

The Crucifixion, by Harry Anderson, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Jesus's last words upon the cross reveal his capacity to love, forgive, and endure, as well as his conscious effort to obey.

# Teachings of Church Leaders on Christ's Final Seven Statements

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In 1929 Reverend James Reid wrote about the Savior's directive from the Sermon on the Mount to "pray for them that despitefully use you" (Matthew 5:44). Although many might feel this is an impossible task, Reid offers a reminder: "Yet the words stand, and challenge us today, because He who spoke them passed His own test, and passed it triumphantly. . . . For, as [Luke] tells us, when they crucified Him, and had done their devilish work on his poor body. . . . His first word [on the cross] was a literal prayer for His enemies, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"<sup>1</sup> This statement is illustrative of thousands of homilies, articles, and other writings connected to the final seven statements of Jesus Christ.

Whole books have even been written to discuss the profound nature of these statements and to explore the personal meaning of each of these sayings for us. Pastor Greg Laurie underscored how precious these last words of the Savior were, reminding us, "Death by crucifixion was death by suffocation. . . . While breathing was incredibly difficult, speaking was even more so."<sup>2</sup> Murray J. Harris, an emeritus professor of New Testament from the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, notes how distinct the last words of Christ are

from any other final words spoken by anyone else, since they “are exceptionally brief and poignant; they are not intimate words of farewell spoken to all his disciples; and they are uttered in the midst of prolonged death throes.”<sup>3</sup>

The seven statements by Christ on the cross have been analyzed from many different viewpoints. Some have examined these statements from a text-critical perspective,<sup>4</sup> while other scholars writing from a historical view have provided insights into how the last seven statements from the cross were interpreted in early Christianity, comparing them to the common interpretations and perspectives of the text in our day.<sup>5</sup> Because the last words of Christ have been a source of inspiration for composers and musicians throughout the centuries, many commentaries evaluate the statements of the cross from the perspective of the musical works that they inspired.<sup>6</sup> Feminist perspectives have also been applied to the Savior’s final statements.<sup>7</sup> Members of many denominations have offered insights into Christ’s last words. For example, some writings authored by Catholics revere the “the final utterances of a man who would be resurrected from the dead to be seated at the right hand of his Father”<sup>8</sup> as sacred words that can “console and strengthen us as we bear our own immeasurably lighter crosses.”<sup>9</sup>

Many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (herein referred to as “the Church”) have also written about Christ’s final statements. For example, Terry Ball and Nathan Winn explored doctrines related to the Savior’s last words<sup>10</sup> and Andrew Skinner shared insights into what these sayings reveal about Christ’s character.<sup>11</sup> In the present study, we add to the existing literature on Christ’s final seven sayings by exploring how Church leaders have used them in their official addresses.

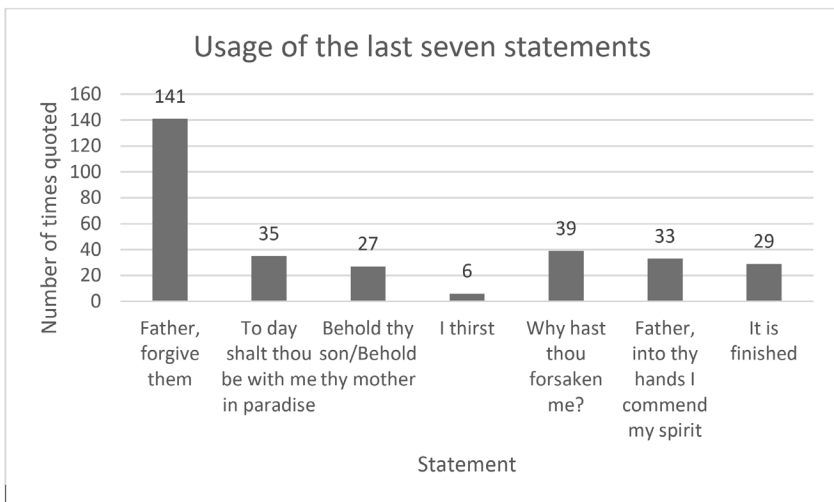
## Method

In order to determine what Church leaders have taught regarding the seven statements of Christ on the cross, we turned to the Scripture Citation Index (<http://scriptures.byu.edu>).<sup>12</sup> This index contains the words from the *Journal of Discourses* and general conference talks through April 2020 and has the text tagged by the scripture verses referenced. This approach has been used by other researchers to identify what church leaders have taught about Lehi’s dream and Nephi’s vision,<sup>13</sup> the frequency with which the Book of Mormon has been used in general conference,<sup>14</sup> and which passages from the Pauline epistles have been most frequently used by Church leaders in general conference addresses.<sup>15</sup>

Rather than manually comb through the scriptural citation index, we worked with Monte Shelley and Jesse Vincent from Brigham Young University's Digital Humanities Office, who develop the textual analysis software WordCruncher. Vincent created a custom program for us using Python that extracted quotations from church leaders associated with the verses in which Christ speaks his final words in mortality.<sup>16</sup> This approach greatly streamlined the data gathering process and is available to other researchers interested in examining what church leaders have taught about various scripture passages.<sup>17</sup> Because the database hosted at <http://scriptures.byu.edu> excludes the years 1887–1941, we used the WordCruncher corpus of general conference talks to search for the last seven statements from the cross during these years. In addition, we searched the Joseph Smith Papers website for teachings from Joseph Smith regarding Christ's final words.<sup>18</sup> Once we had compiled our corpus, we reviewed all of the statements by Church leaders and deleted those that were not specifically related to Christ's final words on the cross.<sup>19</sup>

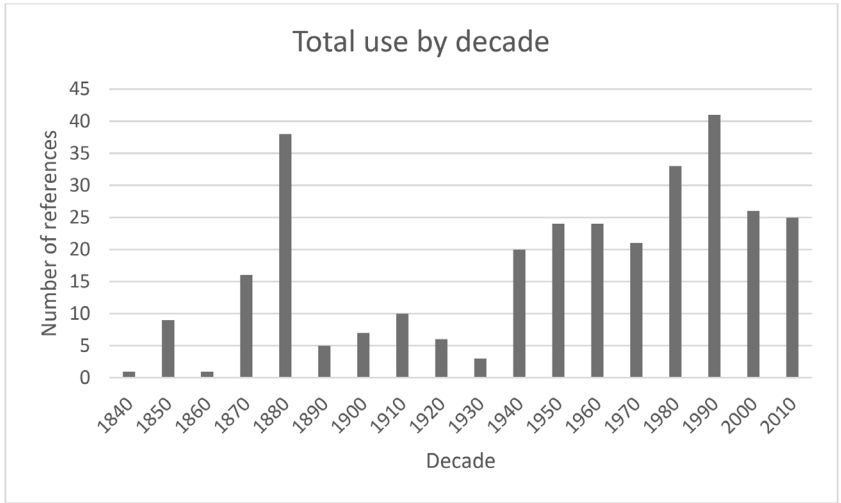
### References to Christ's Crucifixions

Across our corpus, there have been 310 references to Christ's final statements. These numbers are summarized in chart 1.



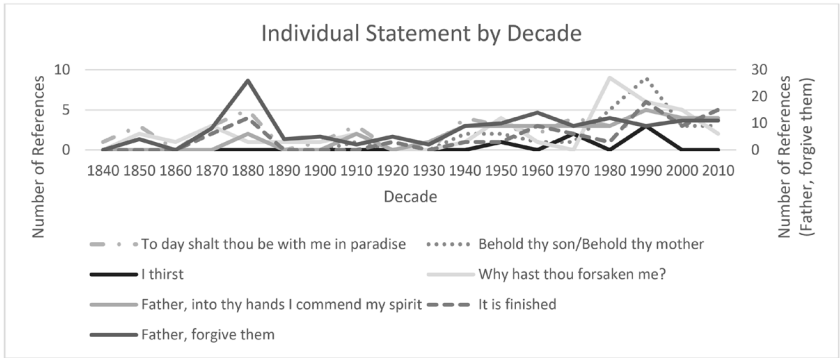
**Chart 1.** Usage of the last seven statements

By far the most commonly quoted statement was “Father, forgive them.” It made up almost half of the total corpus with 141 references. The number of references to the seven statements made each decade generally increased over time and peaked in the 1990s, as shown in chart 2.



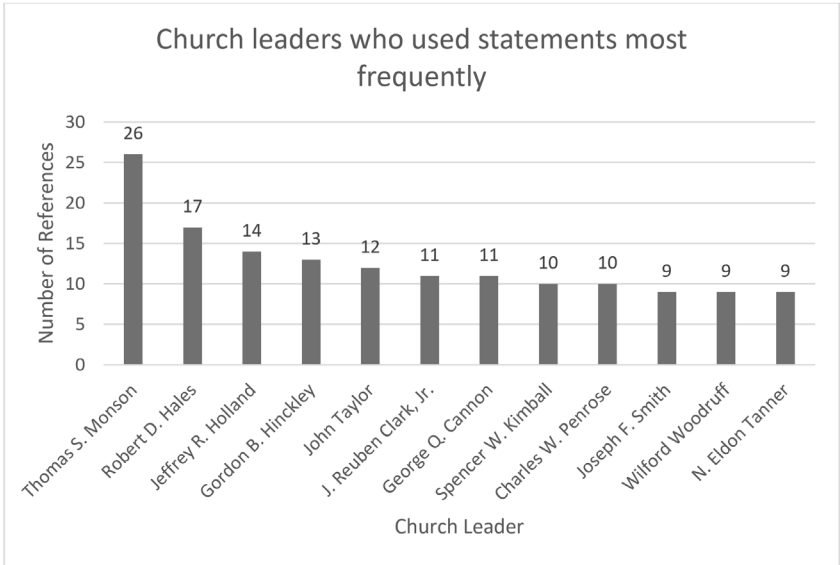
**Chart 2.** Total use by decade

A notable peak in the 1880s reveals an interesting emphasis on Christ’s last words from the cross towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> This overall trend is important to consider when evaluating the usage of the individual statements, which is shown in chart 3 (note the two sets of numbers on the vertical axes, one solely being for “Father, forgive them” based on its higher numerical count):



**Chart 3.** Individual statements by decade

This chart demonstrates several interesting trends regarding the usage of the last seven statements of Christ over time. Church leaders generally mentioned the last seven statements with more frequency over time, with notable exceptions in the 1880s. Leaders never used “I thirst” and “Behold thy son/Behold thy mother” during the nineteenth century. Christ’s agonized cry, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” and his final declaration, “It is finished” both experienced dramatic increases in the late twentieth century.



**Chart 4.** Church leaders who used statements most frequently

A total of 103 individuals cited one or more of the seven statements. Of these, twelve did so nine or more times, as illustrated in chart 4.<sup>21</sup> Several talks allude to four or more statements; however, all seven statements have only been included in the same general conference talk on two occasions.<sup>22</sup>

In the following sections, we provide a brief analysis of what church leaders have said about each of these seven statements. Because each Gospel records different final words of the Savior, we cannot accurately sequence them.<sup>23</sup> While we examine each statement in approximate chronological order below, we do not claim this is the exact order of Christ's statements.

### **“Father, Forgive Them”**

The Savior's phrase “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34) was the most frequently quoted statement in our corpus, accounting for 45 percent of the total times a Church leader referenced one of Christ's final sayings from the cross. Joseph Smith clarified this verse in his inspired translation, adding a parenthetical phrase: “Then said Jesus; Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (*Meaning the Soldiers who crucified him*).”<sup>24</sup> Although this translation makes it clear that Christ refers to the soldiers, Church leaders have also used this statement from the cross to indicate that Christ asked his Father to forgive “the Jews,”<sup>25</sup> Pilate,<sup>26</sup> “the high priests, scribes, elders, and Pharisees”<sup>27</sup> and “those who had caused him to be crucified.”<sup>28</sup> Elder Jeffrey R. Holland taught that in addition to referring to people present at his Crucifixion, “as our advocate with the Father, [Christ] is still making that same plea today—in your behalf and in mine.”<sup>29</sup>

Throughout our corpus, the most common reason that a speaker quoted this statement from the Savior was to teach the doctrine of forgiveness. President Joseph F. Smith explained, “I want to say to you that Latter-day Saints who harbor a feeling of unforgiveness in their souls are more guilty and more censurable than the one who has sinned against them. Go home and dismiss envy and hatred from your hearts; dismiss the feeling of unforgiveness; and cultivate in your souls that spirit of Christ which cried out upon the cross, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ This is the spirit that Latter-day Saints ought to possess all the day long.”<sup>30</sup>

Eldred G. Smith called these words from Christ “the supreme example of forgiveness,”<sup>31</sup> Elder Milton R. Hunter referred to them as “the greatest example in history of pure love, of undefiled charity,”<sup>32</sup> and President Gordon



B. Hinckley used this statement to show how Christ “exemplified [forgiveness] as none other has exemplified it.”<sup>33</sup>

A key insight shared by multiple church leaders in relation to this passage is that it is our responsibility to forgive others regardless of whether they repent. For instance, President Spencer W. Kimball taught that Christ “did not wait till his crucifiers, the high priests, scribes, elders, and Pharisees, should have a change of heart, but forgave them while they were yet covered with his life’s blood.”<sup>34</sup>

In 1954 Elder Thorpe B. Isaacson emphasized the importance of forgiveness by poignantly describing a powerful spiritual experience he had when visiting the site of Calvary. He said, “I thought then and there if Jesus the Christ, the Savior of the world, could say and feel that way after all the torture, agony, and suffering which he had received, surely he taught us the great lesson of love and forgiveness, and I pledged that I would never hold hatred or bitterness or jealousy or anything like that in my heart toward anyone again. What a lesson Jesus had taught the world!”<sup>35</sup> Christ’s forgiving attitude on the cross has also been compared by Church leaders to Christ’s treatment of the woman taken in adultery<sup>36</sup> and Joseph Smith’s attitude towards his persecutors.<sup>37</sup>

From a historical perspective, it is interesting to note that the decade in which this statement was most frequently quoted was the 1880s. During this time period, Church members faced persecution due to plural marriage; church leaders frequently used this passage to encourage members to have a forgiving disposition to those who harmed them. For example, Elder Wilford Woodruff said, “How should we feel towards our enemies? President [John] Taylor of late has called upon us to exercise towards them the same spirit that was manifested by our Savior upon the cross: ‘Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.’ We should endeavor to exercise that spirit. Our persecutors, those who would seek to destroy us, do not know what they do.”<sup>38</sup>

On six occasions between 1878 and 1881, Church leaders contrasted Christ’s statement on forgiveness with King David’s prayer to “let [his enemies] go down quick into hell” (Psalm 55:15).<sup>39</sup> For example, President John Taylor said, “David, you know, on a certain occasion, feeling angry with the people by whom he was surrounded because of their wickedness, prayed that God would send them to hell quickly. Jesus, while suffering the agonies of death, exclaimed, ‘Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.’ How much better the latter is than the former. Let us cultivate that spirit.”<sup>40</sup>



### “To Day Shalt Thou Be with Me in Paradise”

Christ’s comforting promise of “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43) is the first of the seven statements to have been quoted by a church leader, and the only one recorded to have been quoted by Joseph Smith. More than half of these 35 references<sup>41</sup> were clarifications regarding the fate of the penitent thief on the cross and defining where Jesus and the thief went to when their spirits departed this earth. The most common type of statement was one that explained the meaning of the word “paradise.” In 1843, the earliest year in which we found a reference to any of Christ’s last seven statements on the cross, Joseph Smith taught, “There is nothing in the original word in Greek from which this was taken, that signifies paradise, but it was ‘this day thou shalt be with me in the world of Spirits.’”<sup>42</sup>

In several instances, speakers used this statement to specify that Christ was not promising salvation to the penitent thief. For example, in 1885 Elder Moses Thatcher taught, “The expression of the thief brought no promise that he should be saved. Where and what is paradise are important questions. It is not heaven, nor is it where God dwells, for on the third day after the crucifixion, Christ declared to Mary that He had not yet ascended to His God and her God.”<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, leaders often referenced this statement in connection with salvation and the ordinance of baptism. On four occasions, speakers specifically rebutted claims that this statement from the Savior obviated the need for baptism. For instance, in 1883 Charles W. Penrose said, “Some people think that because the thief said, ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,’ and Jesus replied, ‘To day shalt thou be with me in paradise,’ that he (the thief) went direct to heaven and in the presence of God. Now, if he did, Jesus Christ broke His own word; for he said, ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’”<sup>44</sup>

While these teachings might lead us to think that church leaders held out little hope for the penitent thief, that is not the case. In fact, in the same sermon cited previously, Joseph Smith rephrased the Savior’s word to the thief as follows: “*This day* thou shalt be with *me* in the world of Spirits, then *I* will teach you all about it, and answer your inquiries,”<sup>45</sup> making it clear that Christ would personally attend to the thief.

President George Q. Cannon echoed the prophet’s sentiment when, in 1884, he provided an expanded view of what the Savior was saying to the thief on the cross: “Jesus said to him: ‘Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.’

‘There I can speak to you,’ He might have said, ‘more fully than I can now. This is our dying hour, and I am not in a position to preach to you or explain to you the plan of salvation that I have; but wait awhile, before this day ends you will be with me in paradise, and there I can make full explanations to you concerning all that you desire to know.’ And this in reality was the case. That day they were in paradise together.”<sup>46</sup>

In 1903 President Anthon H. Lund provided another positive perspective on the interaction between Christ and the thief: “Jesus saw that the man was penitent, that he had a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and he comforted him with the promise that ‘today shalt thou be with me in paradise.’ I do not think He held out a fallacious hope to this man when He said that he should be with Him in paradise that day.”<sup>47</sup>

An additional significant theme that Church leaders discussed in the context of this statement was the consolation that the Lord offered to the “condemned, believing thief”<sup>48</sup> as they hung together on the cross. Indeed, the Savior “brought comfort to the malefactor,”<sup>49</sup> setting an example for us of looking outward even in the midst of our own difficulties. President Betty Jo N. Jepsen expressed this idea when she said, “Jesus Christ has left us a memorable pattern to follow at all times in our lives. None of us will experience anything equal to the physical pain and the mental anguish of Jesus on the cross. Yet at that moment of his great suffering, a thief hanging beside him ‘railed on him’ (Luke 23:39). Jesus did not respond to him. The second thief rebuked the first and pleaded with the Savior to speak to the Father in his behalf. Jesus put aside his own suffering to console the thief. ‘Today shalt thou be with me in paradise’ (Luke 23:43), he told the thief. It would soon be over, and he would have relief.”<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, Church leaders taught that the comfort that the Lord professed in this dying promise was not for the thief alone. Within this final assurance of the Savior lies a promise of a life after death for all humankind, as Elder Alma Sonne stated: “Mankind needs a vindication against the tyranny of death and against the ravages of time and decay. Jesus Christ and the prophets have supplied that vindication. The Savior supplied it when, in the throes of agony and death, he said to the felon on the cross: ‘To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.’”<sup>51</sup>

### “Behold Thy Son”/“Behold Thy Mother”

Within our corpus, the phrases “Behold thy son” and/or “Behold thy mother” (John 19:26–27) were referenced twenty-seven times by twenty different Church leaders. These statements first appeared in our corpus in 1916<sup>52</sup> but were not quoted frequently until the 1940s. The decade in which they were most frequently used was the 1980s, which represents one-third of all usages of these phrases. With these words, the Savior made a special connection between his beloved disciple (most often thought to be John) and his mother, Mary. President Thomas S. Monson alone referred to these verses in six different talks he gave. He, as did the majority of the leaders, spoke of how these words portrayed Christ’s love, in one instance referring to them as an “eloquent sermon of love personified.”<sup>53</sup>

The principal message taught with this statement was the importance of showing love, specifically to mothers. In 1943 Elder Joseph L. Wirthlin used this statement to show how “Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, exemplified in his attitude toward his earthly parents complete compliance with and obedience to the fifth commandment.”<sup>54</sup> Many Church leaders highlighted Christ’s concern for his mother even in the midst of his own death. President Anne C. Pingree taught, “Even while suffering terrible agony on the cross, He thought of His mother and her needs.”<sup>55</sup> Similarly, President Henry D. Moyle said, “Practically his last act in mortal existence was to provide for his mother.”<sup>56</sup> President Spencer W. Kimball described Jesus “thinking of his sweet mother down beneath him. He was tender and kind as he said to John, ‘Behold thy mother.’”<sup>57</sup> President Thomas S. Monson referred to this statement as “tender words of farewell”<sup>58</sup> and said, “I know of no sweeter expression toward a parent than that spoken by our Savior upon the cross.”<sup>59</sup>

Other speakers praised Mary for her unwavering devotion to her son and extended their praise not just to all mothers but all women. President Elaine L. Jack said, “My mind darts back to the early years as Mary and Joseph raised this most remarkable child. I can hear Mary comforting the baby Jesus with soothing words that come so naturally to us: ‘I’m right here.’ And then at this most dramatic moment of all time, there was the mother, Mary. She couldn’t soothe his pain this time, but she could stand by his side. Jesus, in tribute, offered those grand words, ‘Woman, behold thy son!’ My sisters of Relief Society, we are the bearers of the balm of Gilead.”<sup>60</sup>

Some leaders taught that Christ demonstrated the perfect example not just in honoring and caring for his own mother but in honoring women

generally. After describing the Lord entrusting his mother to the care of the beloved disciple, Elder Yoshihiko Kikuchi in 1988 invited men to ponder, "Are we worthy to be entrusted by the Lord to take care of one of our Heavenly Father's daughters?"<sup>61</sup> In 1994 President Howard W. Hunter lauded the respect and love Jesus demonstrated for the women in his life, including Mary at the cross, and asserted that there was "[no] reason to think that he cares any less about women today."<sup>62</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley similarly described the admiration and reverence with which the Savior treated the women in his life in 2004 and admonished, "Why is it that even though Jesus placed woman in a position of preeminence, so many men who profess His name fail to do so?"<sup>63</sup>

### "I Thirst"

The shortest and most rarely quoted of Christ's last statements from the cross is "I thirst" (John 19:28). This statement was only used six times in our corpus, all between 1958 to 1996. Five out of the six speakers who discussed this statement provided it as evidence of the Savior's extreme suffering on the cross. For example, in 1994 Bishop David H. Burton described it as "his one recorded response to physical suffering."<sup>64</sup> In 1995 Elder Jeffrey R. Holland connected this statement to the partaking of the sacrament, saying that "with a crust of bread, always broken, blessed, and offered first, we remember his bruised body and broken heart, his physical suffering on the cross where he cried, 'I thirst.'"<sup>65</sup>

In 1996 President Russell M. Nelson, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, also elaborated on the depth of suffering behind the phrase, "I thirst." He said, "To a doctor of medicine, this is a very meaningful expression. Doctors know that when a patient goes into shock because of blood loss, invariably that patient—if still conscious—with parched and shriveled lips cries for water. Even though the Father and the Son knew well in advance what was to be experienced, the actuality of it brought indescribable agony."<sup>66</sup>

Although this statement has been infrequently quoted by church leaders, it provides an important insight into the human suffering that Jesus experienced. As King Benjamin taught, "He shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death" (Mosiah 3:7). The Savior's experience of human emotions, including extreme thirst on the cross is part of what allows him to "know

according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:12).

### “Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?”

Both Matthew and Mark record Christ’s final statement from the cross as being a loud cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34). This cry of despair was the second most commonly quoted statement of his last seven on the cross, being referenced thirty-nine times by twenty-two speakers. Elder Neal A. Maxwell mentioned it the most, using the statement in five different talks.

More than one-third of the talks that mention this verse do so in the context of the loneliness that Christ felt on the cross. In 1856 Brigham Young described how “the Father withdrew Himself, withdrew His Spirit, and cast a veil over [Jesus].”<sup>67</sup> Additionally, several leaders emphasized that this experience helped enable Christ to succor all of us when we feel abandoned and alone. For example, Elder Marion D. Hanks taught in 1980, “He understands our infirmities and pressures and problems. Better than any other, he understands how it is to feel all alone.”<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Elder Neal A. Maxwell taught in 1987, “Having been perfected in His empathy, Jesus thus knows how to succor us. . . . He is familiar with them, including even the feeling of being forsaken. Nothing is beyond His redeeming reach or His encircling empathy.”<sup>69</sup> In 2010 Elder Richard G. Scott explained that it was necessary for the Father to withdraw, saying that “the cry was motivated when that Son felt removed the sustaining support He had always enjoyed from His Father. His Father recognized that the Savior needed to accomplish the Atonement totally and completely on His own, without external support.”<sup>70</sup>

Additionally, speakers focused on Christ’s humanity as they highlighted the extreme loneliness experienced by Christ during this necessary atoning moment on the cross. President J. Reuben Clark referred to this question asked to the Father as an “outcry of almost human desperation,”<sup>71</sup> and President John Taylor said it was exclaimed while “groaning in mortal agony.”<sup>72</sup> President Clark also mentioned Christ’s mortality in connection with this statement: “On the cross, in the agony of expiring mortality, he cried aloud to the Father: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’”<sup>73</sup>

Elder Robert D. Hales referenced this phrase in four different talks, each time emphasizing the agency of the Son in carrying out the great Atonement. On one occasion he taught, “The Savior of the world was left alone by His

Father to experience, of His own free will and choice, an act of agency which allowed Him to complete His mission of the Atonement.”<sup>74</sup> Because of this “act of free agency,” Elder Hales explained that we can remember Christ in our moments of extreme loneliness: “Are there times in our lives when we think that we have been forsaken by God, or by our fellow men, or by our families? That is the moment when we have to turn our thoughts back to Christ and endure to the end.”<sup>75</sup>

### **“Father, into Thy Hands I Commend My Spirit”**

Christ’s statement “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46), is the last one recorded in the Gospel of Luke. This phrase has appeared thirty-three times in general conference and has been referenced by eighteen church leaders. Only within the last eighty years has this statement been used extensively; before 1940, it was mentioned only five times.

When leaders have quoted this phrase, they tend to use it as part of a narrative description of the final moments of the Savior’s life; it is frequently paired with another of the last statements made by the Savior. Consider the following representative quote from President Monson: “He was ridiculed, reviled, mocked, jeered, and nailed to a cross. . . . His response: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ ‘Into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.’”<sup>76</sup>

A few speakers used this phrase as an illustration of the tender nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son. In 1953 Elder Levi Edgar Young described this statement as “words of perfect trust and confidence,” that stemmed from a “divine knowledge that from God he came and to God he would return.”<sup>77</sup> Elder Albert E. Bowen similarly used Christ’s last request to the Father as an example of how Jesus “made the reality and the directive authority of God the Father the central theme of his teaching.”<sup>78</sup>

Church leaders have had various interpretations as to how this statement from the Savior was uttered. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland referred to it on one occasion as a whisper,<sup>79</sup> and on another as being said “in triumph.”<sup>80</sup> Elder David B. Haight portrayed it as being made in “reverence, resignation, and relief.”<sup>81</sup>

In 1958 President Harold B. Lee provided a unique viewpoint as he reflected on what these words might have meant to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as she stood near the cross: “This sainted mother with bowed head heard His last prayer murmured from the cross through tortured lips: ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit’ thus inspiring her with resignation and a

testimony of reassurance of a reunion shortly with Him and with God her Heavenly Father.”<sup>82</sup>

### “It Is Finished”

Jesus Christ’s final statement as recorded by John, “It is finished” (John 19:30), was referenced within our corpus twenty-nine times by twenty-one different leaders. The perception of how the Savior delivered these words varies widely. For example, Elder Henry D. Taylor referred to it as an exclamation “in a loud voice of holy triumph,”<sup>83</sup> but Elder Hugh B. Brown described it as an “agonized cry.”<sup>84</sup>

The majority of leaders interpret the phrase “It is finished” as a mark of the end of Christ’s mortal suffering, atoning sacrifice, or earthly mission given to him by the Father. In 1973 Elder S. Dilworth Young emphasized the completion of Christ’s mortal suffering, describing how Jesus hung “there in the heat of the day, the weight of his body on those tearing nails, every muscle and nerve drawn tight in agony. No stopping, no escape until he, having said, ‘It is finished.’”<sup>85</sup> His quote, along with almost one third of the other quotes regarding this statement, alludes to the deep pain endured by the Savior, highlighting the relief and positivity embedded in his final announcement as he reached an end of mortal suffering. Multiple Church leaders remark that this statement acknowledges the faithfulness and obedience that he exhibited as he endured to the end, voluntarily doing as the Father pleased until “the atoning sacrifice had been accepted”<sup>86</sup> and “he relinquish[ed] his life.”<sup>87</sup> In 1995 President Russell M. Nelson (then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve) taught that the word “finished” derives from the Greek word “teleios” which means “complete” and is the same word from which “perfect” is derived in the New Testament. Hence, “His concluding words upon Calvary’s cross referred to the culmination of his assignment—to atone for all humankind.”<sup>88</sup>

Although Jesus declared a finish,<sup>89</sup> some speakers point out that he was not declaring the end of his ministry. In 1882 President Joseph F. Smith emphasized the Savior’s ongoing work through his resurrection when he said, “It is believed by many . . . that our Savior finished his mission when he expired upon the cross, and his last words on the cross, as given by the Apostle John, ‘*It is finished*,’ are frequently quoted as evidence of the fact; but this is an error. Christ did not complete his mission upon the earth until after his body was raised from the dead.” He continued, “Further, the mission of Jesus will be unfinished until he redeems the whole human family, except the sons



of perdition, and also this earth from the curse that is upon it, and both the earth and its inhabitants can be presented to the Father redeemed, sanctified and glorious.”<sup>90</sup> President Spencer W. Kimball likewise taught in 1946, “When the Savior said, ‘It is finished,’ he referred to his mortal experience, for his crucifixion marked but a milepost in his ever-expanding power.”<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

In the six hours that Jesus Christ hung upon the cross at Calvary,<sup>92</sup> the New Testament authors record only seven statements spoken from his lips, totaling a mere fifty-three words in the King James Version of the Bible. This article has only painted broad thematic strokes of the teachings contained in the hundreds of references that we analyzed. Future research papers could focus exclusively on individual statements and examine each one more comprehensively.<sup>93</sup>

This article has focused on what Church leaders have taught about Christ's final *seven* statements on the cross; however, we also note that Church leaders provide us with an *eighth* statement. In the KJV, as Christ “yielded up the ghost,” he “cried again with a loud voice,” (Matthew 27:50) but no mention is made of what he said. The Joseph Smith Translation adds an additional statement made in the loud voice, stating, “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, *saying, Father it is finished, thy will is done*, yielded up the ghost” (JST, Matthew 27:50).<sup>94</sup>

Jesus's last words upon the cross reveal his capacity to love, forgive, and endure, as well as his conscious effort to obey. Whether used as a narrative to describe Jesus' last moments, to reveal one of the Savior's defining characteristics, or to teach a gospel principle, speakers across the decades have used the last statements of Christ in their teachings to help us draw closer to him. He chose to suffer. He chose to forgive. He chose to finish the mission that the Father had given him.

Elder Holland taught, “Can he bear all of our sins and our fear and loneliness too? He did and he does and he will. We do not know how such great sorrow can be borne, but it is no wonder the sun hid its face in shame. No wonder the veil of the temple was rent. No wonder the very earth convulsed at the plight of this perfect child. And at least one Roman centurion who saw all of this sensed something of what it had meant. In awe, he uttered the declaration for all eternity, ‘Truly this was the Son of God.’”<sup>95</sup> Although the Savior's final statements on the cross were likely the only message this

Centurion ever heard from the Savior, they helped him gain a testimony of Jesus Christ. As we carefully study the Savior's statements from the cross, and help those we teach do the same, our testimonies of Christ and desires to follow his example will increase.<sup>96</sup>

## Notes

1. James Reid, "The Words from the Cross," *Expository Times* 41, no. 3 (1 December 1929): 103.
2. Greg Laurie, *Finding Hope in the Last Words of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 8.
3. Murray J. Harris, *The Seven Sayings of Jesus on the Cross: Their Circumstances and Meaning* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), xiv.
4. For instance, Christ's statement "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34) is missing in many early manuscripts; scholars therefore have debated whether this is an actual statement from the cross. See for example, Jason A. Whitlark and Mikeal C. Parsons, "The 'Seven' Last Words: A Numerical Motivation for the Insertion of Luke 23.34a," *New Testament Studies* 52, no. 2 (2004): 188–204.
5. For example, Hudson R. Davis, "The Historical Interpretation of Christ's Fourth Cry from the Cross," Masters Thesis (Dallas Theological Seminary, 2003).
6. Vaughn Roste, "The Seven Last Words of Christ: A Comparison of Three French Romantic Musical Settings by Gounod, Franck, and Dubois" (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2013). See also Richard Young, ed. *Echoes from Calvary: Meditations on Franz Joseph Haydn's The Seven Last Words of Christ* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).
7. See several examples in Carol Ann Newsom, and Sharon H. Ringe, eds., *Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).
8. "Reflections on the Seven Last Words of Christ," *Catholic Sun*, 27 March 2019, <https://thecatholicsun.com/reflections-on-the-seven-last-words-of-christ/>.
9. Kevin Vost, "Seven Meditations on Christ's Seven Last Words," *Catholic Exchange*, 20 February 2018, <https://catholicexchange.com/christs-seven-last-words>.
10. Terry B. Ball and Nathan Winn, "Doctrines from Our Savior's Final Words," in *Behold the Lamb of God: An Easter Celebration*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Frank F. Judd Jr., and Thomas A. Wayment (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2008), 105–24.
11. Andrew Skinner, *Golgotha* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 140–43.
12. This site is maintained by Stephen W. Liddle and Richard C. Galbraith.
13. Mary Jane Woodger and Michelle Vanegas Brodrick, "Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision as Used by Church Leaders," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 374–92.
14. Sharon Black, Brad Wilcox, and Kyle Lyons, "Book of Mormon Citations in General Conference, 1965–2014," *Religious Educator* 17, no. 3 (2016): 144–69.
15. Brad Farnsworth, John Hilton III, Jaclyn Nielson, and Jonathan Ogden, "Prophetic Use of the Pauline Epistles, 1970–2013," *Religious Educator* 16, no. 1 (2015): 77–103.

16. In a few instances this extraction process led to duplicate entries; in addition, in rare instances the original corpus apparently connected the wrong verse with a specific statement. These minor discrepancies were resolved so that there were no duplicate or irrelevant statements in our final corpus.

17. Contact Jesse Vincent (Jesse\_vincent@byu.edu) for further information.

18. See <http://josephsmithpapers.org>. Not counting the Joseph Smith Translation, Joseph Smith only quoted one of Christ's statements on the cross, one time. The Joseph Smith Translation quotes are not included in our final count of Christ's statements; however, we do refer to the Joseph Smith Translation in our analysis of what church leaders have taught regarding these statements.

19. In some cases, a verse that contained a statement from the Savior was referenced, but the Savior's statement was not (a different part of the verse was referenced). For example, President Wilford Woodruff said, "The Savior preached and traveled and suffered until he gave up the ghost on Calvary." Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:215 (12 June 1863). Another example of such a statement is the following from President Brigham Young: "I have no doubt that the soldiers who were commanded to nail the Savior to the cross did not realize what they were doing," Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:25 (6 April 1873). We excluded such quotations. In other instances, Christ's words were not recorded in the quote, but the statement clearly alluded to what Christ said. For example, Elder Cecil O. Samuelson said, "At the time of his crucifixion he asked his beloved John to care for his mother, Mary, as if she were John's own mother (John 19:25-27)." Cecil O. Samuelson, Jr., "As Jesus Sees Us," *Ensign*, May 1995, 30. Similarly, Elder Claudio R. M. Costa said, "Knowing He had fulfilled His mission of saving all mankind, [Jesus] gave up His spirit into the hands of His Father." Claudio R. M. Costa, "That They Do Always Remember Him," *Ensign*, November 2015, 103. We included such instances.

20. Given that Church leaders made the most references to the Crucifixion in general (not specifically to Christ's last words on the cross) from the 1950s to 1980s, it is interesting to note that the two decades that saw the most references to the last seven statements do not fall within that range. See John Hilton III, Emily Hyde, and McKenna Trussel, "The Use of 'Crucifixion' by Church Leaders: 1852-2018," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2020): 49-80.

21. It is important to note that not all Church leaders have given the same number of talks. For example, within our corpus, President Monson gave a total of 249 talks, whereas Elder Hales and Elder Holland gave only 58 and 55, respectively. When evaluating references in proportion to the number of talks given, Elder Hales and Elder Holland have historically been the most frequent users of these statements.

22. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in *One Hundred Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1958), 47, and H. David Burton, "Courage to Harken," *Ensign*, May 1994, 66.

23. Matthew and Mark provide one statement from the Savior on the cross (it is the same in Matthew and Mark). Luke and John each give three statements from Christ, all of which are unique to their respective Gospels. Because all seven statements are not present in one account, it is difficult to determine their precise order.

24. "New Testament Revision 2, ca. 4 Apr. 1831-24 Mar. 1832 and 20-31 July 1832," 101, The Joseph Smith Papers.

25. See Wilford Woodruff, "Need for Prophets," in *Collected Discourses: President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, The Twelve Apostles, and Others* (Sandy: B.H.S. Publishing, 1987), 1:387.

26. Sterling W. Sill, in *One Hundred Twenty-Sixth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1955), 45.

27. Spencer W. Kimball, in *One Hundred Twentieth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949), 132.

28. Milton R. Hunter, in *One Hundred Thirtieth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1960), 25.

29. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Peaceable Things of the Kingdom," *Ensign*, November 1996, 83. While Elder Holland and many others refer to Christ's statement as "a plea," other leaders refer to it as a "request" or a cry. See John H. Groberg, "The Beauty and Importance of the Sacrament," *Ensign*, May 1989, 40, or Moses Thatcher, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:209 (13 April 1885).

30. Joseph F. Smith, in *Seventy-Third Semi-annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1902), 87.

31. Eldred G. Smith, in *One Hundred Thirty-First Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), 69.

32. Milton R. Hunter, in *One Hundred Thirtieth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1960), 25.

33. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Of You It Is Required to Forgive," *Ensign*, November 1980, 61.

34. Spencer W. Kimball, in *One Hundred Twentieth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1949), 132.

35. Thorpe B. Isaacson, in *One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1954), 42.

36. See for example, O. Leslie Stone, in *One Hundred Forty-Third Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973), 40 and Gordon B. Hinckley, "Blessed Are the Merciful," *Ensign*, May 1990, 69.

37. Milton R. Hunter, in *One Hundred Eighteenth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948), 31, and Loren C. Dunn, "Building Bridges to Faith," *Ensign*, May 1981, 26.

38. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:328 (10 December 1882). President Franklin D. Richards similarly taught, "No matter how much you are aggravated by the acts of the ungodly. . . Put up with it as Christ did when he was hanging upon the cross . . . and say 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' That is the way we want to look as far as we can upon those who are oppressing and injuring us, breaking up our homes, and scattering our women and children to the four winds." Franklin D. Richards, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:172 (4 April 1885).

39. Five of these statements were made by John Taylor and one by Wilford Woodruff, all between 1878 and 1881.

40. John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 20:255 (3 August 1879).

41. These 35 references came from 27 different Church leaders.

42. Joseph Smith, "Discourse, 11 June 1843," [1573], The Joseph Smith Papers; punctuation modified.
43. Moses Thatcher, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:312 (28 August 1885).
44. Charles W. Penrose, in *Journal of Discourses*, 24:95 (4 March 1883). See also Joseph L. Wirthlin, in *One Hundred Sixteenth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1945), 99, John Morgan, in *Journal of Discourses*, 25:74 (20 January 1884), and George Q. Cannon, in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:310 (3 December 1871).
45. Joseph Smith, "Discourse, 11 June 1843," [1573], The Joseph Smith Papers; emphasis added.
46. George Q. Cannon, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:83 (9 November 1884). Similarly, Elder Parley P. Pratt taught, "there was a moment in which the poor, uncultivated, ignorant thief was with him [Jesus] in that world" (Parley P. Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:9 (7 April 1853)).
47. Anthon H. Lund, in *Seventy-Fourth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1903), 81.
48. Eldred G. Smith, "Three Days in the Tomb," *Ensign*, May 1974, 96.
49. Thomas S. Monson, "The Way of the Master," *Ensign*, May 1996, 50.
50. Betty Jo N. Jepsen, "Kindness—A Part of God's Plan," *Ensign*, November 1990, 92.
51. Alma Sonne, in *One Hundred Twenty-Sixth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1956), 64. Similarly, Elder Matthew Cowley connected this statement to temple work and discussed what great comfort this promise from the Savior is to all of us. He said, "We know where that promise is today. Brothers and sisters, our people in the islands of the sea, our people in the missions of Europe, know where that promise is. 'Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.' And how they long to come to participate in the blessings of that promise, how they long to come to the Hawaiian Temple and go in there, as it were, into paradise, to reach back into their ancestry and say, 'Today thou shalt be with me; today I will bring you into a knowledge and an appreciation of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.'" Matthew Cowley, in *One Hundred Eighteenth Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1947), 82.
52. Anthon H. Lund, in *Eighty-Seventh Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916), 14.
53. Thomas S. Monson, "The Way of the Master," *Ensign*, May 1996, 50.
54. Joseph L. Wirthlin, in *One Hundred Fourteenth Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1943), 121.
55. Anne C. Pingree, "Charity: One Family, One Home at a Time," *Ensign*, November 2002, 109.
56. Henry D. Moyle, in *One Hundred Eighteenth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948), 7.
57. Spencer W. Kimball, in *One Hundred Twenty-Sixth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1956), 119.
58. Thomas S. Monson, "Compassion," *Ensign*, May 2001, 19.
59. Thomas S. Monson, "Think to Thank," *Ensign*, November 1998, 18.

60. Elaine L. Jack, "Relief Society: A Balm in Gilead," *Ensign*, November 1995, 93.
61. Yoshihiko Kikuchi, "Daughter of God," *Ensign*, May 1988, 76.
62. Howard W. Hunter, "Stand Firm in the Faith," *Ensign*, November 1994, 96.
63. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Women in Our Lives," *Ensign*, November 2004, 84.
64. H. David Burton, "Courage to Hearken," *Ensign*, May 1994, 67.
65. Jeffrey R. Holland, "This Do in Remembrance of Me," *Ensign*, November 1995, 67.
66. Russell M. Nelson, "The Atonement," *Ensign*, November 1996, 35.
67. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:206 (17 February 1856).
68. Marion D. Hanks, "Willing to Receive," *Ensign*, May 1980, 30.
69. Neal A. Maxwell, "Overcome . . . Even As I Also Overcame," *Ensign*, May 1987, 70.
70. Richard G. Scott, "He Lives! All Glory to His Name!," *Ensign*, May 2010, 77.
71. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in *One Hundred Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1958), 47.
72. John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 20:319 (6 October 1879).
73. J. Reuben Clark Jr., in *One Hundred Twentieth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1950), 117.
74. Robert D. Hales, "Behold, We Count Them Happy Which Endure," *Ensign*, May 1998, 75. See also Robert D. Hales, "Waiting upon the Lord: Thy Will Be Done," *Ensign*, November 2011, 71; Robert D. Hales, "Agency: Essential to the Plan of Life," *Ensign*, November 2010, 25; Robert D. Hales, "Lessons from the Atonement That Help Us to Endure to the End," *Ensign*, November 1985, 20.
75. Robert D. Hales, "Lessons from the Atonement That Help Us to Endure to the End," *Ensign*, November 1985, 20.
76. Thomas S. Monson, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives!" *Ensign*, May 2007, 25.
77. Levi Edgar Young, in *One Hundred Twenty-Third Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1953), 31.
78. Albert E. Bowen, in *One Hundred Ninth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1939), 93.
79. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Hands of the Fathers," *Ensign*, May 1999, 15.
80. Jeffrey R. Holland, "None Were with Him," *Ensign*, May 2009, 88. Elder Henry D. Taylor similarly said, "Jesus exclaimed in a loud voice of holy triumph: 'It is finished' and then, addressing his Father, he said: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.'" Henry D. Taylor, in *One Hundred Thirty-Seventh Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1967), 142.
81. David B. Haight, "Jesus of Nazareth," *Ensign*, May 1994, 75. Note that this statement is a quote from James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*.
82. Harold B. Lee, in *One Hundred Twenty-Eighth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1958), 134–35.
83. Henry D. Taylor, in *One Hundred Thirty-Seventh Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1967), 142.



84. Hugh B. Brown, in *One Hundred Thirty-Second Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1962), 108.

85. S. Dilworth Young, in *One Hundred Forty-Third Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973), 167.

86. H. David Burton, "Courage to Hearken," *Ensign*, May 1994, 66.

87. James E. Talmage, in *Ninety-Eighth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1928), 95.

88. Russell M. Nelson, "Perfection Pending," *Ensign*, November 1995, 86.

89. In 1990 Elder Neal A. Maxwell drew attention to the fact that Christ once before also declared that his work was finished in his intercessory prayer just before heading to the Garden of Gethsemane with his disciples: "I have *glorified* thee on the earth: I have *finished* the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Neal A. Maxwell, "Endure It Well," *Ensign*, May 1990, 35.

90. Joseph F. Smith, in *Journal of Discourses*, 23:173–75 (18 June 1882). Sterling W. Sill also mentions this point to help people recognize that "It is finished" were not the last words ever heard from the lips of Jesus Christ, but that he continues to live and speak. Sterling W. Sill, in *One Hundred Thirty-Third Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1963), 42.

91. Spencer W. Kimball, in *One Hundred Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946), 49.

92. According to the Gospel of Mark, it was 9:00 a.m. when "they crucified him" (Mark 15:25). In John 19:14, Pilate passes judgment on Christ about noon, shifting the timeline portrayed in Mark.

93. As an example of a small detail, not discussed in the present study, the phrase, "Why has thou forsaken me" was used one time to illustrate that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are separate individuals. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent," *Ensign*, November 2007, 41.

94. This verse has only been referenced one time by a church leader. See James E. Faust, "The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope," *Ensign*, November 2001, 19.

95. Jeffrey R. Holland, "He Loved Them unto the End," *Ensign*, November 1989, 26.

96. Chad H Webb, administrator of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, wrote, "I have come to understand and believe that the single most important way in which we can help increase faith in the rising generation is to more fully place Jesus Christ at the center of our teaching and learning by helping our students come to know Him, to learn from Him, and to consciously strive to become like Him. Every day, we must 'talk of Christ, . . . rejoice in Christ, . . . [and] preach of Christ.'" Chad H Webb, "We Talk of Christ, We Rejoice in Christ" (Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Annual Training Broadcast, 12 June 2018). We hope that this article will in a small way assist religious educators in fulfilling this invitation from Brother Webb.