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The NEW TESTAMENT and the LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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Corinthians 11:27-28). To partake unworthily will cause one to stumble and bring about sickness, either physical or mental, and, Paul said, may even bring death [sleep] (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). Such is the order revealed to the Corinthians by Paul and verified in the Book of Mormon as a second witness (3 Nephi 18:28-32; Mormon 9:29). The sacrament is thus a stepping-stone or a stumbling block.

Conclusion

The gospel is eternal. Although customs and traditions become linked to their practice in various locations, the truths and principles of salvation are the same. The devil is always opposing the Lord's plan for bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man (Moses 1:39). These temptations of Satan were called stumbling blocks by Paul since they obstruct our progress on the path to eternal life. As indicated in the above analysis, these stumbling blocks are almost as eternal as the gospel. There are certain things that Satan always tosses in our way. The sins are the same even if they are dressed in charmingly varied robes of deceit. However, the road signs given us by the Lord's apostles to avoid the turnoffs and chuckholes are also eternal and will lead us through the rough places of the wilderness of Satan to the bosom of Abraham and Christ.

Interpreting the New Testament

Chauncey C. Riddle

This paper is divided into three parts: Part 1 deals with the place of the New Testament in our lives and why we must know it. Part 2 discusses the three modes of interpreting the New Testament. Part 3 contains special suggestions for interpreting the New Testament.

Part 1: The Place of the New Testament in Our Lives

To understand the place of the New Testament in the life of a Latter-day Saint, we must first inquire as to the place of the scriptures in general. If salvation is the goal for man, then we see that there are three principal helps for man as he seeks to be saved. The first help is God himself. Salvation is not a mortal or human thing. It is supernatural, a lifting of man from human to divine status, and comes to us only in the person of Jesus Christ. It is through the personal power and intervention of Jesus Christ that any man is saved from unrighteousness.

The second help sent by God to draw men unto him that they might be saved is the prophets of God. These are they who are given power from God to teach the true gospel of Jesus Christ and to administer the saving ordinances, which are the covenants thereof. The gospel is necessary because men must understand and desire salvation from unrighteousness before they can be saved. Each person is then saved in and through the covenants each makes with God and the carrying out of the promises made by each person and by God.

A third help for salvation is the holy scriptures. The purpose of the scriptures is to acquaint men with the possibility of salvation, that each might have the opportunity to understand and to desire salvation through Jesus Christ. Those who have that desire are pointed by the scriptures to find a prophet of God, that they, too, might partake of the covenants and thus enter into life, which is salvation. When the scriptures are not adulterated by men, they perform well those two tasks: allowing men to desire righteousness by understanding its possibility in Jesus Christ, and pointing them to find an authorized servant of Jesus Christ

who can lawfully and effectively administer the saving ordinances.

Let us note what is necessary for salvation: God is necessary, and since he saves men only through covenants, the covenants are necessary. Prophets of God would not be necessary if God himself were to come down and administer the gospel and the covenants directly to men. But God chooses not to do that most of the time. When God chooses not to come down, then men who desire to be saved must seek a legal administrator sent from God, a prophet. In this case, the prophet, who bears the authority of God to teach the gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof, becomes necessary. The scriptures are not necessary. They are helpful, but men could be saved if there were not one line of scripture written. Men could be saved by the prophet of God without scripture, for the true prophet has all that is necessary.

But the scriptures are helpful. They point our minds to our God and to righteousness. They make us hunger and thirst for the ordinances which make righteousness possible. Each different scripture gives the witness of a different people and/or time, showing that God loves his children and saves men in all ages through the very same gospel and ordinances. The New Testament is the special witness of the prophets who labored in the Old World during the meridian of time. They give us many precious insights into the life and ministry of the Savior and his apostles. But no Latter-day Saint needs those insights to be saved.

We are a missionary people, however. The New Testament is the only record of Jesus Christ and his gospel that much of the world knows. That record therefore is the bridge by which we can put them in touch with the true priesthood authority of God. Because Latter-day Saints are a missionary people, we need to know the New Testament backwards and forwards, not for our own salvation but that we might be instrumental in bringing the knowledge of how to be saved to others of our brothers and sisters. For us to ignore the New Testament or to know it poorly is not to love either our God or those Christian neighbors whom our God has given us.

Part 2: Three Modes of Interpreting the New Testament

The first mode for understanding the New Testament is private interpretation; the second is scholarly interpretation; and the third is prophetic interpretation.

A. Private Interpretation

Private interpretation of the New Testament is reading some version of it and deciding that it means whatever we think it means. In this method, each person sets himself up as the interpreter and fixes on his own fancy as the standard. There are two principal ways of doing this.

The first kind of private interpretation is whimsical; with it we allow our own creative imagination to tell us that the text means whatever pops into our heads as we read it. Many human beings interpret everything they read in this way.

The second variety of private interpretation is the dogmatic variety, wherein the reader attributes the same meaning to the text which he or she has been told by someone else is the proper interpretation. Without any further thought or inquiry the reader simply accepts what he has been told.

The New Testament has a pointed comment about private interpretation. Peter warns us not to indulge in it: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21). The dogmatic variety of private interpretation is what the scriptures call the "chains of hell" (see D&C 123:7-8). The purpose and end of private interpretation is to confirm and convince the reader of what he already believes. It is principally an occasion for self-justification, a path to be eschewed under all circumstances.

B. Scholarly Interpretation

Scholarly interpretation of the New Testament is applying a rational formula to the translating of a scriptural text into some vernacular and then designating the significance of that text. There are two principal varieties of scholarly interpretation.

First-class scholarship has each of the following criteria as necessary conditions: (a) the most authentic version of the text must be used; (b) the text must be used in the original language (Greek, for the New Testament); (c) the scholar must be aware of and account for what every other first-class scholar has said on the topic or passage being interpreted; and (d) the first-class scholar must use a rational formula which he explicitly describes and which any other scholar could discern and use. These rather strict conditions for first-class scholarship cause it to be rare. One mark of the work of first-class scholars is the abundance of

footnotes, but many footnotes do not make first-class scholarship. Only a first-class scholar will read all the footnotes, track down the origins, and judge for himself whether or not a writer makes sense. It takes a first-class scholar to identify and deal with a first-class scholar.

Second-class scholarship is interpretation which satisfies any one of the conditions for first-class scholarship but lacks one or more of the other requirements. There is a good deal of second-class scholarship in the world.

The rational formulae which scholars use are of some note, and it serves our purpose to review the principal varieties here.

"*Lower*," or *textual criticism*, is the comparison of texts to determine by both internal and external evidence the text which is most authentic. In the case of the New Testament, this usually is the pursuit of the oldest manuscript, assuming the oldest to be the closest to the source. We have nothing which could be considered an original manuscript for the New Testament, so lower criticism is important to every student of that text.

"*Higher*" *criticism* is the search for authorship of biblical texts by considering internal evidence, such as writing style, vocabulary, historical references, and so forth.

Grammatical criticism, or ordinary textual interpretation, is intense analysis of the words and grammatical forms of the text, in an attempt to establish what would constitute an acceptable modal translation of the text based on what are considered to be the meanings of other nonscriptural texts of the Koine Greek which appears in the New Testament manuscripts.

Source criticism is the attempt to structure the hypothetical original documents which the writers of the Gospels and Acts might have used to compose those works, drawing evidence from the similarities and differences found among the synoptic Gospels in particular.

Form criticism is the attempt to relate the New Testament texts to the literary forms present in the manuscripts of the contemporary Hellenic culture of the writers of the New Testament. Various pericopes or fragments of the text are analyzed as paradigms, tales, legends, myths, and exhortations, interpretation being affected by the perceived literary device employed.

Redaction criticism assumes that there were primary source documents like those which source criticism seeks to reconstruct, and that writers of the New Testament were principally employed in stitching the older fragments together with comments of their own, which is redaction. The work of redaction criticism is to

reinterpret the text in light of the perceived biases and emphases of each redactor.

Tradition-history criticism attempts to correlate the biblical text with the historic development of the New Testament church. It is based on two principles: first, that the Christology of the New Testament is not that of Jesus himself but is a product of the legends which grew up in the first century; and second, that it is possible to separate the authentic teachings of Jesus himself from the accretions added by later Christians.

Comparative religion criticism (history of religion criticism) approaches the New Testament by noting what elements it does and does not have in common with the other religions of the ancient Near East. Relationships with Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, and other religions are established, showing that the atoning sacrifice and purification rites were common to many cultures.

Demythologizing is the attempt to relieve the New Testament of its supernatural elements, which, it is said, are no longer tolerable to the enlightened mind, and to discover the authentic, timeless core that lies within those supposed myths. An interesting variation on that theme is the attempt to "remythologize" the text in favor of modern myths, those more acceptable to modern minds.

Hermeneutics, as an intellectual approach, leaves the attempt to say what the text originally meant to others, and concentrates instead on discerning what the text should mean for us in our modern setting. Instead of our judging the text, it is understood that the text judges us who read it. As Jesus established a common understanding with the people to whom he spoke that he might thereby surely deliver his message, so we must seek today that frame of mind in which the teachings of Jesus will be most meaningful to us.

Another scholarly device is that employed by Harnack, Boman, and others in the attempt to characterize the patterns of Hebrew thinking as they contrast with those of the Greek mind. Boman sees the Hebrews as interested in action, whereas the Greeks look for the unchangeable, eternal verities; the Hebrews focus on inner qualities of soul, while the Greeks favor visible particulars in describing persons; Hebrews see action as either complete or incomplete, whereas the Greeks nicely divide time into past, present, and future. Such differences as these, Boman

contends, must be taken into account when interpreting the Hebrew New Testament message in Greek grammatical forms.¹

An excellent explanation of much that relates to the scholarly interpretation of the New Testament is found in a work edited by I. Howard Marshall, entitled *New Testament Interpretation*.² I recommend especially the article by F. F. Bruce entitled "The History of New Testament Study," one by E. Earl Ellis entitled "How the New Testament Uses the Old," and a third by Anthony Thiselton entitled "The New Hermeneutic."

The end or goal of scholarly interpretation is knowledge. The scholar seeks, with the best rational tools and worldly learning that he can muster, to reach conclusions that are intellectually justifiable. His greatest fear is that he will believe something that is unworthy of rational assent. Often he assumes protective custody of nonscholars in attempting to spare them the horrors of naive belief and private interpretation, thus becoming a brother-keeper. Some scholars, of course, have a real belief that Jesus was divine. They search and reason while believing, hoping to find a better faith, and through their faith have given great gifts to the world. I think here of works such as that of James Strong, who, with others but without the benefit of a computer, produced that invaluable tool for biblical scholarship that we know as *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.³ I also recommend the volume by Richard L. Anderson entitled *Understanding Paul*, an interpretive work of first-class scholarship.⁴

Scholarly interpretation is clearly an improvement on private interpretation. Scholarly and rational though it is, much of it is guesswork. But gems can be found in it which are well worth the search. This body of material is much in the category of the biblical Apocrypha concerning which the Lord declared through the Prophet Joseph Smith: "There are many things

¹Boman, Thorlief; *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, W. W. Norton Co., 1960.

²Paternoster Press, Exeter, England, 1977.

³MacDonald Publishing Company, McLean, Virginia.

⁴Anderson, Richard Lloyd; *Understanding Paul*, Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1983.

contained therein that are not true, which are interpolations by the hands of men. . . . Therefore, whoso readeth it, let him understand, for the Spirit manifesteth therefrom; And whoso receiveth not by the Spirit, cannot be benefitted" (D&C 91:2-6).

C. Prophetic Interpretation.

We now contrast private and scholarly interpretation with prophetic interpretation. Prophetic interpretation is interpretation of a scriptural text under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit. This is personal revelation, the same kind of personal revelation by which the scripture was originally created. This kind of interpretation is denominated "prophetic" because it is the Holy Spirit which brings the true testimony of Jesus Christ and that testimony of Jesus Christ is the spirit of prophecy. Whoever has the Holy Spirit to guide him or her is for that moment a prophet—not necessarily a prophet to anyone else, but at least a prophet unto himself or herself. Since it takes a prophet to tell a prophet, the Holy Spirit binds the sent prophet to the receiving prophet in the unity of submission to the mind and will of God (cf. D&C 50:13-24).

Thus there are two basic types of prophetic interpretation. The first is the prophecy of receiving from God for one's own personal benefit. As one approaches a scriptural text in prayer and faith, ready to do what is instructed by the Holy Spirit, one indeed may receive specific instruction in connection with text as to how that should be interpreted, then acting accordingly in one's own life situation and predicaments. This is using the text as if it were a Urim and Thummim, a divinely given aid to facilitate the receiving of further revelation from the Lord. Since the Lord has promised that he will give wisdom—that knowledge of how to act in faith—that we might please him, such revelation is a frequent occurrence. Its occurrence is correlated strictly with the degree to which the person seeks and hungers after righteousness through Jesus Christ. We noted above that the purpose in private interpretation is self-justification and that the purpose of scholarly interpretation is the ascertaining of truth, that one might know what to believe. Contrasted with both is the purpose of prophetic interpretation: to be able to act in faith to please God. Action, which includes but goes much beyond mere believing, is the end of prophetic scriptural interpretation. Built into this kind of prophecy is the supposition that this process will take place again and again, and that through much faith and experience in experimenting with those messages delivered by the still, small

voice of the Spirit, one will come to know for oneself, unerringly, what is and what is not the voice of God in this world. Thus one becomes sure and established, rooted and tested in the faith of Christ, and through that mature faith comes all other good things from God.

The second kind of prophetic interpretation of the scriptures is the prophecy of receiving from God for the purpose of bearing witness to others concerning God. To safeguard the purity of this kind of revelation, the Lord has put three safeguards on it. First, prophecy may be received and delivered to other human beings only by those who are ordained of God by the laying on of hands by those who have true authority from God, even as was Aaron. Second, the hearer will always be one to whom the preacher or teacher is specifically sent. It will be publicly known to members of the Lord's Church who those preachers and teachers are that are duly sent. Third, each hearer is entitled to personal revelation from God himself confirming any interpretation or prophecy which the one who is sent might deliver to him or her. Thus the prophecy of preaching or teaching for God must be matched by the prophecy of receiving from God by the hearer for the witness of the preacher or teacher to be valid and binding. These three essentials are clearly stated by the Lord as his standard: "And, behold, and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth—And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation" (D&C 68:2-4).

Thus, each human being who encounters the holy scriptures has three choices: he may put his own private interpretation on the scripture, he may use the tools and formulae of the scholarly world in interpreting it, or he may seek and find personal revelation that the Lord might interpret it for him. It seems that this is an exhaustive taxonomy; every interpretation can be correctly designated as one of these three.

But what about the value of mixing these three types of interpretation? It is plain that private interpretation is always evil and that it will destroy any good that might otherwise be found by an individual when combining it with either scholarly or prophetic interpretation. Scholarly interpretation is evil if it is private interpretation, that is to say, if it is not done under the inspiration and permission of the Holy Spirit. But scholarship

can be noble and spiritually rewarding. The scholarly work of Mormon in creating the Book of Mormon is a perfect model of responsible, spiritual scholarship. But scholarly or not, interpretation of scripture must always be purely prophetic to avoid being evil. The kingdom of our Savior today could use more first-class scholarship by those who enjoy the spirit of prophecy. Of course, what it most needs is more persons reading the scriptures by the spirit of prophecy and then acting faithfully. We have enough scripture; we need to better use what we have. It is promised that then we shall have more.

D. Applications by History

How can an understanding of these three kinds of interpretation be seen to operate historically? First, we note that all scripture is produced by prophecy, by the revelations of God to his chosen servants. The intention is that all reading and interpreting of any portion or of all of that scripture should be done by prophecy, either for the benefit of the individual in his own stewardship or for the purpose of instructing others. But when men sin, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are taken from them. If they then interpret scripture, they are forced either to scholarly or to private interpretation.

After prophets ceased in Judah in Old Testament times (c. 400 B.C.), there arose the schools of rabbinic interpretation. Rabbinic interpretation is scholarly interpretation. It focuses on reading the accepted text in the original Hebrew, knowing what other rabbis have said about it, and elaborating interpretation according to rational formulae. These scholars were known as scribes and Pharisees in the Savior's time. Jesus was a problem to them because he did not have the rabbinic training or outlook: he taught as one having authority, for indeed he was a prophet of God. He spoke only by the spirit of prophecy and instructed his followers to do likewise. In this the Savior threatened the rabbinic tradition of the scribes and Pharisees. They saw themselves as the saviors of the common people, preserving them from the great evil of private interpretation of the holy scriptures, which is generally the scholarly attitude. It was these protectors of the people who called for and gained Jesus' blood, calling him a blasphemer for pretending to revelation from his Father and theirs. So they had their way, and rabbinism has maintained its hold on Judah to this day.

Paul was a rabbinic zealot, persecuting the blasphemers wherever he could. He was cured of his spiritual blindness by a

revelation which left him physically blind. But then, knowing revelation, he became a faithful disciple of the Savior, teaching the deadness both of the law of Moses and of the rabbinic tradition of interpretation which refused to see the law as the schoolmaster to prepare Israel for Christ.

During the time of Paul and the other Apostles, prophetic interpretation of the scriptures flourished, though not without opposition. But when the apostles were gone, the opposition triumphed and scholarly interpretation replaced revelation, even as it had done in Judaism earlier. Training for the priest became the study of languages and philosophy that scholarly work might be pursued. Thus, the world came to think that one cannot preach unless he is school learned.

The Protestant Reformation provided an interesting twist on the old story. When Luther, Wycliffe, and others translated the Bible into the vernacular languages, they did so as scholars, but they were undoubtedly aided by the Holy Spirit in much of what they did. The result was that prophetic interpretation again began to flourish. Individuals could now read the things of God and interpret them for themselves, and through faithful obedience to God as he gave them revelation, they revolutionized the world for much good. Institutionally, Protestantism has always been weak. Lacking authority for the preaching and teaching gifts, it has foundered on the question of authority. But individuals were not barred or prevented from doing much good. That is perhaps why the practice of Christian religion among genuine Protestants has so often been very good while the theory has been very bad.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also reflects the tension among these three modes of interpreting the scriptures. Prophetic interpretation is the core and being of the Restored Church. But there are those who insist on their own private interpretation of the revelations. These go off into the desert (spiritually and/or temporally) and form their own private churches and kingdoms. They have their reward.

Others employ scholarly methods to interpret the scriptures, and some of that scholarship is first-rate. Among these scholars there are those who are also submissive to the Holy Spirit, who wait upon the Lord; they have sometimes made important contributions to the kingdom, often anonymously. They know that their blessings come not through their scholarly attainments but from their faith in Jesus Christ. Another group in the Church are scholars of one sort or another who do not brook priesthood authority and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They come to

believe that reason must and will eventually triumph over what they call "blind faith." To them, blind faith is unscholarly faith. They struggle with what the General Authorities of the Church say and cannot fully support those authorities. They are sometimes miffed because persons of lesser intelligence and scholarship are placed in positions of authority over them or are given precedence before them. Their scholarship has become a stumbling block to them. This is one source of the so-called anti-intellectual bias of the Church.

But scholarship and revelation can go hand in hand as long as revelation is the leader, the interpreter, and not vice versa.

Part 3: Suggestions for Interpreting the New Testament

We come now to the third part of this paper, which is to make some concrete suggestions for faithful, prophetic interpretation of the New Testament. It is incumbent upon every faithful member to read the New Testament during 1987, if at all possible. If we read it and how we read it will determine much about our future.

I will make seven specific suggestions as to how one might profitably go about reading the New Testament prophetically. I report these as admonitions to myself, hoping that something I say might find a responsive chord in your spiritual repertoire.

1. I believe that it is important to begin each scripture session with prayer, that we might demonstrate our faith and make ourselves more receptive to the whisperings of the Spirit. Indeed, prayer itself, if done truly, is simple practice at receiving and obeying personal revelation. It is thus a specific preparation for receiving what the Lord would have us do in connection with the text we are about to examine. I call as my witness on this point, Nephi of old: "But behold, I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul" (2 Nephi 32:9).

2. It has often been noted that we tend to see in a text what we already believe. If what we already believe is true, then we have a great help in interpreting the scriptures. But if we are struggling with new doctrine and have false doctrine as our interpretive frame, we will have a difficult time when the Holy Spirit tells us something contrary to what we already believe. We must clean up the launching pad to avoid misinterpretation.

One excellent way to cleanse our minds of error is to let the Book of Mormon be our standard of doctrine and truth. Of course, the Book of Mormon cannot give us the truth without revelation. But at least we are reading the book with the most correct text in this whole world. A better place to practice interpretation by the Spirit and to establish a true theology and cosmology is difficult to find, and if found, is sometimes not accessible (such as the person of a General Authority). My witness here is the Prophet Joseph Smith: "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book" (Introduction to The Book of Mormon).

3. We need to see all things from the perspective of eternity. There is only one thing which matters in eternity: righteousness. If righteousness is the thing after which we hunger and thirst, then as we read the scriptures prayerfully and faithfully, we will be filled with information about how to obtain righteousness and how to avoid unrighteousness. The Christian world generally believes that the problem of salvation is to somehow get forgiveness for unrighteousness. The Book of Mormon shows us that the larger problem is getting our personal self re-created into a new being that no longer does anything unrighteous. Studying that process of re-creation through being reborn and growing up into the stature of the fulness of Christ is the key to righteousness and eternity. We have the promise of the Savior: "Blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 12:6).

4. We can liken the scriptures unto ourselves. When we read the stories of the scriptures, we can imaginatively put ourselves in the place of the characters of the story. How would I think, feel, and act if I suddenly awoke and realized that I am the prodigal son? What should I then feel, think, say, and do? Or do I imagine myself to be the other brother who supposedly never sinned; do I see myself as saved while all about me are prodigal? If so, I probably am in great need of repentance for even allowing myself to suppose that I am *that* son.

When I read of Ananias and Sapphira, do I understand what must have been going through the heart and mind of each when questioned about the consecration? Can I feel the fear of trusting entirely in that unseen Jesus Christ, yet being tugged upon by the Holy Spirit to tell the truth? Can I imagine the anguish each must have felt in deliberately denying the Holy Spirit, grasping at a

worldly straw? Can the memory of that imagination help me in the future when my faith wavers and the cares of the world press upon me? I can indeed live a hundreds lives in my imagination, and taste the bitterness of sin and the joy of righteousness vicariously. That knowledge then can help me to be strong and reject the bitterness of hell. Through Cain I know murder and perdition. Through Judah I know the pain of adultery. Through David I know the damnation of lust. Through Peter I deny that I know the Christ and have bitter tears. Through Paul I know persecution and stoning. Through John I know what it is to lean upon the Savior's breast and be his beloved disciple. Not that I do these things, but the Holy Spirit causes all these things in me as I prayerfully meditate and ponder the stories which the prophets have carefully preserved for me under instruction from the Holy One. Again, I call Nephi as my witness in this likening: "And I did read many things unto them which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Nephi 19:23).

5. More specifically I can ask myself how I relate to the priesthood authority which my Savior has set over me. Am I Uzza who steadies the ark? Am I Simon who would buy the power of the priesthood if I cannot bring myself to repent to get it? Am I like the rich young man who goes to the authorities for help but then has to go away sorrowing because I love the world more than I love obedience? Can I see how I must not pretend that I am as good as the prophet, as Hiram Page was tempted? Do I see in my bishop and stake president the same authority and power which parted the Red Sea and fed the five thousand?

The brethren who preside over us are human, but the authority they have is not. Can I look both fully in the face and accept them? When those brethren use a scripture to teach us, do I find fault with their interpretation because I fancy myself to be superior, then neglect to do what they tell me, thus compounding the error? Peter tells us that the key to perfecting our love for the Savior is first to learn to love the brethren whom he has sent to preside over us (see 2 Peter 1). If our reading of the scriptures encourages us and enables us to do that, we are profiting from the scriptures indeed.

6. If we love the brethren who preside over us, we then can use our reading of the scriptures to draw us closer to the Lord himself. Have we read the life of the Savior in all the detail preserved for us, then prayed for the confirmation so that we can say with Peter;

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)? If we read with faith, we will know that our Savior loves us and that he does nothing save it be for the benefit of the world. If we love and serve him, everything which happens to us he will turn to our good. As our admiration and love for him and our faithfulness to him grow, we will grow in the power and understanding of his word. The scriptures will indeed become a Urim and Thummim to us. We will not be in doubt as to what he would have us believe and do. He himself tells us, "And again, verily I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you to ponder in your hearts, with this commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall call upon me while I am near—Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 88:62-63).

7. My final suggestion for interpreting the New Testament and all scripture is that we strive to understand how to apply the great commandment. We are told, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him" (D&C 59:5). I take this to mean that there are four basic and distinct ways in which we should love our God. Since everything we do should be an act of love for him, reading the scriptures must be one of those things, and we should use the scriptures to learn how we can love and serve him with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength.

Our heart is the heart of our spirit body and is the factor which determines what we choose among the alternatives furnished by the mind. Most of us have the problem that our hearts are not pure: we want to do what is right, but we also want to sin. So we defeat ourselves, frustrate ourselves by doing some good things but not being able to reap the full benefits because we also tarnish ourselves with sinning. The solution to the problem is to find the one way to become pure in heart, which is found only in the Savior. If we come unto him as little children, believing and obeying, he can purify us. When we read the scriptures, we might well be asking, What does this passage teach me about how I should feel and what I should desire? If I then follow through with what I am instructed by the Spirit to feel and desire, I am beginning to love the Lord with my heart.

Our mind apparently is the brain of our spirit body. It is our mind which knows and understands, which receives instruction and reproof, which contemplates the world and the perspective of eternity. If our mind is right, we will receive many things but

admit into our beliefs only those things directly attested by the Holy Spirit, which will show us the truth of all things. Under the direction of that Spirit we will train ourselves to think, to compare, to analyze, to relate, to synthesize, to create, to conjecture, to test, to evaluate. We will strive to furnish our heart with an able and truthful servant and companion. Even as the heart needs to be pure, so does the mind need to be filled with truth and to eschew all error, even until one sees and understands the mysteries both of this world and of eternity. Only the Spirit of Truth, which is Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost acting as one, can so purify our minds and fill them that we can begin to become wise servants, properly furnished with the perspective of eternity. As we read the scriptures, we should be hungering and thirsting after truth, jealous for every true belief, that we might learn to love the Lord fully, in truth and righteousness, with our mind.

Our strength is our body, our mortal tabernacle. To love our God with all our strength, we must study and train ourselves until we furnish this body with the very best nutrition available, the best hygienic environment we can muster, the most valuable exercise and work which is appropriate. We must treasure our power of reproduction, deeming its purity of more value than physical life itself. We must search out that field of labor where the Lord would have us dwell and be a husbandman to his vineyard, and bring forth upon the earth those physical and spiritual fruits which will please him. Our study of the scripture will help suggest particulars of how we might act as just and wise stewards, how we might keep ourselves unspotted from the world, how we might need to sacrifice our very physical life in the cause of our Master. Thus we learn to love the Lord with all of our strength.

Our might is our sphere of influence in this world: our money, our property, our belongings, our family and friends, our stewardships. We are apprentice gods, and it pleases God to instruct us in all the ways of godliness if we seek righteousness rather than power. As we read his word, we will learn many things about how to be a just and wise steward. Through his Spirit he will show us good examples in the scriptures of the very principles and standards that he himself abides. As we are faithful in complying with that instruction, he is able to make us rulers over many, for we have then learned to love him with our might.

Learning to love God through the scriptures is like learning to braid with four strands. Here and there, line upon line, and precept upon precept, we learn the standards and requirements

for loving him with heart, might, mind, and strength. As we obey, we make the strands a reality instead of a possibility. As we obey through time, we twist, turn, weave, and sacrifice until we have formed a tightly woven strand, one that is strong yet flexible, durable yet pliable, ready and able to bear the weight of eternal things. We personally, being reborn and refashioned, have become worthy of the Master of our apprenticeship through loving him and his word.

One example must suffice. We read in John that if we continue in the word of the Savior, we are his disciples indeed; then we shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free. How shall we interpret this according to heart, might, mind, and strength? With our heart we can desire to know him who is the truth, desire enough that we actually repent of our sins and obey his will through his Holy Spirit, hungering and thirsting after righteousness. With our mind we can understand that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and that besides him there is no Savior and no salvation. We see that the world does not know the truth. We must put our whole trust and confidence in him only. With our strength, we can sacrifice to keep his commandments, to get up when we should, to sleep when we should, to eat when we should, to go and come and work and play as we should, to defend or retreat as we should, to till the earth and provide for our own as we should. With our might we can tithe and consecrate, foster good causes and bless, share with our neighbor who is in want, store for a dark future, and invest in that which is eternally worthwhile. For if we love and serve him who is the truth, he will then be able to set us free from every impurity, every smallness, every selfishness, every error, every untoward desire. Then we shall be free indeed.

The sum of the matter is that scripture is of no private interpretation. We must search and strive until we find that Holy Spirit which alone can make the scriptures come alive to us with that life which never ends. May we relish that great treasure, the New Testament, in that way, is my hope for all of us.

The Book of Romans: An Orthodox Description of Faith, Works, and Exaltation

Joseph B. Romney

It is rather common for Church members to shy away from the epistle to the Romans, as well as from the other Pauline epistles. In part, this reaction may be because those writings seem difficult to understand. Perhaps another reason is that the doctrines they contain do not appear to be exactly orthodox. This second reason is reinforced by the use of certain passages from Paul's epistles by those who say that all one must do to be saved is to verbally accept Christ as one's personal Savior. Since Latter-day Saints understand that conclusion to be erroneous, and since Paul's epistles are used as a basis for that conclusion, Church members may feel suspicious of those epistles. The Book of Romans is especially susceptible to this concern because nowadays it is often cited as a source of that doctrine, and historically it was the trigger for Martin Luther's spiritual renovation which led to the emphasis of that doctrine in that Reformation.¹

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that the epistle to the Romans is in accord with what the restored gospel of Jesus Christ teaches about the correct relationship of faith and works as they lead to exaltation. This accord will be demonstrated by briefly describing the orthodox doctrine, then comparing the basic organizational structure of Romans to that doctrine. The

¹This position was personally presented to me not long ago by James R. Spencer. It is in his book *Beyond Mormonism: An Elder's Story* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), citing Romans 1:16-17; 3:20-22 on pages 113-14, and his personal subscription to me of Romans 10:1-4. Luther's view was expressed in his own words where he struggled to understand "the justice of God" as discussed in Romans. "Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that the just shall live by faith: [1:16] Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith." Quoted in Roland H. Bainton, *The Age of Reformation* (New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1956), p. 97.