

The Process of Salvation

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It is not uncommon for a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to be asked the following questions by a caring or curious Christian: “Are you a saved Christian?” or “Have you been saved?” Latter-day Saints may stumble over their words and wrestle with how to respond, for we generally associate salvation with the life to come and believe that being saved has to do with gaining eternal life following death and eventual resurrection.

Here, as in other theological matters, we use the same or similar words as our Christian neighbors to describe a Christian concept, but discover upon more serious investigation that what we mean is at least slightly different. In that vein, I would suggest that for Latter-day Saints being saved is a *process*, one that has something to do with what has been accomplished in the past, what is going on now, and what will yet take place in the future. Thus, our hesitation to respond to a rather straightforward question about being saved derives not from

any effort to avoid the issue or to suggest that we do not believe in the saving role of Jesus Christ but rather from the fact that the question is not easily answered.

In this paper I will attempt to provide a Latter-day Saint perspective on the matter of salvation in Christ and will suggest where our beliefs parallel but also differ from those of other Christian traditions.

The Greatest Gift

Salvation, or eternal life (for in most all of our scriptural sources these two terms are synonymous), is “the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7; see also D&C 6:13). It is not something for which we can barter nor something that may be purchased with money. Nor in the strictest sense is it something that may be *earned*.¹ More correctly, salvation is a gift, a gift most precious, something gloriously transcendent that may only be inherited and bestowed.

A Book of Mormon prophet explained that “the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free” (2 Nephi 2:4). One Latter-day Saint leader, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, has written: “Salvation is free. . . . Justification is free. Neither of them can be purchased; neither can be earned; neither comes by the Law of Moses, or by good works, or by any power or ability that man has. . . . Salvation is free, freely available, freely to be found. It comes because of his goodness and grace, because of his love, mercy, and condescension toward the children of men. . . . The questions then are: What salvation is free? What salvation comes by the grace of God? With all the emphasis of the rolling thunders of Sinai, we answer: All salvation is free; all comes by the merits and mercy and grace of the Holy Messiah; there is no salvation of any kind, nature, or degree that is not bound to Christ and his atonement.”²

Our Plight

Cornelius Plantinga has written:

In the film *Grand Canyon*, an immigration attorney breaks out of a traffic jam and attempts to bypass it. His route takes him along streets that seem progressively darker and more deserted. Then the predictable . . . nightmare: his expensive car stalls

on one of those alarming streets whose teenage guardians favor expensive guns and sneakers. The attorney does manage to phone for a tow truck, but before it arrives, five young street toughs surround his disabled car and threaten him with considerable bodily harm. Then, just in time, the tow truck shows up and its driver—an earnest, genial man—begins to hook up the disabled car. The toughs protest: the truck driver is interrupting their meal. So the driver takes the leader of the group aside and attempts a five-sentence introduction to metaphysics: “Man,” he says, “the world ain’t supposed to work like this. Maybe you don’t know that, but this ain’t the way it’s supposed to be. I’m supposed to be able to do my job without askin’ you if I can. And that dude is supposed to be able to wait with his car without you rippin’ him off. Everything’s supposed to be different than what it is here.”³

No, things aren’t the way they ought to be. And they haven’t been since Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden. This is a fallen world, and we are brought face to face on a regular basis with the fact that for this temporal time and season not all well-laid plans will come to fruition. Times change. Things break down. Youth fades. Bodies grow old and decay. I look at the date and recall that in June 2001 I was rushed to the hospital because of a serious heart attack. I am grateful to be alive, but I walk a little slower now, don’t have the stamina I once had, and in general feel like the old tabernacle is losing the battle against mortality.

What, then, is the nature of human beings? Are they prone to choose the right, serve others, and make noble contributions to society? Or, on the other hand, are they depraved creatures, sinful infidels who seek only the gratification of the flesh? Which is it? To resolve this dilemma, we must first recognize that some statements from LDS literature speak of our eternal nature, while others speak of our mortal or fallen nature.

To be sure, Joseph Smith taught that we are eternal beings. He declared that a person’s spirit “is not a created being; it existed from eternity, and will exist to eternity. Anything created cannot be eternal.”⁴ Subsequent Church leaders have explained that the attributes, powers, and capacities possessed by our Father in Heaven reside in men and

women in rudimentary and thus potential form. There is a sense, then, in which we might say that men and women, being spiritual heirs to godliness, are good by nature; that is, they are good because they are related to and products of the Highest Good, a spark of divinity from the Father of lights (see James 1:17). As the scriptures declare, men and women are created in the image of God (see Genesis 1:26). God is good, even the embodiment and personification of all that is noble, upright, and edifying, and we are from Him. Such teachings would surely have stood in stark contrast to the more traditional belief in human depravity held by most Christians in the nineteenth century.

Because Latter-day Saints believe in a “fortunate fall,” that the Fall of our first parents was as much a part of the plan of God as the Atonement—indeed, the Atonement derives from the Fall—they do not believe in the doctrine of human depravity. “When our spirits took possession of these tabernacles,” Brigham Young observed, “they were as pure as the angels of God, wherefore total depravity cannot be a true doctrine.”⁵ On another occasion he taught:

The spirits that live in these tabernacles were as pure as the heavens, when they entered them. They came to tabernacles that are contaminated, pertaining to the flesh, by the Fall of man. The Psalmist says, “Behold, I was shapened in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” [Psalm 51:5]. This scripture has established in the minds of some the doctrine of total depravity—that it is impossible for them to have one good thought, that they are altogether sinful, that there is no good, no soundness, and no spiritual health in them. This is not correct, yet we have a warfare within us. We have to contend against evil passions, or the seeds of iniquity that are sown in the flesh through the Fall. The pure spirits that occupy these tabernacles are operated upon [by God’s Spirit], and it is the right of Him that sent them into these tabernacles to hold the pre-eminence, and to always give them the Spirit of truth to influence the spirits of men, that [the Spirit of God] may triumph and reign predominantly in our tabernacles.⁶

C. S. Lewis also did not hold a traditional Christian view of human depravity. For one thing, Lewis concluded that if people are depraved they cannot even decide between what is good and what is

evil. "If God is wiser than we," he stated, "His judgement must differ from ours on many things, and not least on good and evil. What seems to us good may therefore not be good in His eyes, and what seems to us evil may not be evil. On the other hand, if God's moral judgement differs from ours so that our 'black' may be His 'white,' we can mean nothing by calling Him good." This particular problem would affect our relationship to God, including our obedience to Him. "If He is not (in our sense) 'good' we shall obey, if at all, only through fear—and should be equally ready to obey an omnipotent Fiend. The doctrine of Total Depravity—when the consequence is drawn that, since we are totally depraved, our idea of good is worth simply nothing, may thus turn Christianity into a form of devil-worship." Lewis also observed, "I disbelieve that doctrine [total depravity], partly on the logical ground that if our depravity were total we should not know ourselves to be depraved, and partly because experience shows us much goodness in human nature."⁷

Thus, Brigham Young explained that our spirits can be and are influenced by our fallen nature, our flesh. "Now I want to tell you," he pointed out, "that [Satan] does not hold any power over man, only so far as the body overcomes the spirit that is in a man, through yielding to the spirit of evil. The spirit that the Lord puts into a tabernacle of flesh, is under the dictation of the Lord Almighty; but the spirit and body are united in order that the spirit may have a tabernacle, and be exalted; and the spirit is influenced by the body, and the body by the spirit. In the first place the spirit is pure, and under the special control and influence of the Lord, but the body is . . . under the mighty influence of that fallen nature that is of the earth."⁸ Hence the debate between those who argue for our nobility and those who argue for our ignobility is resolved by asking the question, which nature are we speaking of? We are basically good, at least our eternal nature is. But at the same time we are basically fallen, at least our mortal nature is.

Because Adam and Eve transgressed by partaking of the forbidden fruit, they were cast from the Garden of Eden and from the presence of the Lord; they experienced spiritual death. As a result came blood, sweat, toil, opposition, bodily decay, and physical death. Even though

the Fall was a vital part of the great plan of the Eternal God, our state, including our relationship to and contact with God, changed dramatically. While Latter-day Saints do not subscribe to a belief in an “original sin,” the scriptural word does not permit us to minimize the effects of the Fall. To say that we are not accountable for or condemned by the Fall is not to say that we are unaffected by it. Joseph Smith did not believe that human beings, because of intrinsic carnality and depravity, are incapable of choosing good over evil. And he did not believe that children are born in sin, that they inherit the so-called sin of Adam, either by sexual union or by birth. But he did believe in the powerful pull of the Fall. “There is one thing under the sun which I have learned,” Joseph stated in 1843, “and that is that *the righteousness of man is sin* because it exacteth over much; nevertheless, the righteousness of God is just, because it exacteth nothing at all, but sendeth the rain on the just and the unjust, seed time and harvest, for all of which man is ungrateful.”⁹

The propensity for and susceptibility to sin are implanted in our nature at conception, as is death (see Psalm 51:5; Moses 6:55). Both death and sin are present only as potentialities at conception, and therefore neither is fully evident at birth. Death and sin do, however, become actual parts of our nature as we grow up. Sin comes spontaneously, just as death does. In the case of little children, we believe that responsibility for the results of this fallen nature (sinful actions and dispositions) are held in abeyance by virtue of the Atonement until children reach the age of eight, the time of accountability (see D&C 29:46; 68:25–27; 74:7; Moses 6:53–54). When they reach the time of accountability, however, children become subject to spiritual death and must thereafter repent and come unto Christ by covenant and through the sacraments or ordinances of the gospel.

The glad tidings, the good news, is that redemption from the Fall and reconciliation with the Father are possible. Redemption and reconciliation come through the finished work of Jesus the Christ. In short, salvation is in Christ. Redeemed people are those who have partaken of the powers of Christ through the Atonement, repented of their sins, and been renewed through the sanctifier, who is the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the midwife of salvation. He is the agent

of the new birth, the sacred channel and power by which men and women are changed and renewed and made into new creatures. This new birth brings membership in the family of God: such persons are redeemed from the Fall, reconciled to the Father through the Son, and made worthy of the designation of sons and daughters of God. They come to see and feel and understand things that the spiritually inert can never know. They become participants in the realm of divine experience. Brigham Young summed up our position on the Fall this way: "It requires all the atonement of Christ, the mercy of the Father, the pity of angels and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with us always, and then to do the very best we possibly can, to get rid of this sin within us, so that we may escape from this world into the celestial kingdom."¹⁰

A Plan of Salvation

Fundamental to the plan of God is moral agency, the divine right and capacity to choose. Agency is a gift of God, one that comes through the blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. A Book of Mormon prophet explained that "the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon. . . . Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; . . . and they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil" (2 Nephi 2:26–27). Some six hundred years later another spiritual leader declared that "whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself: for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free" (Helaman 14:30; see also D&C 58:27–28; Moses 7:32).

Latter-day Saints believe that Christian doctrines have been taught and Christian sacraments administered by Christian prophets since the beginning of time. In this sense, the Saints do not accept a type of developmental or evolutionary approach to the Old and New

Testaments. They do not accept the view that the antediluvians, for example, were primitives, or that the so-called Christian era we generally associate with the birth or ministry of Jesus is in some way superior to, on a higher plane than, or more spiritually progressive than the eras of the Old Testament patriarchs or prophets. It is true that we speak of the Christian era as “the meridian of time,” but this has reference to the centrality of Christ’s ministry, teachings, and atoning sacrifice more than to the uniqueness of the message delivered in the first century.

God has revealed Himself and His plan of salvation during different periods of the earth’s history called *dispensations*. The Adamic dispensation was the first. Latter-day Saint scripture declares that Adam and Eve, after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, called upon God in prayer and came to know the course they should pursue in life through God’s voice, through the ministry of angels, and through revelation by the power of the Holy Ghost. This gospel was then taught to their children and their grandchildren, and thus the knowledge of God, of a coming Savior, and of a plan for the redemption and reclamation of wandering souls was in effect early on (see Moses 5:1–8, 58).

Other dispensations followed, periods of time wherein the heavens were opened, prophets were called and empowered, and new truths and new authorities were restored to the earth, usually following a time of falling away or apostasy. Thus, the ministries and teachings of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Joseph Smith introduced major dispensations, periods wherein God—His person and plan—was revealed anew. Lest there be misunderstanding at this point, I hasten to add that Jesus Christ is chief, preeminent, and supreme over all the prophets. Jesus was a prophet, a restorer, a revealer of God, but He was also the divine Son of God. Under the Father, His is the power by which men and women are forgiven, redeemed, and born again unto a new spiritual life. All the prophets from the beginning testified of Christ; all of those called as spokesmen or mouthpieces for God were, first and foremost, witnesses of the Redeemer, inasmuch as “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).

The Atonement

The word *gospel* means “good news” or “glad tidings.” The bad news is that because of the Fall of our first parents we are subject to the effects and pull of sin and death. The bad news is that because of the Fall, men and women experience spiritual death—separation and alienation from the presence of God the Father. The bad news is that every man, woman, and child will one day face the grim reaper, the universal horror we know as physical death. The good news is that there is help, relief, extrication from the pain and penalty of our sins. The good news is that there is reconciliation with God the Father through the mediation of His Son, Jesus Christ. The good news is that there is an Atonement, literally an at-one-ment with the Father. The good news is that the victory of the grave and the sting of death are swallowed up in the power of One greater than death (see 1 Corinthians 15:54–55; see also Isaiah 25:8). The good news is the promise of eventual life after death through the Resurrection. The good news is that victory and divine help begin in this life; we do not need to wait until after death. In short, the gospel is the good news that Christ came to earth, that He lived and taught and suffered and died and rose again, all to the end that those who believe and obey might be delivered from death and sin unto eternal life (see D&C 76:40–42). This good news we share with Christians throughout the world.

Jesus did what no other man or woman has ever done, could do, or will do—He lived a perfect life. He was tempted in all points just as we are, but He did not yield (see Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). Jesus was the Truth; He taught the truth, and His teachings stand as the formula for happiness, the guide for personal, interpersonal, and world peace. His messages, as contained in the New Testament, are timely and timeless; they are a treasure house of wisdom and divine direction for our lives. But other men and women have spoken the truth, have offered wise counsel for our lives, and have even provided profound insight as to who we are and what life is all about. Jesus did what no other person could do—He atoned for our sins and rose from the dead. Only a god, only a person with powers over death, could do such things.

While everything Jesus did from the time of His baptism until His final ascent into heaven was in some way contributive to His mission

of atonement, Latter-day Saints believe that the final phase of the Atonement of Christ began in the Garden of Gethsemane and was consummated on the cross of Calvary. Professor Douglas Davies has written: “Christians have paid relatively little attention to what befell Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane compared to what happened to him at the Last Supper and on Calvary. This is as true for artists as it is for theologians. There are innumerable paintings of the Crucifixion but relatively few dealing with Christ’s Passion in the garden. So, too, with theology: there is much written about the Eucharist and Christ’s death but much less on his personal trial in the garden.” Davies goes on to describe the master’s anguish in Gethsemane as a betrayal of sorts, one instance among many during the long hours of atonement, in which Jesus was left alone, this time by the Father Himself.¹¹

Pastor John MacArthur, in writing of the “bitter cup” Jesus was called upon to imbibe, observed: “Never was so much sorrow emanating from the soul of one individual. We could never comprehend the depth of Christ’s agony because, frankly, we cannot perceive the wickedness of sin as He could. Nor can we appreciate the terrors of divine wrath the way He did.” Further, he asked: “What is the cup? It is not merely death. It is not the physical pain of the cross. It was not the scourging or the humiliation. It was not the horrible thirst, the torture of having nails driven through His body, or the disgrace of being spat upon or beaten. It was not even all of those things combined.” Rather, MacArthur adds, “what Christ dreaded most about the cross—the cup from which he asked to be delivered if possible—was the outpouring of divine wrath He would have to endure from His holy Father. . . . In some mysterious way that our human minds could never fathom, God the Father would turn His face from Christ the Son, and Christ would bear the full brunt of the divine fury against sin. . . . In other words, on the cross, God imputed our sin to Christ and then punished Him for it.”¹²

One of the direct consequences of sin is the withdrawal of the Father’s Spirit, resulting in feelings of loss, anxiety, disappointment, fear, alienation, and guilt. Latter-day Saint scripture and leaders affirm that Jesus experienced the withdrawal of the Father’s Spirit and thus suffered in both body and spirit (see D&C 19:15–20). The withdrawal

of the Spirit lasted for a period of hours in Gethsemane and recurred on the cross the next day. This was why Jesus cried out from the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). A Book of Mormon prophet described our Lord’s sufferings as follows: “And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken to his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2 Nephi 9:21). The difference for Latter-day Saints is their belief that the Savior’s suffering in Gethsemane was not just prelude to the Atonement but a vital and important part of it. In the Book of Mormon, a prophet-king, speaking of the coming of the Messiah, said: “And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, *blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people*” (Mosiah 3:7; emphasis added).

In a revelation given through Joseph Smith in March 1830, the resurrected Lord declared:

Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; *which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.* (D&C 19:15–19; emphasis added)

It was Brigham Young who spoke specifically on the subject of what made Jesus sweat blood in the garden:

God never bestows upon His people, or upon an individual, superior blessings without a severe trial to prove them, to prove that individual, or that people. . . . For this express purpose *the Father withdrew His spirit from His Son, at the time he was to be crucified.* Jesus had been with his Father, talked with Him, dwelt

in His bosom, and knew all about heaven, about making the earth, about the transgression of man, and what would redeem the people, and that he was the character who was to redeem the sons of earth, and the earth itself from all sin that had come upon it. . . . Consequently at the very moment, at the hour when the crisis came for him to offer up his life, *the Father withdrew Himself, withdrew His Spirit, and cast a veil [sic] over him. That is what made him sweat blood. If he had had the power of God upon him, he would not have sweat blood; but all was withdrawn from him, and a veil was cast over him, and he then pled with the Father not to forsake him.*¹³

How this took place is unknown. We believe in Christ and trust in His redeeming mercy and grace. We accept the word of scripture, both ancient and modern, in regard to the ransoming mission of Jesus the Christ. We know from personal experience—having been transformed from pain to peace, from darkness to light—of the power in Christ to renew the human soul. But, like the rest of the Christian world, we cannot rationally comprehend the work of a God. We cannot grasp how one man can assume the effect of another man's error, and, more especially, how one man, even a man possessed of the power of God, can suffer for another's sins. The Atonement, the greatest act of mercy and love in all eternity, though real, is, for now, incomprehensible and unfathomable.

Very often I am asked why the Latter-day Saints do not believe in the saving efficacy of the cross. In point of fact, we do. As I previously mentioned, what began in Gethsemane was completed, brought to its conclusion, on the cross. President Ezra Taft Benson explained, "In Gethsemane and on Calvary, He [Christ] worked out the infinite and eternal atonement. It was the greatest single act of love in recorded history. Thus He became our Redeemer."¹⁴ In short, it was necessary that Jesus (1) forgive our sins and thereby deliver us from spiritual death; and (2) die and then rise from the dead, to offer the hope of resurrection, thereby overcoming physical death. One Book of Mormon prophet foresaw the time, some six hundred years ahead, when Jesus would be "*lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world*" (1 Nephi 11:33; emphasis added). Notice the language of the risen

Lord to the people of the Book of Mormon: “Behold, I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—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*; 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, whether they be good or whether they be evil” (3 Nephi 27:13–14; emphasis added). In that spirit, Joseph F. Smith, sixth President of the Church, reminded us that “having been born anew, which is the putting away of the old man sin, and putting on of the man Christ Jesus, we have become soldiers of the Cross, having enlisted under the banner of Jehovah for time and for eternity.”¹⁵

Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body. Following death, that spirit goes into a postmortal spirit world to await the time when spirit and body are reunited, the time we know as the Resurrection. Latter-day Saints accept the account in the New Testament that Jesus of Nazareth died on the cross and that His body was taken down by His disciples and placed in a tomb. On the third day He rose from the dead. His physical body was joined again with His spirit. With that physical body He walked and talked and taught and ate and ministered. The Resurrection of Jesus is of monumental importance; it was the first occurrence of a resurrection on this earth and stands as a physical proof of His divine sonship (see 1 Corinthians 15:12–17; 2 Nephi 9:8–9; 3 Nephi 11). Again, in a way that is incomprehensible to finite minds, Christ’s rise from the tomb opened the door for all men and women to rise one day from death to life. In short, because He rose, we shall also, in the proper time.

The following words of God to Moses the Lawgiver are recorded in the Pearl of Great Price: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). This is a capsule statement, a succinct summary of the work of redemption in Christ. From a Latter-day Saint perspective, two types of salvation are made available through the Atonement of Jesus Christ—universal and individual. All who take a physical body—good or bad, evil or righteous—will be resurrected. That is, all men and women

will one day rise from death to life, their spirits reuniting with their bodies, never again to be divided. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). This is universal salvation. It is salvation from physical death, a salvation available to all. Immortality is salvation from the grave. It is endless life. It is a universal gift.

Individual salvation is another matter. Though salvation is available to all through the goodness and grace of Christ, there are certain things that must be done in order for divine grace and mercy to be activated in the lives of individual followers of Christ. Persons must come unto Him, accept Him as Lord and Savior, and have faith on His name. The products of that faith include repentance, baptism, the reception of the Holy Spirit, and dedicated discipleship until the end of one's life. Eternal life comes to those who believe and obey. Christ is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9). One Book of Mormon prophet thus observed: "And he [Christ] shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else. Therefore the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works" (Alma 11:40–41).

Latter-day Saints believe that all men and women have the capacity to be saved. "We believe," Joseph Smith wrote in 1842, "that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" (Articles of Faith 1:3). Stated another way, there is no person who comes to earth who is outside the reach of Christ's power to save, no soul beyond the pale of mercy and grace. God is no respecter of persons, as Peter pointed out, "but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35). Thus, Latter-day Saints do not believe in predestination, that men and women are chosen or elected unconditionally to salvation or damnation. Joseph Smith taught that "unconditional election of individuals to eternal life was not taught by the Apostles. God did elect or predestinate, that all those who

would be saved, should be saved in Christ Jesus, and through obedience to the Gospel; but He passes over no man's sins, but visits them with correction, and if His children will not repent of their sins He will discard them."¹⁶

The highest rewards hereafter and the greatest happiness here are reserved for those who come unto Christ and accept His gospel. Though we acknowledge the decency of men and women of goodwill everywhere—the effort of many outside the Christian faith to make a positive difference in the world, and the nobility and refined character of so many who adopt other religious views—still we hold to the position that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of all men and women. His message and redemptive labors are infinite in scope and meant to be accepted by all. He will one day return in glory to the earth, assume responsibility for the purification of this planet, and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

And so while “the wages of sin is death,” we know that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). As indicated, a gift must be received. Although there is no question that salvation is in Christ and that the renovation of men and women's souls is the work of a God, persons who choose to come unto Christ are expected to be more than grateful and passive observers of the changes taking place within them. Men and women have a role to play. “We can't know Jesus as the Messiah,” John MacArthur pointed out, “until we surrender to Him. . . . You will never know whether Jesus can save your soul from hell, give you new life, re-create your soul, plant His Holy Spirit there, forgive your sin, and send you to heaven until you give your life totally to Him. That is self-denial, cross bearing, and following Him in obedience. . . . I don't believe anyone ever slipped and fell into the kingdom of God. That's cheap grace, easy-believism, Christianity Lite, a shallow, emotional revivalist approach.”¹⁷ “We profanely assume,” C. S. Lewis noted, “that divine and human action exclude one another like the actions of two fellow-creatures so that ‘God did this’ and ‘I did this’ cannot both be true of the same act except in the sense that each contributed a share.” He continued: “In the end we must admit a two-way traffic at the junction. . . . We have nothing that we have not received; but part of what we have received

is the power of being something more than receptacles.”¹⁸ As Lewis stated elsewhere, “Christians have often disputed as to whether what leads the Christian home is good actions, or faith in Christ. I have no right really to speak on such a difficult question, but it does seem to me like asking which blade in a pair of scissors is most necessary. . . . You see, we are now trying to understand, and to separate into watertight compartments, what exactly God does and what man does when God and man are working together.”¹⁹

Latter-day Saints have often been critical of those who stress salvation by grace alone, while we have often been criticized for a type of works-righteousness. We believe that the gospel is, in fact, a gospel *covenant*. The Lord agrees to do for us what we could never do for ourselves—forgive our sins, lift our burdens, renew our souls and recreate our nature, raise us from the dead, and qualify us for glory hereafter. Whereupon, we strive to do what we *can* do: have faith in Christ, repent of our sins, be baptized, love and serve one another, and do all in our power to put off the natural man and deny ourselves of ungodliness. In short, we believe that more is required of men and women than a verbal expression of faith in the Lord, more than a confession with the lips that we have received Christ into our hearts. Without question, the power to save us, to change us, to renew our souls, is in Christ. True faith, however, always manifests itself in *faithfulness*. Thus, the real question is not whether one is saved by grace or by works but rather, In whom do we trust? On whom do we rely?

Few things would be more sinister than encouraging lip service to God while discouraging obedience and faithful discipleship. On the other hand, surely nothing could be more offensive to God than a smug self-assurance that comes from trusting in one’s own works or relying upon one’s own strength. What is perhaps the most well-known passage in Latter-day Saint literature on this delicate matter is found in the Book of Mormon: “For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; *for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do*” (2 Nephi 25:23; emphasis added; see also 2 Nephi 10:24; Alma 24:10–11). That is, above and beyond all we can do, in spite of all we can do, notwithstanding all we can do, we are

saved by the grace of Christ. Further, the more we learn to trust the Lord and rely upon His merits and mercy, the less anxious we become about life here and hereafter. “Thus, if you have really handed yourself over to Him, it must follow that you are trying to obey Him. But trying in a new way, a less worried way.”²⁰

Justification and Sanctification

At the time of the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in April of 1830, Joseph Smith recorded the following revelation: “And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.” Now note these words: “And we know that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true; and we know also, that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength” (D&C 20:29–31).

One Church leader, Elder D. Todd Christofferson, pointed out that “Justification and sanctification are at the center of God’s gracious plan of salvation.” In speaking of justification, he wrote that “pardon comes by the grace of Him who has satisfied the demands of justice by His own suffering, ‘the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God’ (1 Peter 3:18). He removes our condemnation without removing the law. We are pardoned and placed in a condition of righteousness with Him. We become, like Him, without sin. We are sustained and protected by the law, by justice. We are, in a word, *justified*. Thus, we may appropriately speak of one who is justified as pardoned, without sin, or guiltless.”²¹

Sidney B. Sperry wrote:

Justification seems to anticipate for a Christian a decision of “acquittal” or of being regarded as “righteous” in a future divine judgment. Can a member of the Church of Christ be regarded in the present time as being justified by faith? If he has truly been “born again” of the Spirit and continues in a newness of life, we may answer “yes.” In anticipation of his continued observance of the requirements of God, he may be regarded as “acquitted” or

as “righteous,” and so is in Divine favor. A comparison may be made by reference to a man on an escalator. We anticipate that he will reach a given floor if he stays on the escalator. So a person will eventually be justified, but may be regarded as being so now, if he retains a remission of sins (Mosiah 4:26) and continually shows his faith in God.²²

Elder Christofferson added that “to be sanctified through the blood of Christ is to become clean, pure, and holy. If justification removes the punishment for past sin, then sanctification removes the stain or effects of sin. . . . This marvelous pardon that relieves us of the punishment that justice would otherwise exact for disobedience and the purifying sanctification that follows are best described as gifts. . . . *Given the magnitude of the gift of grace, we would never suppose, even with all the good we could possibly do in this life, that we had earned it. It is just too great.*”²³

To say this another way, justification is a legal term; being justified establishes my righteous *standing* before God. On the other hand, sanctification is an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, one that deals with the gradual purification of my *state*. One early twentieth-century leader, B. H. Roberts, insightfully taught that the forgiven soul may still continue to

feel the force of sinful habits bearing heavily upon him. He who has been guilty of habitual untruthfulness, will at times find himself inclined, perhaps, to yield to that habit. He who has stolen may be sorely tempted, when opportunity arises, to steal again. While he who has indulged in licentious practices may again find himself disposed to give way to the seductive influence of the siren. So with drunkenness, malice, envy, covetousness, hatred, anger, and in short all the evil dispositions that flesh is heir to.

There is an absolute necessity for some additional sanctifying grace that will strengthen poor human nature, not only to enable it to resist temptation, but also to root out from the heart concupiscence—the blind tendency or inclination to evil. The heart must be purified, every passion, every propensity made submissive to the will, and the will of man brought into subjection to the will of God.

Man’s natural powers are unequal to this task; so, I believe, all will testify who have made the experiment. Mankind stand in

*some need of a strength superior to any they possess of themselves, to accomplish this work of rendering pure our fallen nature. Such strength, such power, such a sanctifying grace is conferred on man in being born of the Spirit—in receiving the Holy Ghost. Such, in the main, is its office, its work.*²⁴

The Doctrine and Covenants poses this question: “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift” (D&C 88:33). Thus, while we are justified and sanctified through the mercy of God, yet such gifts must be received, must be accessed. This occurs through receiving what are known as the first principles and ordinances of the gospel—namely, faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and the receipt of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. Joseph Smith also called these the “articles of adoption,” the means by which men and women are adopted into the family of the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁵ Again, in a very real sense, repentance, baptism, and confirmation are the *effects* that flow from saving faith.

Orson Pratt, an Apostle, wrote:

Faith alone will not save men: neither will faith and works save them, unless they are of the right kind. . . . The first effect of true faith is a sincere, true, and thorough repentance of all sins; the second effect is an immersion in water, for the remission of sins; the third is the reception of the ordinance of the laying on of the hands for the baptism of the Holy Ghost: these are the first commandments in the Gospel. No man has a saving faith without attending to these three requirements. . . . Indeed these are the introductory principles, and the only principles by which men and women can be born into the kingdom of Christ, and become his sons and daughters. . . .

A faith, then, that brings remission of sins or justification to the sinner, is that which is connected with repentance and baptism. Faith alone will not justify; faith and repentance alone will not justify; faith and baptism alone will not justify; but faith, repentance, and baptism will justify and bring remission of sins through the blood of Christ. What does Paul mean when he says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God,

through our Lord Jesus Christ?" He means that *faith is the starting point—the foundation and cause of our repentance and baptism which bring remission or justification*; and being the cause which leads to those results, it is not improper to impute justification to faith.

And then, in commenting on the Apostle Paul's teaching that "by grace are [we] saved" in Ephesians 2, Elder Pratt explained:

We are to understand from these passages, that the grace and faith by which man is saved, are the gifts of God, having been purchased for him not by his own works, but by the blood of Christ. Had not these gifts been purchased for man, all exertions on his part would have been entirely unavailing and fruitless. Whatever course man might have pursued, he could not have atoned for one sin; it required the sacrifice of a sinless and pure Being in order to purchase the gifts of faith, repentance, and salvation for fallen man. *Grace, Faith, Repentance, and Salvation, when considered in their origin, are not of man, neither by his works; man did not devise, originate, nor adopt them; superior Beings in Celestial abodes, provided these gifts, and revealed the conditions to man by which he might become a partaker of them.* Therefore all boasting on the part of man is excluded. He is saved by a plan which his works did not originate, a plan of heaven, and not of earth.²⁶

In short, when one has faith, repents, and is baptized, he or she is justified before God. Thereafter, by virtue of the Atonement, as well as the baptism which has taken place, a person may plead for forgiveness and receive from God a remission of sins. "None of us, of course, is perfectly obedient, and thus we rely on our baptismal covenant to bring a remission of sins after baptism just as it has done for our lives before baptism. We rely on repentance to reinvigorate that covenant [or to "renew" one's covenant], to bring the Holy Spirit and, with it, atoning grace. The process of cleansing and sanctifying through the baptisms of water and of the Holy Ghost can be continued weekly as we worthily partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper."²⁷ To be sure, the sacrament or ordinance of baptism does not save, nor does partaking of the emblems of the Savior's broken body and spilt blood, for salvation is in Christ the person; rather, baptism and the sacrament

of the Lord's Supper are channels of divine grace that help activate the power of God in a person's life.

In one sense, a person is sanctified at the time he or she enters the kingdom of God through baptism. The initiate is cleansed of sin and accounted a Saint, a sanctified one, a member of Christ's Church (see 1 Corinthians 1:2). At the same time, the process of sanctification goes on for the rest of one's life. Brigham Young explained that sanctification

consists in overcoming every sin and bringing all into subjection to the law of Christ. God has placed in us a pure spirit; when this reigns predominant, without let or hindrance, and triumphs over the flesh and rules and governs and controls as the Lord controls the heavens and the earth, this I call the blessing of sanctification. Will sin be perfectly destroyed? No, it will not, for it is not so designed in the economy of Heaven. . . . Do not suppose that we shall ever in the flesh be free from temptations to sin. Some suppose that they can in the flesh be sanctified body and spirit and become so pure that they will never again feel the effects of the power of the adversary of truth. Were it possible for a person to attain to this degree of perfection in the flesh, he could not die neither remain in a world where sin predominates. Sin has entered into the world, and death by sin. I think we shall more or less feel the effects of sin so long as we live, and finally have to pass the ordeals of death. . . . If we live our religion it will enable us to so overcome sin that it will not reign in our mortal bodies but will become subject to us, and the world and its fulness will become our servant instead of our master.²⁸

Prevenient Grace

One group of scholars defined prevenient grace as follows: "A designation of the priority of God's gracious initiative on behalf of humans." This prevenient grace "precedes all human response to God's initiative." For Calvinists, it "is bestowed only on those God elects to eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ." For Arminians, it "is the Holy Spirit's work in the hearts of all people, which gives them the freedom to say yes to the gospel."²⁹

Although Latter-day Saints believe that salvation is available to all men and women (see Articles of Faith 1:3), they acknowledge at the same time that the effects of the Fall tend to entice humankind away from God, away from godliness, and away from an acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. To counteract this influence, there are unconditional blessings and benefits—graces that flow from the Almighty. For one thing, Latter-day Saints believe that every man and woman born into mortality possesses the Light of Christ or the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This inner light is given to each of us to lead us to God, to Christ, and to the gospel. One important manifestation of the Light of Christ is what we call conscience, a kind of moral monitor by which people know right from wrong, good from evil, important from insignificant. If persons are true to this light within them, they will in time be led to higher light and deeper understanding (see Moroni 7:12–19; D&C 84:44–48).

Note this language from an early Book of Mormon prophet: “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall.” Now pay particular attention to the following: “*And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon. . . . Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh. . . . And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself*” (2 Nephi 2:25–27; emphasis added; see also 2 Nephi 10:23).

Some six hundred years later, a prophet pleaded with a wayward people: “And now remember, remember, my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free. He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death” (Helaman 14:30–31). In the Doctrine and Covenants, the early Latter-day Saints were instructed that “men should be anxiously

engaged in a good cause, and *do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; for the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves*" (D&C 58:27–28; emphasis added).

Saved: Today and Tomorrow

Do Latter-day Saints, then, consider themselves “saved Christians”? In April 1998 Elder Dallin H. Oaks addressed this question in a general conference of the Church. He pointed out that Latter-day Saints use the words *saved* and *salvation* in several ways: saved from the permanence of physical death through the Resurrection of Christ; saved in the sense of having died to sin and come alive to things of righteousness; saved in the sense of having escaped ignorance concerning God, Jesus Christ, and the plan of salvation; saved from the second death or final spiritual death; saved from sin on condition of repentance; and saved in the sense of being exalted through the receipt of temple ordinances, a matter that will be discussed shortly.³⁰

Latter-day Saints identify, to some extent, with the following from Evangelical theologian John Stott:

Salvation is a big and comprehensive word. It embraces the totality of God’s saving work, from beginning to end. In fact salvation has three tenses, past, present and future. . . . I have been saved (in the past) from the penalty of sin by a crucified Saviour. I am being saved (in the present) from the power of sin by a living Saviour. And I shall be saved (in the future) from the very presence of sin by a coming Saviour. . . .

If therefore you were to ask me, “Are you saved?” there is only one correct biblical answer which I could give you: “yes and no.” Yes, in the sense that by the sheer grace and mercy of God through the death of Jesus Christ my Saviour he has forgiven my sins, justified me and reconciled me to himself. But no, in the sense that I still have a fallen nature and live in a fallen world and have a corruptible body, and I am longing for my salvation to be brought to its triumphant completion.³¹

Well, then, do Latter-day Saints believe they are saved? What about “eternal security”? Or do they, as some have suggested to me, live in constant anxiety and morbid fear because they sense they must

“save themselves”? Whereas the ultimate blessings of salvation do not come until the next life, there is a sense in which people in this life may enjoy the assurance of salvation and the peace that accompanies that knowledge (see D&C 59:23). True faith in Christ produces *hope in Christ*—not worldly wishing but *expectation, anticipation, and assurance*. As the Apostle Paul wrote, the Holy Spirit provides the “earnest of our inheritance,” the promise or evidence that we are on course, in covenant, and thus in line for full salvation in the world to come (Ephesians 1:13–14; see also 2 Corinthians 1:21–22; 5:5). That is, the Spirit of God operating in our lives is like the Lord’s “earnest money” on us—His sweet certification that He seriously intends to save us with an everlasting salvation. Thus, if we are striving to cultivate the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are living in what might be called a “saved” condition.

David O. McKay, ninth President of the Church, taught that “the gospel of Jesus Christ, as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, is in very deed, in every way, the power of God unto salvation. It is salvation *here*—here and now. It gives to every man the perfect life, here and now, as well as hereafter.”³² On another occasion, President McKay taught: “Sometimes we think of salvation as a state of bliss after we die. *I should like to think of salvation as a condition here in life today.* I like to think that my Church makes me a better man, my wife a better woman, a sweeter wife, my children nobler sons and daughters, here and now. I look upon the gospel as a power contributing to those conditions.”³³ Brigham Young stated: “*It is present salvation and the present influence of the Holy Ghost that we need every day to keep us on saving ground. . . . I want present salvation. . . . Life is for us, and it is for us to receive it to-day, and not wait for the Millennium. Let us take a course to be saved to-day, and, when evening comes, review the acts of the day, repent of our sins, if we have any to repent of, and say our prayers; then we can lie down and sleep in peace until the morning, arise with gratitude to God, commence the labours of another day, and strive to live the whole day to God and nobody else.*”³⁴

“I am in the hands of the Lord,” President Young pointed out, “and never trouble myself about my salvation, or what the Lord will do with me hereafter.”³⁵ As he said on another occasion, our work “is

a work of the present. *The salvation we are seeking is for the present, and, sought correctly, it can be obtained, and be continually enjoyed.* If it continues to-day, it is upon the same principle that it will continue tomorrow, the next day, the next week, or the next year, and, we might say, the next eternity.”³⁶

I like the thought that has been expressed that heaven “is not, so to speak, the reward for ‘being a good boy’ (though many people seem to think so), but is the continuation and expansion of a quality of life which begins when a man’s central confidence is transferred from himself to God-become-man [Jesus Christ].” It is fascinating “that Jesus Christ on more than one occasion is reported to have spoken of ‘eternal life’ as being entered into *now*, though plainly to extend without limitation after the present incident we call life. The man who believes in the authenticity of His message and puts his confidence in it already possesses the quality of ‘eternal life’ (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47). He comes to bring men not merely ‘life,’ but life of a deeper and more enduring quality (John 10:10; 10:28; 17:3).”³⁷

Salvation is a process, one that includes hearing the word, being transformed by the power of that word, coming into the kingdom of God by covenant and ordinance, and then remaining in the gospel harness. One’s spiritual growth and maturity take place line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little (see Isaiah 28:10; 2 Nephi 28:30). Truly, as Paul wrote, “now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Romans 13:11). The Saints can thus be possessed of that confidence that “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). Our task is thus to “stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God” (D&C 123:17; see also Exodus 14:13).

While a man or woman may receive the conditional assurance of salvation in this life through the influence of the Spirit—the quiet but compelling realization that one is on course and thus in line for full salvation hereafter—Latter-day Saints also speak a great deal about “enduring to the end”—remaining constant, steadfast, and immovable in the faith (see Mosiah 5:15) until death. Thus, the promise is that “whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end the same shall be saved” (Alma 32:13). Also,

“And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God” (D&C 14:7). Finally, “Blessed are they who are faithful and endure, whether in life or in death, for they shall inherit eternal life” (D&C 50:5). Endurance to the end entails walking in the light as Christ is in the light (see 1 John 1:7), striving to manifest our faith through our faithfulness. Truly, “the only visible evidence you will ever have of your salvation is a life lived in the direction of obedience; it is the proof that you genuinely have bowed to the lordship of Jesus Christ and been transformed by His grace into a servant of His righteousness.”³⁸

A Broad Concept of Salvation

As early as February 1832, Joseph Smith declared that the life beyond consists of more than heaven and hell. He recorded a revelation known as “The Vision of the Glories” or simply “The Vision” (see D&C 76). This vision serves as a type of commentary on the Master’s declaration that “in my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2) and on the Apostle Paul’s passing comment to the Corinthians about types of bodies in the Resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–42). The Prophet Joseph stated that God revealed to him the concept of three main divisions in the afterlife—in descending order (in terms of the greatest eternal reward), the celestial kingdom, terrestrial kingdom, and telestial kingdom, each of which is a kingdom of glory.

Latter-day Saints use the term *hell* to mean two things: (1) the division of the postmortal spirit world where those who lived wickedly and spurned morality and decency reside until the time of their resurrection; and, ultimately, (2) the final abode of those called the “sons of perdition,” persons who deny and defy the truth, who come to know God and then fight against Him and His plan of salvation (see D&C 76:31–35). Only the sons of perdition face the second death (meaning the second or final spiritual death). They inherit a kingdom of no glory. Everyone else will come forth from the grave to inherit a kingdom of glory.

In that sense, Latter-day Saints believe in a type of universal salvation, not in the sense that everyone will one day dwell with God and be like God, but rather that all who do not defect to perdition

will enjoy a measure of God's goodness and grace through inheriting a heaven of some type.³⁹ For one thing, all people who have had a physical body will be resurrected, "for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). Or, as a Book of Mormon prophet put it, "the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works" (Alma 11:41). As stated in the Vision, "And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, . . . that he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness; that through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him; who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands, except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him" (D&C 76:40–43).

This idea is not totally foreign to other Christians. In the words of popular writer Bruce Wilkinson, "Although your eternal destination is based on your belief [in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior], how you spend eternity is based on your behavior while on earth." Thus, "the Unbreakable Link" is stated as follows: "Your choices on earth have direct consequences on your life in eternity." Discipleship flows from true conversion. That is, "doing is a servant's language of devotion." In short, "there will be degrees of reward in heaven."⁴⁰ Jonathan Edwards stated, "There are many mansions in God's house because heaven is intended for various degrees of honor and blessedness. Some are designed to sit in higher places there than others; some are designed to be advanced to higher degrees of honor and glory than others are."⁴¹ Similarly, John Wesley spoke of some persons enjoying "higher degrees of glory" hereafter: "There is an inconceivable variety in the degrees of reward in the other world. . . . In worldly things men are ambitious to get as high as they can. Christians have a far more noble ambition. The difference between the very highest and the lowest state in the world is nothing to the smallest difference between the degrees of glory."⁴²

Once while I was sitting with a group of religious scholars, they commented to me that the problem with the LDS conception of heaven is that *everyone* is saved. I thought of that conversation as I later read the following from Richard John Neuhaus, a Roman Catholic scholar:

“The hope that all may be saved . . . offends some Christians. It is as though salvation were a zero-sum proposition, as though there is only so much to go around, as though God’s grace to others will somehow diminish our portion of grace. . . . If we love others, it seems that we must hope that, in the end, they will be saved. We must hope that all will one day hear the words of Christ, ‘Today you will be with me in paradise.’ Given the evidence of Scripture and tradition, we cannot deny that hell exists. We can, however, hope that hell is empty. We cannot know that, but we can hope it is the case.”⁴³

While our faith and conduct in this mortal experience are vital, learning and growth and redemption continue well beyond the grave. “When you climb up a ladder,” Joseph Smith explained only two months before his death, “you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil [of death] before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.”⁴⁴ As Charles W. Penrose once stated, “While there is one soul of this race, willing and able to accept and obey the laws of redemption, no matter where or in what condition it may be found, Christ’s work will be incomplete until that being is brought up from death and hell, and placed in a position of progress, upward and onward, in such glory as is possible for its enjoyment and the service of the great God.”⁴⁵

Temples and Salvation

It is not uncommon to have one of my Christian friends, particularly one who knows me well and senses my commitment to Jesus Christ, ask me, “Bob, if you sincerely believe in the ransoming power and completed work of Jesus Christ, why do you as a people build and attend temples? Is salvation really in Christ, or must you enter the temple to be saved?” This is an excellent question, one that has forced me to ponder carefully the place and meaning of temples in our theology. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught that “each temple built by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stands as an

expression of the testimony of this people that God our Eternal Father lives, that He has a plan for the blessing of His sons and daughters of all generations, that His Beloved Son, Jesus the Christ, who was born in Bethlehem of Judea and was crucified on the cross of Golgotha, is the Savior and Redeemer of the world, whose atoning sacrifice makes possible the fulfillment of that plan in the eternal life of each who accepts and lives the gospel.” On another occasion he stated, “These unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology.” Thus, the temple is “a statement that we as a people believe in the immortality of the human soul. . . . It speaks of life here and life beyond the grave.”⁴⁶

Like most Christians, Latter-day Saints believe that the ancient tabernacles and temples were types of the Savior. That is, the “placement, the furniture, the clothing—each item was specified by the Lord to bear witness, in typology, symbolism and similitude of Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice.”⁴⁷ This appears to be the message of Hebrews, chapters 9 and 10. “Accordingly,” one LDS writer has observed, “it should not seem surprising that the Atonement is a focal point of modern temple worship, just as it was in ancient times.”⁴⁸ The temple and its ordinances are the highest channel of grace, indeed, the culminating channel, the means by which men and women are endowed with power from on high through their connection with Jesus Christ (see Luke 24:49). These ordinances serve as extensions and reminders of the Lord’s infinite and eternal Atonement. In that sense, “The rebirth that climaxes all rebirths is in the House of the Lord.”⁴⁹

The covenants and ordinances of the temple “embody certain obligations on the part of the individual,” such that he or she promises “to observe the law of strict virtue and chastity, to be charitable, benevolent, tolerant and pure; to devote both talent and material means to the spread of truth and the uplifting of the race; to maintain devotion to the cause of truth; and to seek in every way to contribute to the great preparation that the earth may be made ready to receive her King,—the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵⁰ As Elder Tad R. Callister writes, “An integral part of the temple experience is the making of covenants. Why? Because faithful observance of those covenants can help to

bring about the broken heart and contrite spirit that allow us to more fully enjoy the infinite blessings of the Atonement.” Further, “It is our privilege, in the sanctity of these holy places, to commune and reflect more meaningfully upon the Savior and his vicarious act of love for each of us, and then to receive of that endowing power that lifts us heavenward.” In short, “The Atonement is the focal point of each saving ordinance.”⁵¹

Because the ordinances, or sacraments, are essential—inasmuch as they represent, symbolize, and consummate our covenants with Christ—each son or daughter of God must receive the sacraments in order to gain the highest of eternal rewards. If the opportunity to receive such rites is not possible in mortality, it will be made available in the world to come. Thus, temples become the place of covenant, the place of ordinance, for both the living and the dead. A living person may thus enter the temple and be baptized, for example, in behalf of one who has died. “This is a sanctuary of service,” President Hinckley pointed out. “Most of the work done in this sacred house is performed vicariously in behalf of those who have passed beyond the veil of death. I know of no other work to compare with it. It more nearly approaches the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God in behalf of all mankind than any other work of which I am aware. . . . It is a service of the living in behalf of the dead. It is a service which is of the very essence of selflessness.”⁵² In short, “As the mission of the Church is to ‘invite all to come unto Christ,’ so I believe, in its clearest and loveliest sense, that this is also the mission of temples, where we not only undertake the sacred service of work for redemption of the dead, to open the door for them, but where the choicest of all opportunities exists to learn of Christ, and to come to know him and commune with him and to purify our own hearts.”⁵³

I sat at lunch some time ago with a dear friend of mine who is an Evangelical minister. On many occasions we have met to chat, to reflect on one another’s faith, to ask hard questions, to seek to better understand one another. On this particular occasion, we were discussing grace and works. I had assured my friend that Latter-day Saints do in fact believe in, accept, and rely upon the saving mercy of Jesus. “But Bob,” he said, “you folks believe you have to do so

many things to be saved!” “Like what?” I asked. “Well,” he continued, “let’s just take baptism, for example. You believe that baptism is what saves you.” “No, we don’t,” I responded. “Yes, you do,” he followed up. “You believe baptism is essential for entrance into the celestial kingdom.” “Yes,” I said, “while baptism and other ordinances are necessary as channels of divine power and grace, they are not the things that save us. *Jesus saves us!*” While Latter-day Saints believe and teach that the highest form of salvation comes to those who receive the blessings of the temple (see D&C 131:1–4), we do not in any way believe that it is the temple, or the ordinances contained there, that saves us. Salvation is in Christ. We believe the temple to be a house of learning, of communion and inspiration, of covenants and ordinances, of service, and of personal refinement. We believe the temple is the house of the Lord. But it is not the Lord. We look to Christ the person for salvation.

The Glorification of Man

The final point I wish to make is that Jesus Christ—the One we believe was and is the eternal Jehovah as well as the Savior of the New Testament—is an unselfish being. While He is a glorified, exalted, perfected personage, He is also one who yearns to forgive our sins and purify our hearts, one who delights to honor those who serve Him in righteousness and in truth (see D&C 76:5). That is, He is not possessive of His powers, nor is He hesitant about dispensing spiritual gifts or sharing His divine attributes. In the words of Max Lucado, “God loves you just the way you are, but he refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus.”⁵⁴ Dallas Willard likewise noted that “Jesus offers himself as God’s doorway into the life that is truly life. Confidence in him leads us today, as in other times, to become his apprentices in eternal living.”⁵⁵

Joseph Smith taught that “all those who keep his [God’s] commandments shall grow up from grace to grace, and become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; possessing the same mind, being transformed into the same image or likeness.” Truly, “As the Son partakes of the fullness of the Father through the Spirit, so the saints are, by the same Spirit, to be partakers of the same

fullness, to enjoy the same glory; for as the Father and the Son are one, so, in like manner, the saints are to be one in them. Through the love of the Father, the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, they are to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.”⁵⁶

God is the Father of the spirits of all men and women, the source of light and truth, the embodiment of all godly attributes and gifts, the Father of lights, and the supreme power and intelligence over all things (see Numbers 16:22; 27:16). Yet we worship a divine Being with whom we can identify. That is to say, His infinity does not preclude either His immediacy or His intimacy. “In the day that God created man,” scripture attests, “in the likeness of God made he him; in the image of his own body, male and female, created he them” (Moses 6:8–9). We believe that God is not simply a spirit influence, a force in the universe, or the Great First Cause. When we pray, “Our Father which art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9), we mean what we say. We believe God is comprehensible, knowable, approachable, and, like His Beloved Son, touched with the feeling of our infirmities (see Hebrews 4:15).

On the other hand, our God is God. There is no knowledge of which the Father is ignorant and no power He does not possess (see 1 Nephi 7:12; 2 Nephi 9:20; Mosiah 4:9; Alma 26:35; Helaman 9:41; Ether 3:4). We feel that scriptural passages that speak of Him being the same yesterday, today, and forever⁵⁷ clearly have reference to His divine attributes—His love, justice, constancy, and willingness to bless His children.

We come to the earth to take a physical body, to be schooled, and to gain experiences that we could not have in the “first estate” (see Jude 1:6), the premortal life. We then strive to keep the commandments and grow in faith and spiritual graces until we are prepared to go where God and Christ are. From the Doctrine and Covenants: “That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). That “perfect day” is the Resurrection, the day when spirit and body are inseparably united in immortal glory. That is, those “who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory [in this life] shall then [in the Resurrection] receive of

the same, even a fulness” (D&C 88:29). The Doctrine and Covenants also instructs that those who come unto Christ, follow His path to the Father, and thus realize the fruits of true worship, are empowered to “come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness” (D&C 93:19). This is what Latter-day Saints call gaining eternal life.

Let’s define some terms at this point. *Salvation*, as we have said, is the greatest of all the gifts of God (see D&C 6:13; 14:7). To be saved is to have eternal life and thus be qualified to inherit the highest heaven. The word *salvation* stresses the saved condition, a deliverance from death and sin through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. “Eternal” is one of the names of God (see D&C 19:11–12), and thus to possess *eternal life* is to enjoy God’s life. More specifically, eternal life consists of (1) the continuation of the family unit into eternity through compliance with the covenants and ordinances of the temple; and (2) inheriting, receiving, and possessing the fulness of the glory of the Father (see D&C 132:19). To possess *exaltation* is to possess eternal life, to be entitled to the blessings of the highest degree of the celestial kingdom. The word *exaltation* emphasizes the elevated and ennobled status of one who qualifies for the society of the redeemed and glorified. Essentially, salvation, exaltation, and eternal life, in their purest senses, are synonymous terms.⁵⁸

Eternal life consists of being *with* God and *like* God. “People who live long lives together,” Max Lucado observed, “eventually begin to sound alike, to talk alike, even to think alike. As we walk with God, we take on his thoughts, his principles, his attitudes. We take on his heart.”⁵⁹ That is, we begin to be more and more like God. A study of Christian history reveals that the doctrine of the deification of man was taught at least into the fifth century by such notables as Irenaus, Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Athanasius, and Augustine.⁶⁰ Latter-day Saints might not agree with some of what was taught about deification by such Christian thinkers, but it is clear that the idea was not foreign to the people of the early church.

All men and women, like Christ, are made in the image and likeness of God (see Genesis 1:27; Moses 2:27), so we feel it is neither audacity nor heresy for the children of God to aspire to be like God (see

Matthew 5:48; 1 John 3:2–3). Acquiring the attributes of godliness comes through overcoming the world through the Atonement (see 1 John 5:4–5; Revelation 2:7, 11; D&C 76:51–60), becoming heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, the natural Heir (see Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7), becoming partakers of the divine nature (see 2 Peter 1:4), and thus inheriting all things, just as Jesus inherits all things (see 1 Corinthians 3:21–23; Revelation 21:7; D&C 76:55, 95; 84:38; 88:107). In that glorified state we will be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus (see Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:2; Alma 5:14), receive His glory, and be one with Him and with the Father (see John 17:21–23; Philippians 3:21).

Nor has the idea of the ultimate deification of man been completely lost from Christian thinking in our own time. “The Son of God became a man,” C. S. Lewis pointed out, “to enable men to become sons of God.”⁶¹ Further, Lewis explained: God “said (in the Bible) 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 creature, 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. Nothing less. He meant what He said.”⁶²

Lewis wrote elsewhere: “It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbour. . . . It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship. . . . There are no ordinary people.”⁶³

I honestly don’t know the extent of what Lewis meant (nor what he understood or intended) by these statements. The doctrine of the deification of man did not originate with Lewis, nor with the Latter-day Saints; it is to be found throughout Christian history and

within Orthodox Christian theology today. Whether Lewis would have agreed fully with the teachings of such notables as Irenaus, Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Athanasius, and Augustine on deification—or, for that matter, with what the Latter-day Saints teach—I cannot tell.

While Latter-day Saints certainly accept the teachings of Joseph Smith regarding humans becoming like God, we do not fully comprehend all that is entailed by such a bold declaration. Subsequent or even current Church leaders have spoken very little concerning which of God's attributes are communicable and which are incommunicable. While we believe that becoming like God is entailed in eternal life (see D&C 132:19–20), we do not believe we will ever, worlds without end, unseat or oust God the Eternal Father or His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ; those holy beings are and forever will be the Gods we worship. Even though we believe in the ultimate deification of human beings, I am not aware of any authoritative statement in LDS literature that suggests that men and women will ever worship any being other than the ones within the Godhead. Parley P. Pratt, an early Apostle, wrote one of the first theological treatises within Mormonism. In describing those who are glorified and attain eternal life, Elder Pratt stated: “The difference between Jesus Christ and another immortal and celestial man is this—the man is subordinate to Jesus Christ, does nothing in and of himself, but does all things in the name of Christ, and by his authority, being of the same mind, and ascribing all the glory to him and his Father.”⁶⁴ We believe in “one God” in the sense that we love and serve one Godhead, one divine presidency, each of whom possesses all of the attributes of godhood (see Alma 11:44; D&C 20:28). While we do not believe that God and humans are of a different species, we readily acknowledge that the chasm between a fallen, mortal being and an immortal, resurrected, and glorified Being is immense, almost infinite (see D&C 20:17; 109:77).

President Hinckley observed that “the whole design of the gospel is to lead us onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. . . . Our enemies have criticized us for believing in this. Our reply is that this lofty concept in no way diminishes God the

Eternal Father. He is the Almighty. He is the Creator and Governor of the universe. He is the greatest of all and will always be so. But just as any earthly father wishes for his sons and daughters every success in life, so 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.”⁶⁵

To summarize, Latter-day Saints teach that through the cleansing and transforming power of the blood of Jesus Christ, men and women may mature spiritually over time. That is, by and through His blood, we “have a forgiveness of sins, and also a sure reward laid up for [us] in heaven, even that of partaking of the fullness of the Father and the Son through the Spirit. As the Son partakes of the fullness of the Father through the Spirit, so the saints are, by the same Spirit, to be partakers of the same fullness, to enjoy the same glory; for as the Father and the Son are one, so, in like manner, the saints are to be one in them. Through the love of the Father, the mediation of Jesus Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, they are to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.”⁶⁶

Some people have asked the following question: If the doctrine of theosis or the deification of man is a true part of Mormonism, why is it not found in the Book of Mormon? The answer is that although the Book of Mormon is said to contain “the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:9), this does not mean that it contains the fulness of gospel doctrine, or that it contains all of the doctrines within the faith. The Book of Mormon teaches the fulness of the gospel—the message of salvation in Christ—with simple plainness. The repetitive focus in the Book of Mormon is upon such principles as faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, enduring to the end, the Atonement, bodily resurrection, and eternal judgment. Many of the more distinctive doctrines of Mormonism are found in the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Latter-day Saints would not expect all of the principles and doctrines of the faith to be set forth within the pages of the Book of Mormon any more than traditional Christians would expect all of the doctrines of salvation to be articulated within the four Gospels.

Conclusion

Using language similar to that of the Apostle Paul (see 1 Corinthians 15:25–26), Joseph Smith taught: “Salvation is nothing more nor less than to triumph over all our enemies and put them under our feet.” That is, “Salvation is for a man to be saved from all his enemies; for until a man can triumph over death, he is not saved.” In short, for a man to be saved means “being placed beyond the power of all his enemies.”⁶⁷ Latter-day Saints believe and teach that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of all, the “prototype or standard of salvation; or, in other words, . . . a saved being. And if we should . . . ask how it is that he is saved? the answer would be—because he is a just and holy being.” That just and holy Being, according to Joseph Smith, proposed to save the human family; that is, “he proposed to make them like unto himself, and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings; and for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved.” In this light, “salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself or one like him.”⁶⁸

It is glorious and heartwarming to know that God our Father has a plan for His children, a plan of recovery, a plan of renewal and reconciliation, a plan of salvation, a plan by which those who wander—and that includes all of us—can pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and through the cleansing and enabling power of the Atonement, return home. None of us is bright enough or powerful enough to do it alone; we must have help. And were it not for divine assistance, each of us would falter and fail, would lose the battle of life. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). Our God offers us “so great salvation” (Hebrews 2:3) through the infinite intercession of the only completely pure and perfect being to walk the earth.

On January 1, 2000, the leaders of the highest councils of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a statement entitled “The Living Christ.” The document ends on a note of praise and witness by attesting that “Jesus is the Living Christ, the immortal Son of

God. He is the great King Immanuel, who stands today on the right hand of His Father. He is the light, the life, and the hope of the world. His way is the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His divine Son.”⁶⁹

Notes

1. See Dallin H. Oaks, *With Full Purpose of Heart* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 75.

2. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 346–47.

3. Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 7.

4. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 158; see also 181, 352–54.

5. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1851–86), 10:192; hereafter cited as *JD*.

6. Young, in *JD*, 10:105.

7. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 33, 59.

8. Young, in *JD*, 2:255–56.

9. Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 317; emphasis added.

10. Young, in *JD*, 11:301.

11. Douglas Davies, *Private Passions: Betraying Discipleship on the Journey to Jerusalem* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2000), 77–87.

12. John MacArthur, *The Murder of Jesus* (Nashville: Word, 2000), 63–71.

13. Young, in *JD*, 3:205–6; emphasis added.

14. Ezra Taft Benson, *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 14.

15. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 91.

16. Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 189.

17. John MacArthur, *Hard to Believe: The High Cost and Infinite Value of Following Jesus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), 67, 84.

18. C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1964), 49–50.

19. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 131–32; see also *Christian Reunion*, 18.
20. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 131.
21. D. Todd Christofferson, “Justification and Sanctification,” *Ensign*, June 2001, 18, 20.
22. Sidney B. Sperry, *Paul’s Life and Letters* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 176.
23. Christofferson, “Justification and Sanctification,” 22; emphasis added.
24. B. H. Roberts, *The Gospel and Man’s Relationship to Deity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 170; emphasis added.
25. Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 328.
26. Orson Pratt, “The True Faith,” in *A Series of Pamphlets* (Liverpool: Franklin D. Richards, 1852), 3–9; emphasis added; see also Orson Pratt, *Orson Pratt’s Works* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1945), 51.
27. Christofferson, “Justification and Sanctification,” 24.
28. Young, in *JD*, 10:173.
29. Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 95.
30. See Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, April 1998, 75–79.
31. John Stott, *Authentic Christianity from the Writings of John Stott*, ed. Timothy Dudley-Smith (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 168.
32. David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals: Selections from the Discourses of David O. McKay* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953), 6; emphasis in original.
33. Remarks at the dedication of the San Mateo, California, meeting-house on February 22, 1953; reported in *Church News*, February 28, 1953; emphasis added.
34. Young, in *JD*, 8:124–25; emphasis added.
35. Young, in *JD*, 6:276.
36. Young, in *JD*, 1:131; emphasis added.
37. J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 115.
38. MacArthur, *Hard to Believe*, 112–13.
39. See John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 198–201.
40. Bruce Wilkinson, *A Life God Rewards: Why Everything You Do Today Matters Forever* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2002), 23, 25, 73, 98.
41. Jonathan Edwards, cited in Wilkinson, *A Life God Rewards*, 119.
42. John Wesley, cited in Wilkinson, *A Life God Rewards*, 120–21.

43. Richard John Neuhaus, *Death on a Friday Afternoon* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 57, 61.
44. Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 348.
45. Charles W. Penrose, "Mormon" *Doctrine, Plain and Simple* (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1897), 72.
46. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 623, 636, 638.
47. Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 294.
48. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 295.
49. Truman G. Madsen, "The Temple and the Atonement," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 72.
50. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 84.
51. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 296.
52. Hinckley, *Teachings*, 635.
53. Marion D. Hanks, "Christ Manifested to His People," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 16.
54. Max Lucado, *Just Like Jesus* (Dallas: W Publishing Group, 2003), 3.
55. Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 12.
56. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 5:2–3.
57. For example, see Psalm 102:27; Hebrews 1:12; 13:8; 1 Nephi 10:18–19; 2 Nephi 27:23; Alma 7:20; Mormon 9:8–11, 19; Moroni 8:18; 10:7; D&C 3:2; 20:12, 17; 35:1.
58. See McConkie, *The Promised Messiah*, 129–30.
59. Lucado, *Just Like Jesus*, 61.
60. See Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 60–61.
61. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 155.
62. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 176.
63. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 39.
64. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 21–22.
65. Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, October 1994, 64.
66. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 5:3.

67. Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, 297, 301, 305.
68. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 7:9, 16.
69. First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles, "The Living Christ," *Ensign*, April 2000, 3.