

or not to die. To the casual observer, it would have appeared that Christ had been executed by crucifixion. However, to those like Abinadi who understood the nature of Christ's sacrifice, his death on the cross was an act of his own will and not of the executioners. This recognition is hinted at in Mark 15:39 for the Roman centurion attending the crucifixion, when he stated, "Truly this man was the Son of God." There may be other forms of execution that would fulfil the requirements just outlined, but I am unaware of any.

12. See King Benjamin's delivery of the words of an angel of God on the Atonement in Mosiah 3. Verses 8 and 9 especially reveal a knowledge of the doctrine Abinadi taught. See also Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11, Alma's speech in Alma 7, Amulek's understanding in Alma 34:9-10 and Alma's explanation of the atonement to his son in Alma 42, especially verse 15. It should be noted that Abinadi may not have had access to any of these discourses, with the exception of 1 Nephi 11. But he could have drawn upon the same source of inspiration for this doctrine that was available to Alma and Amulek.

"I Want To Pay Tribute": Heber J. Grant Gives Thanks to Departed Saints

Paul H. Peterson

"I cannot sit down without paying a tribute to Erastus Snow, [of] whom I know of no more devoted servant of God, and no man more interested in the work of the Latter-day Saints," observed President Heber J. Grant in 1931. "More than all the rest of the General Authorities of the Church I am indebted to him for an individual interest and for the teachings, advice, and counsel he gave to me."¹⁶¹ In paying tribute to Elder Snow, President Grant was only doing what he had been in the habit of doing for over forty years—thanking Saints for devoted, hallowed service to the Church and to the Lord. Born in 1856, President Grant's eighty-eight year life span stretched from the Civil War era to the closing months of World War II, from handcarts and wagon trains to automobiles and airplanes. Called as an apostle by President John Taylor in 1882, President Grant was intimately acquainted with three (or even four) generations of Church members. As a young man, President Grant knew Brigham Young and was well-acquainted with the colonizing exploits of that second generation of Saints, who at President Young's direction, settled the dusty, barren outreaches of the Great Basin. He witnessed the construction of the historic tabernacle (completed in 1869) and was present when President Wilford Woodruff dedicated the Salt Lake Temple in 1893. By his mid-years, after stints of mission service in Japan and Europe, Elder Grant was familiar with the realities of performing missionary work in difficult and sometimes hostile environments. He also knew firsthand of the difficulties and financial burdens the Saints faced during the numbing depression of the 1890s.

In his elderly years President Grant experienced the vicissitudes of two horrific world wars and another even more severe depression. On a happier note, he witnessed the dawning of a new age for the Church, an age when Latter-day Saints were no longer singled out and ridiculed for their differences, but respected and even admired—admired for their progressive health code called the Word of Wisdom, admired for their extensive welfare operation which enabled Saints to take care of themselves during challenging times, and admired for the attention and concern they gave their youth.

More than most, President Grant understood that people were larger than the events they created or were involved with, that amid every challenge or tragedy and behind every accomplishment, were men and women, ordinary in so many ways but heroic in dimensions that they themselves scarcely realized. It was ordinary people with extraordinary devotion who colonized much of the Intermountain West; it was ordinary people with remarkable loyalty who spent fifteen, twenty, or more years serving missions in foreign lands; it was faithful, disciplined, regular people, as Elder Grant freely confessed, who were called to serve as Church leaders.

President Grant knew such people, thousands of them, and he never forgot their sacrifices, their contributions, their dedication. A brief sampling of President Grant's general conference talks makes it clear that the older he grew, the more difficult it became for him to give a talk in which he did not pay tribute or give thanks to those who devoted their energies and sometimes their very lives to the kingdom. Often, but not always, the Saints that President Grant chose to acknowledge were those who had passed away since the last general conference of the Church. Often, but not always, he would begin his moment of praise by saying, "I would like to pay tribute to . . ." or "I would like to express gratitude for. . ."

In October general conference of 1907, for example, Elder Grant paid tribute to recently-departed fellow apostle, George Teasdale. "... I was called to the Apostleship upon the same day as Elder Teasdale, and I labored with him, in season, and out, for twenty-four and a half years," Brother Grant told the Saints. "I ever found him full of humility, full of love of his fellows. I never saw him angry; I never heard an unkind word fall from his lips. I always found that his heart was full of love; that he reached for the benefit, uplifting, and betterment of humanity; and it seemed to me that he was in very deed an ideal servant of God, a preacher of the plan of life and salvation."¹⁷²

Ten years later in 1917, Elder Grant memorialized the late Elder Francis M. Lyman, President of the Council of the Twelve. It was not easy for President Grant to part with his predecessor, father figure, and Word of Wisdom mentor. "He is gone from us," Brother Grant solemnly declared. "I have been almost as intimately associated with him as a boy is with his father, for thirty-six years—two years in Tooele and thirty-four years in the Council of the Twelve, and upon all occasions, in public and in private, at home and abroad, he was always full of the spirit of teaching and admonition and showed forth a good example to the people." President Grant concluded his tribute to his beloved friend by telling Saints who chose to emulate President Lyman's highly-principled lifestyle, that "I can promise you that when the battle of life is ended, and you have the privilege of meeting President Lyman, beyond the veil, you will have that same joy when he welcomes you, which you have experienced here on earth when he put his arm around you and said, 'God bless you, my brother,' or 'my sister.'"¹⁸³

President Grant's circle of praise extended far beyond his General Authority associates. In April general conference of 1922 he noted the death of William W. Riter, chairman of the Church Auditing Committee. President Grant told the Saints that Brother Riter, "religiously, once a year, read the Book of Mormon through."¹⁹⁴ Two years later in October 1924, President Grant commented on the passing and made mention of the service and generosity of Stake President Andrew Kimball of Thatcher, Arizona, and Elizabeth C. McCune of Salt Lake City.²⁰⁵ In 1928, he noted with sadness the death of *Improvement Era* editor, Edward H. Anderson, and commented that, "no more capable,

faithful, diligent, God-fearing man has ever been engaged in the service of the Lord in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."²¹⁶ One year later, President Grant announced that Idaho Falls Stake President Fred L. Caine, who had labored with President Grant in the Japanese mission, had passed away. "I wish to bear witness," Brother Grant stated, "that it has not been my privilege to ever be associated with a more sincere, God-fearing, capable, faithful man than was Brother Fred A. Caine."²²⁷ Throughout his ministry, President Grant evidenced a strong appreciation for those who temporarily (or sometimes almost permanently) renounced earthly concerns to preach the gospel. In 1913 he praised beloved missionary Ben E. Rich. "I would like to pay . . . tribute to the memory of one who spent fully one-half of his mature years in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ," President Grant said to assembled Saints. "Both by tongue and with his pen, this man has brought many, many souls to a knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God bless his memory."²³⁸ Seven years into his presidency, in 1925, he lauded the loyalty of President Charles W. Penrose. "He spent nearly twenty years of his life as a missionary in his native land," President Grant observed. "We mourn his loss, but we rejoice in the wonderful record of labor and service that he made in the spread of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ at home and abroad."²⁴⁹ Four years later, in April conference of 1929, President Grant noted the dedication of President Joseph Wilford Booth, who had recently died of a heart attack in Syria after spending nearly eighteen years as a missionary in the Near East. Of Brother Booth President Grant noted that "no more faithful, God-fearing, humble, splendid man have we had pass away in the mission field."²⁵¹⁰

Oftentimes during President Grant's lifetime, married men served as missionaries. And, most often their wives remained at home. In 1931 President Grant made reference to "the marvelous labors" of pioneer wives. "They had the burdens to bear. The wives stayed at home while the men went out into the mission field, but theirs was the greatest labor."²⁶¹¹

Never a scholar in the strict academic sense, President Grant always admired gifted Church members who plied their talents in the interest of the Church. In October conference of 1933, he sadly noted the passing of apostle-theologian, James E. Talmage, and prominent historian and First Council of Seventy member, B. H. Roberts. Regarding authors Talmage and Roberts, President Grant said, "I know of no one of our general authorities who has studied more or was better posted—I know of no one of them who has been a greater promulgator of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, than were the two men who were with us six months ago . . . who have since passed away. They will go on progressing beyond the grave," he promised, "and using that marvelous store of knowledge and information that they had gained. We miss them, the whole Church will miss them."²⁷¹²

Perhaps more than any single group, President Grant praised the contributions of Church musicians. Not endowed with musical gifts and unable to hold a tune without difficulty, President Grant memorized scores of Latter-day Saint hymns in his lifetime. Frequently, during bouts with insomnia, he would hum the melodies and review the lyrics in an effort to go to sleep. He loved the hymns and he frequently quoted from them in Church addresses. In general conference of October 1933 (the same conference where he praised Elders Talmage and Roberts), after announcing that the choir would sing "Song of the Redeemed" by Evan Stephens, President Grant observed that three years previous,

Brother Stephens, after having led the choir in this very selection, returned to his home, became ill and passed away soon thereafter. "We owe a very deep debt of gratitude to Brother Evan Stephens, Brother George Careless, Brother Ebenezer Beesley, Brother Joseph J. Daynes, and many others for the marvelous music they have composed."²⁸¹³ Every few conferences President Grant expressed heart-felt gratitude for those who had assumed the prophetic mantle before him. In October conference of 1935, for example, he told of his recent privilege of dedicating the statue of Moroni at the Hill Cumorah. After three days of meeting dignitaries and frequenting with the Saints he was tired and decided not to speak at yet another engagement. "But as I listened to President McKay bearing witness of the divinity of this work," President Grant said, "I could not resist the urgent desire to stand up and pay a tribute to Joseph Smith,... who in the providences of God was the instrument in the hands of our Lord and Savior of establishing again upon the earth the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I could not resist the temptation to pay my tribute of respect to Brigham Young, to John Taylor, to Wilford Woodruff, to Lorenzo Snow, and to Joseph F. Smith, who have stood at the head of this church from the time of its organization."²⁹¹⁴

From prophets to pioneer women, from prominent Saints to lesser-known Church members, from non-member Salt Lake Tribune editors to Roman Catholic Church officials, President Grant expressed gratitude—sincere gratitude for their accomplishments or their kindnesses.³⁰¹⁵

To the end of his administration and through his declining years, President Grant gave thanks to good people who performed good deeds. Limited in his strength and ability to speak after a severe stroke in 1940, he gave his last conference address in April 1942.³¹¹⁶ But, eighteen months later, as President David O. McKay reminded Church members in general conference in October 1943, President Grant retained the spirit of gratitude. On this occasion, the concluding afternoon session of Sunday general conference President Grant was at home, resting and listening to conference proceedings on the radio. President McKay, then second counselor in the First Presidency, and himself a man who frequently spoke on the virtues of gratitude, quoted the essayist Carlyle: "In this world there is one Godlike thing, the essence of all that ever was or ever will be of Godlike in this world—the veneration done to human worth by the hearts of men."

President McKay told the Saints this passage

came to my mind this noon when our beloved President suggested that something should be said in this conference by way of appreciation and tribute to two... General Authorities who, since our last Conference, have passed to the other side—President Rudger Clawson and Elder Sylvester Q. Cannon. [p.88]

"President Grant is one of the most thoughtful men in the world,"

President McKay went on to say. "This request is typical of him; his mind was on an appreciation of services rendered by these two men who associated with him so many years."³²¹⁷

"I want to pay tribute to ...," "We owe a debt of deep gratitude to ... ," "I want to express heartfelt thanks to ... ,"—these simple but reverential expressions rolled spontaneously and sincerely from the mouth of President Heber J. Grant, as naturally as water follows a stream bed. They were the manifestations of a deep-seated piety, the reflections of a humble

heart, of a man who well understood that thankfulness is a divinely sanctioned and universally appropriate gesture.³³18

Notes

1. *Deseret News Church Section*, 1 August 1931, 4, as cited in G. Homer Durham, (comp.) *Gospel Standards*, (1976), 229.
2. Conference Report, October 1907, 25.
3. Conference Report, October 1917, 26.
4. Conference Report, April 1922, 15.
5. Conference Report, October 1924, 5-6.
6. Conference Report, April 1928, 5.
7. Conference Report, October 1929, 3.
8. Conference Report, October 1913, 87-88.
9. Conference Report, October 1925, 3.
10. Conference Report, April 1929, 88; Daniel C. Peterson, *Abraham Divided* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1992), 331-39.
11. *Deseret News Church Section*, 1 August 1931, 4, as cited in *Gospel Standards*, 152-153.
12. Conference Report, October 1933, 9-10.
13. *Ibid.*, 99.
14. Conference Report, October 1935, 11.
15. Conference Report, April 1930, 183, October 1934, 6. President Grant thanked Tribune writers for their fair and comprehensive coverage of the Church on its centennial anniversary. He thanked Roman Catholic officials for their tributes to counselor Anthony W. Ivins and for tolling the bells of the splendid Cathedral of the Madeleine as the funeral cortege of Elder Ivins passed by. Graciously, Roman Catholic officials also tolled the Cathedral bells during President Grant's funeral procession. See Francis M. Gibbons, *Heber J. Grant: Man of Steel, Prophet of God* (1979), 231-32.
16. Gibbons, 227.
17. Conference Report, October 1943, 125.
18. In April 1990 general conference, President James E. Faust observed that "the expression of kindness is universally appropriate." See *Ensign*, May 1990, 86.

The Little, Narrow Prison of Language: The Rhetoric of Revelation

Richard Lyman Bushman

I want to raise an old question about Joseph Smith's revelations, one that came up early in Church history when plans were first being made to publish the compilation of revelations called the Book of Commandments.³⁴1 The question is about the language of the revelations. Joseph noted in his history that at the November 1831 conference in Kirtland where publication was approved "some conversation was had concerning revelations and language." This was the occasion when William E. McLellin, apparently the leading critic of the language, was challenged to make a revelation himself, and failed. Joseph said the Elders at the conference all watched while McLellin made "this vain attempt of a man to imitate the language of Jesus Christ," noting that "it was an awful responsibility to write in the name of the Lord."³⁵2