God. He was the Firstborn spirit child of the Father. How this was done I do not know any more than I know what it means when the Nicene Creed says that the Son was "begotten, not made." Whatever language we use to try to describe the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son, we must in the end affirm that in His divinity Christ was unlike us, even though He takes upon Himself humanity, for He was and is God, the second person of the Godhead. By virtue of His humanity He can stand in our stead, and because of His divinity He can overcome sin and death. It is indeed God the Son who goes into the far country that He may become the servant of all.

Jesus works the Atonement as the servant, or more properly in Pauline language, as the slave of God (see Philippians 2:7). God will not permit humanity to be separated from Him. In Jesus Christ He

reconciles sinful humanity to Himself. Along with all other Christians, Latter-day Saints have no doctrine more central than the doctrine of the Atonement. We need turn only to Joseph Smith again to see that clearly. He states:

But notwithstanding the transgression, by which man had cut himself off from an immediate intercourse with his Maker without a Mediator, it appears that the great and glorious plan of His redemption was previously provided; the sacrifice prepared; the atonement wrought out in the mind and purpose of God, even in the person of the Son, through whom man was now to look for acceptance, and through whose merits he was now taught that he alone could find redemption, since the word had been pronounced, Unto dust thou shalt return.

But that man was not able himself to erect a system, or plan with power sufficient to free him from a destruction which awaited him, is evident from the fact that God, as before remarked, prepared a sacrifice in the gift of His own Son who should be sent in due time, to prepare a way, or open a door through which man might enter into the Lord's presence, whence he had been cast out for disobedience.³

Joseph further states: "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it."⁴

The Atonement has its roots in eternity. It is not merely an event that took place in a moment of history. Barth talks about the inner-Trinitarian decree in which the Father and the Son covenanted together to create human beings, so that God the Son could dwell with them as a human being Himself. This covenant of grace was made before anything was created. Turning once again to Joseph Smith, we read: "Everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth; these personages . . . are called God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the witness or Testator."⁵

Similarly, as a product of the covenant, the plan of salvation for Latter-day Saints is the basis upon which this and all other worlds of our Heavenly Father were brought into being. Thus, mortality is an opportunity for all persons to grow and develop, yet none of us would have dared to enter this world had we not known of the plan of salvation and that there was a way prepared for us to return to the presence of our Father in Heaven, even when we sinned during our earthly sojourn.

Encapsulated in the above statement is a doctrine about human beings that sets Latter-day Saints apart from their brothers and sisters of other Christian traditions: human beings lived in a premortal realm before coming to earth. We hold that human beings—more specifically their intelligences—are as eternal as is God. They are uncreated. They are self-existent. As spiritual beings we dwelt in the presence of our God, learned of the plan of salvation, and chose to risk earth life so that we might grow, develop spiritually, and become like our Savior, Jesus Christ, through His Atonement.

While we differ with our Christian brothers and sisters on the origin of human beings, we do not differ on the essential nature of the Atonement. I do believe, however, that Latter-day Saints have an expanded view of the event of the Atonement from that of other Christians. Latter-day Saints take most seriously Jesus's suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and see in it more than a personal struggle over what Jesus is about to experience. Rather, and particularly based on the Lucan narrative with its account of an angel coming to strengthen Jesus and the profound anguish that gave rise to sweat like great drops of blood (see Luke 22:39–46), Latter-day Saints see Jesus beginning the process of taking our sins upon Himself in Gethsemane. However, we do not hold that the Atonement occurred only in Gethsemane. To hold that view would be to deny the entire Pauline corpus that clearly locates the Atonement at Calvary. As only one example, Paul states in Romans 5:9 that we are put right with God through the death of Jesus. That took place on Calvary. The Book of Mormon underlines this when the risen Lord explains, "Behold I have given unto you my gospel . . . that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross" (3 Nephi 27:13–14). Thus, from a Latter-day

Saint perspective, the Atonement begins in Gethsemane and culminates at Calvary when Jesus declares, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Elder Bruce R. McConkie made this clear in his testimony only days before his death when he said:

We do not know, we cannot tell, no mortal mind can conceive the full import of what Christ did in Gethsemane.

We know he sweat great goutts of blood from every pore as he drained the dregs of that bitter cup his Father had given him.

We know he suffered, both body and spirit, more than it is possible for man to suffer, except it be unto death.

We know that in some way, incomprehensible to us, his suffering satisfied the demands of justice, ransomed penitent souls from the pains and penalties of sin, and made mercy available to those who believe in his holy name. . . .

As near as we can judge, these infinite agonies—this suffering beyond compare—continued for some three or four hours.

. . . On a hill called Calvary—again, it was outside Jerusalem’s walls—while helpless disciples looked on and felt the agonies of near death in their own bodies, the Roman soldiers laid him upon the cross.

With great mallets they drove spikes of iron through his feet and hands and wrists. Truly he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

. . . While he was hanging on the cross for another three hours, from noon to 3:00 p.m., *all the infinite agonies and merciless pains of Gethsemane recurred.*

And, finally, when the atoning agonies had taken their toll—when the victory had been won, when the Son of God had fulfilled the will of his Father in all things—then he said, “It is finished” (John 19:30), and he voluntarily gave up the ghost.⁶

But death does not have the last word for Latter-day Saints any more than it does for other Christians. It is the living, risen Lord whom we follow. In His Resurrection Jesus completed the Atonement, for by it He overcame not only spiritual death but physical death as well. Evil and death have no victory, for Christ has overcome all. Thus, evil and death have no power over those who come to Christ and appropriate the Atonement through the channels of grace that God has provided. As the ancient liturgy states: “Christ is risen; He is risen indeed.”

Christ's Kingly Role

As we move now from Christ's priestly to His kingly role, there is no better transition than Philippians 2:5–11, which says:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to
be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him
the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given
him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things
in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is
Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Barth introduces Christ's kingly role with the following statement: "Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Lord who humbled Himself to be a servant, is also the Son of Man exalted as this servant to be the Lord, the new and true and royal man who participates in the being and life and lordship and act of God and honours and attests Him, and as such the Head and Representative and Savior of all other men, the origin and content and norm of the divine direction given us in the work of the Holy Spirit."⁷

Perhaps because the New Testament says less about the actual nature of salvation than it does about the process by which one attains it, fewer of the papers have addressed the kingly role of Christ and our participation in it. Certainly Stephen Davis addresses aspects of this role as he talks about Jesus's Resurrection and the new life both now and later in which the Christian participates. Robert Matthews has shown us the role that ordinances play in making us like Christ. David Paulsen and John Sanders have also explored aspects of this kingly work (as well as the priestly) as they have examined the fate of the unevangelized in this life, and Robert Millet spoke of the Latter-day Saint view of a saved being. As Harry Pappas explored the Eastern Orthodox concepts of salvation, particularly those related to deification, he too reached in this direction.

As we turn to Barth's treatment of Christ as king, we should note that all of Barth's theological reflections start with Jesus Christ, and this is especially true of his doctrine of election. Barth challenged Calvin on this doctrine, because in all other instances Calvin had also begun his doctrinal reflections with an examination of Christ. However, with the doctrine of election, Barth accuses Calvin of beginning with a philosophical category—that is, sovereignty—rather than beginning with Christ. Barth's contention is that if one examines what God has done in Christ, there is only one person elected to damnation—Christ Himself—and simultaneously there is one person elected to exaltation—again Christ—and all others are caught up in this election. In Barth's hands, this approaches, if it is not actually, a doctrine of universal salvation.

From my perspective, Latter-day Saint thought has affinities with Barth's on two fronts: (1) Latter-day Saints have a doctrine of salvation that is almost universal, and (2) Christ the King invites His followers to become like Him. In the first instance, Latter-day Saints hold that the gospel was made known in the premortal life, is preached in mortality, and is also preached among those who have passed beyond the veil of death. We believe all will have to deal sooner or later with Jesus Christ, the authority of the priesthood, and the saving ordinances of the gospel. How people respond will determine their ultimate destiny in terms of one of the three degrees of glory or degrees of salvation. Virtually everyone will dwell in the celestial kingdom, the terrestrial kingdom, or the telestial kingdom. Few will be utterly cast out, and thus in one sense, salvation for those who enter mortality is much broader than many other Christians would hold. However, only those who have fully appropriated the Atonement through faith, repentance, and the ordinances of the gospel administered by persons holding priesthood authority will ultimately enter the celestial kingdom, the highest degree of heaven.

In the second instance, human beings may become like Christ and the Father through the Atonement. We must be careful, however, for Saints have sometimes created barriers between themselves and their Christian neighbors because they have perhaps said more than anyone really knows about this doctrine of "becoming like Christ" or "becoming like God," as Robert Millet has indicated. There is a point

where we must finally bow in awe before the grandeur of God and His plan for His children.

Latter-day Saints talk about becoming like God because there is a similarity between God and humanity from our perspective. God and humans are of the same species, if you will. For Latter-day Saints three things other than God are eternal—matter, energy, and intelligence or intelligences. All three are self-existent and uncreated. Joseph Smith taught that man is self-existent, just as God is. There is no doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* in Latter-day Saint theology. God organizes preexisting, eternal entities, but does not create them from nothing. Consequently, inherent in the human being is the potential to become like God, for humans are as eternal as God. Probably the passage that expresses this possibility the best is found in Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–62:

And again we bear record—for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

They are they who are the church of the Firstborn. They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods even the sons of God—Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

And they shall overcome all things.

Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

Human beings have no inherent right to become gods or “joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). Human beings are sinners, and thus there will always be a qualitative difference between the Father, the Son, and us. Only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ—God the Son—is there any possibility of becoming like God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are and always will be God. Whatever God summons us to become, that becoming is rooted in the Atonement of Jesus Christ because we need cleansing from our sins and a rebuilding through the Spirit. Thus, it is with awe and wonder, not pride or arrogance, that this doctrine should be approached. In the end, I have to say that I cannot begin to comprehend it. I simply affirm that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, God will make us all that He wishes us to be. We will become through Christ sufficiently like the Father to enable us to dwell in His presence.

As others have noted, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “I believe our Father in Heaven wishes for his children that they might *approach* him in stature and stand beside him resplendent in godly strength and wisdom.”⁸ When we speak in these terms, we do not stand far from what others within the Christian tradition, especially the Eastern Orthodox, have suggested may be the ultimate destiny of human beings through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Perhaps the most poignant non-Latter-day Saint statement in recent years of human possibilities comes from C. S. Lewis. He writes: “[God] said that we were ‘gods’ and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him—for we can prevent Him if we choose—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, dazzling, radiant, immortal creatures, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for.”⁹

What of these creatures called human beings that God proposes to exalt into His presence? We have already seen that they have no inherent right to salvation. What then should we say of them? We have previously noted that there are some unique Latter-day Saint understandings of what human beings are. For example, they are eternal and uncreated. They have already lived in the presence of the Father in a premortal life. They heard the gospel plan in that premortal existence, and now they are on earth to grow and mature in their spirituality in Christ so that they may one day return to the presence of the Father. From a Latter-day Saint perspective, then, what is their nature while upon the earth?

Latter-day Saints do not believe in original sin. There is no doctrine of depravity. We do not believe that the human being loses the ability to say both yes and no to God while living in this fallen world. For Latter-day Saints, part of the way people say yes or no to God is through the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. It is through them that we appropriate the Atonement of Jesus Christ for ourselves. These are the channels of grace that bring us fully into contact with the Atonement of the Savior. The first two of these channels—faith and repentance—we share with all Christians. In the first instance, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is an encounter with Him. In that encounter we come to know who we are and who He is. He is Lord, and we are sinners in need of repentance. It is the Christian who struggles with sin in Romans 7:14–25, because it is the Christian who knows sin. Thus, the natural outgrowth of faith—of God’s turning toward us and our turning toward Him—is repentance, a radical change of life. But it is here that we part ways with most of Protestant Christianity and find ourselves in company with Catholics, for God has prescribed special ways through which we can encounter Christ and draw upon the Atonement. These ways are called ordinances, or in Catholic terms, sacraments. Robert Matthews and Kenan Osborne have helped us understand these within their respective traditions.

Latter-day Saints believe that God has commanded all persons who have reached the age of accountability to participate in the ordinances of the gospel as visible signs of their commitment to Him. In return, God meets Christians in the ordinances. Thus, all persons must

be baptized by immersion under the hands of individuals holding the priesthood of God. It is this latter—the priesthood with its attendant authority—that defines the Restoration and separates Latter-day Saints from all other Christian traditions. We believe the full authority of Deity to perform the saving ordinances of the gospel lies only within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That is why we evangelize all persons—Christians and non-Christians alike. We believe that the fulness of the gospel contains the authority to perform the saving ordinances of the gospel and thus must be offered to all persons living and dead. Once persons have been baptized by priesthood holders, hands are laid on their heads, and they are confirmed members of the Church and commanded to receive the Holy Ghost. If they permit the Spirit to enter their lives, then the Atonement becomes a full, present, daily reality upon which they can draw. In addition to these first principles and ordinances, we have the ordinances of the temple, all of which are wholly Christological in orientation, which once again bring us into contact with Jesus Christ. These are essential ordinances, because it is through them that we access Christ most fully. It is through them that we participate in Christ’s kingly role, becoming what only God can make us—joint-heirs with Christ.

Christ’s Prophetic Role

Barth begins the third section of his doctrine of reconciliation with this statement: “Jesus Christ as attested to us in Holy Scripture is the one Word of God whom we must hear and whom we must trust and obey in life and in death.”¹⁰ He goes on to say:

Defined very generally, [the event of man’s vocation] is the event in which man is set and instituted in actual fellowship with Jesus Christ, namely, in the service of His prophecy, in the *ministerium Verbi divini*, of the Word of reconciliation, and therefore in the service of God and his fellow-men. Even more generally, one might say that it is the event in which the grace (*charis*) of God which justifies man before Him and sanctifies him for Him finds its counterpart in the gratitude (*eucharistia*) of man. This event, this act of God, or more exactly the *one* act of God in Jesus Christ in a different dimension, significance and power, is the theme of the this new section.¹¹

Thus, Barth begins his treatment of discipleship. Note especially his assertion that there is only one act of God. Justification, sanctification, and discipleship are not three separate acts within the doctrine of reconciliation. They are all part of the one whole—that being the reconciliation of God and humans in Jesus Christ. To treat the doctrines of justification and sanctification without also treating the doctrine of discipleship would be completely inadequate. To say it another way, faith and works cannot be separated. We cannot appropriate justification and sanctification without also being disciples. To speak otherwise would be to fragment Christ, for His three roles of priest, king, and prophet cannot be separated. Hence, without discipleship there is no salvation. Faith without works is dead. Or to use the language of 1 John 2:3–6 (RSV): “And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says ‘I know him’ but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

Geoffrey W. Bromiley, the translator of Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, underlines the active nature of the Christian’s participation in Christ’s prophetic office in the preface to volume 4.3 of the *Dogmatics*. He says: “Because Jesus Christ, according to Barth’s title, is also ‘the true Witness,’ the atonement is not merely true; it is active truth shining and revealing itself in the world’s darkness and overcoming it. Reconciliation is not closed in upon itself; it moves out and communicates itself, and is the creative source of a reconciled community and a reconciled world. In this third form, it is in the field as the light of life, engaged in triumphant self-demonstration in the enlightening and quickening power of the Holy Spirit.”¹²

Discipleship is active and vital. It is to be lived in accord with the mind and will of God. Obedience is not a dirty word. We are to live as Christ would live. We are to be “perfect, as [our] heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48; RSV). However, some Protestant theology is shaped by Luther’s thought about the law. For him, the law was that which showed us that we needed a Savior simply because we could not keep the law. The law showed us only death and drove us

to the gospel.¹³ Calvin, on the other hand, understood that God's law still is in effect for the Christian. It is not something with which we can bribe God, if we keep it, for that would be trying to climb up to God using the law as a ladder. Instead, the law, after showing us how unable we are to keep it in the pre-Christian state, returns to the Christian through the Holy Spirit as a tutor and guide.¹⁴ It shows us the nature of the Christian life. It shows us what God wills until the time we learn to live by the Spirit, having the law written on our hearts so that no one has to teach anyone anymore (Jeremiah 31:31–34). One day, the law will be unnecessary, but until we are so fully at one with Christ that His and the Father's wills are our will, the law is present to lead us in God's paths.

I have been deeply pleased to see the emphasis on works as an outgrowth of faith in Christ among so many of our participants. Stephen Davis is clear on the importance of works as part of the Christian life, as are Craig Blomberg, Douglas Davies, and Robert Millet. Andrew Skinner has also treated works as a part of rebirth in Christ. Camille Fronk has shown us the essential nature of the Christian's prophetic office as she taught us about the gifts of the Spirit. Harry Pappas has strongly emphasized Christian vocation as responsibility in the world. For all of them, persons who live *in* Christ also live *as* Christ when guided by the Spirit.

Given this recognition of the importance of Christian works or discipleship, it puzzles me that Latter-day Saints have received so much criticism from other Christian traditions for expecting their members to live Christian lives. We know that we are saved only by the Atonement of Jesus Christ, but just as surely as justification and sanctification are part of the Atonement, so is discipleship; that is, a real human response, freely given, must be the answer to offered (but not irresistible) grace. We read Paul and see not only God's grace reflected there but also Paul's clear demand in every letter that Christians respond to Christ and live the Christian life. There are expectations in Paul for human beings to respond freely to God's grace in Christ, as well as standards in the Pauline corpus by which humans are to live, just as surely as they are present in James. Barth puts the case correctly when he says,

In the reality and power of the union of Christ with the Christian, however, their fellowship has also the meaning and character of a union of the Christian with Christ. Their fellowship would not be complete if their relationship were actualised only from above downwards and not also from below upwards, if it were not reciprocal. A justifiable concern for the unconditional predominance of the freedom, grace and decision of Jesus Christ which establish the relationship should not mislead us into suppressing or minimising the fact that His action has its correspondence in an action of the Christian. According to the guidance of the New Testament the declaration concerning the communication of Christ with the Christian necessarily includes a complementary declaration concerning the communication of the Christian with Christ.¹⁵

As I have said before, justification, sanctification, and discipleship are one whole. They are the results of Christ's priestly, kingly, and prophetic roles. Therefore, Latter-day Saint theology is a balanced theology including faith, repentance, and discipleship, the latter meaning that we believe in responding to and striving to be obedient to Christ in all that He asks and requires of us. We have seen that some of what He asks of us is included in the saving ordinances of the gospel. These channels of grace continually bring us to Christ. But beyond that there is a lifestyle that Latter-day Saints are expected to live, a lifestyle of discipleship that is the outward expression of their attachment to Christ. Without discipleship, persons can be disciplined by the Church or prohibited from entering the temples of the Church. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is serious about the necessity of discipleship, if one claims to know Christ.

In recent years, members of our faith have placed great stress on the necessity of discipleship, a stress that to outsiders may seem to have glossed over the doctrines of justification and sanctification. But for each emphasis in the Church, there is a time and a season. The emphasis on discipleship that many have observed in the Latter-day Saint community has been in part a response to what we have observed in the larger Christian community. It is our response to what Dietrich Bonhoeffer so aptly termed "cheap grace," a grace that asks nothing and expects nothing of the believer. Grace does not stand alone, and it demands response.

I admit that the Latter-day Saint emphasis on discipleship was in part a product of misunderstanding the traditional Protestant emphasis on grace. But as the world moves further and further into sensuality, materialism, and violence, the emphasis on living the Christian life is not going to go away among Latter-day Saints. If anything, it will become stronger, if for no other reason than to try to keep our children safe in a terribly dangerous world. Any downplaying of the place of works in Christian discipleship would be to succumb to the standards of the world, something I fear too many of our Christian neighbors are doing. We feel that it was precisely for that reason that a Restoration was needed. Interestingly, the conditions of the early nineteenth century were such that it may not have been wholly clear why there needed to be a Restoration. There were many good Christians leading good Christian lives. However, the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have made it very clear that there need to be clear Christian voices, unwilling to accommodate themselves to the standards of the world. There need to be voices that will speak God's word into the present time when the trumpet call of some Christians may be hesitant or wavering. We have heard clear calls to Christian discipleship from those present at this conference.

As for Latter-day Saints, we will continue to exercise our prophetic office as we demand a Christian lifestyle from our members. We will continue to demand chastity of our members. We will expect persons to continue to live the Word of Wisdom, in which tobacco, alcohol, tea, coffee, and harmful drugs are forbidden to members of the Church. Those who adhere to these standards will live more disciplined lives and will be healthier than those who do not. We will continue to ask our members in temple recommend interviews if there is anything amiss in their relationships with their families. In that question we are looking for any kind of abuse or exploitation of family members. We further expect that persons who have been divorced or separated from spouses will fulfill their obligations financially and otherwise to their family members. If they are not doing so, they are not in good standing and will not receive a temple recommend. We will continue to expect our members to attend their meetings on the Sabbath and to fulfill their callings in the Church. We make no apologies for expecting that our members will tithe ten percent of their income and that they

will provide a generous fast offering for the assistance of others less fortunate than they. That is the Lord's program, and blessings attend all who participate in it. We will continue to ask our members if they are honest in all their dealings with their fellow beings, both inside and outside the Church. And we will continue to withhold temple recommends from those who do not live the basic standards, just as surely as we will discipline those who violate the laws of chastity, honesty, and integrity.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints says with conviction that there is no such thing as a Christian without Christian discipleship. To believe that there can be salvation without works or human response to grace is to overlook the entirety of the New Testament and to attempt to separate Christ's prophetic office from His priestly and kingly offices. Christ cannot be fragmented, nor can His offices, in which we each participate, be separated.

Conclusion

We have seen that we share much in common as representatives of various denominations and traditions. We may not always agree on theological issues. However, it is clear that we all know Jesus Christ and seek to serve Him to the best of our abilities within our own traditions.

Before I conclude, I want to reflect briefly from a Latter-day Saint perspective on Harry Pappas's statement about Eastern Orthodox views on the relation between grace and the human freedom. His paper was for me an "Aha" experience. So much of my recent intra-Christian dialogue has been with evangelical Christians who have a Calvinistic background. They hold concepts of human depravity or original sin, irresistible grace, election and perhaps predestination, limited Atonement, salvation through faith without human participation, faith as a gift, and the inability to fall out of grace. In other words, God does essentially everything, and human beings have little or nothing to contribute to the relationship. Latter-day Saints do not hold these positions, and neither do the Eastern Orthodox. That was my "Aha!" I realized through Father Harry's paper that there are three hundred million Eastern Orthodox Christians who believe much as do Latter-day Saints. Latter-day Saint positions on the relationship between grace

and human cooperation with God are in harmony with a significant segment of the Christian world, albeit not with many evangelical Christians. Consequently, it seems to me that Latter-day Saints stand well within a mainstream Christian tradition on central issues related to Christ's Atonement and its appropriation.

In closing, I would reiterate something that I said at the beginning of my talk, and that is that theology—anybody's theology—has never saved a soul. It is Jesus Christ—the God of heaven and the man of Nazareth—the priest, king, and prophet—who saves us as we respond to Him in faith and repentance and walk united with Him in will and purpose.

In any kind of Christian dialogue, it is always my hope that we will celebrate that which brings us together—especially when that something is Jesus Christ—rather than focusing on less essential theological differences that may divide us. With this in mind, Krister Stendahl, the Lutheran Bishop of Stockholm, Sweden, gave three criteria for interfaith dialogue at a press conference at the time of the dedication of the Latter-day Saint Stockholm temple. They were: (1) if you want to know something about another's faith, ask an active, participating member of that faith; (2) compare your best with their best; and (3) leave room for holy envy. In harmony with Stendahl's vision of interfaith dialogue, we have heard at this conference people of faith say what they believe within the framework of their own traditions; we have compared our best with one another's best; and we have affirmed the beautiful wherever we have found it.

Notes

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical citations are from the King James Version.

1. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, volume 4 in *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936–1962), 4.1:157; hereafter cited as *CD*.

2. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1978), 6:474; hereafter cited as *HC*.

3. *HC*, 2:15.

4. *HC*, 3:30.

5. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 190.

6. Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, April 1985, 9–10; emphasis added.

7. *CD*, 4.2:3; emphasis added.

8. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, October 1994, 64; emphasis added.

9. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 176.

10. *CD*, 4.3:3.

11. *CD*, 4.3:382.

12. *CD*, 4.3:ix.

13. See Martin Luther, “The Heidelberg Disputation,” in *Luther: Early Theological Works*, vol. 19 of the Library of Christian Classics series, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 292–93, 294. Luther states, “The law works wrath: it kills, curses, makes guilty, and judges and damns every one who is not in Christ” (Thesis XXIII). “The law says, ‘Do this,’ but it is never done. Grace says: ‘Believe in him,’ and everything is done already” (Thesis XXVI).

14. See John Calvin, in *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, volume 20 of the Library of Christian Classics Series, ed. John T. McNeill and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 2:360–61. “Even the believers have need of the law” (Sec. 12). “Whoever wants to do away with the law entirely for the faithful, understands it falsely” (Sec. 13).

15. *CD*, 4.3:543–44.