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## Religious Doctrine and the Principles of Revelation

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## ARTICLE

# RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE AND THE PRINCIPLES OF REVELATION

VAL D. RICKS\*

I want to thank the board of editors of the University of St. Thomas Law Journal for their wonderful open-mindedness. I have been asked to discuss the development of doctrine within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Inviting an ecumenical panel to write about the development of religious doctrine in a journal sponsored by a Catholic university shows the Board's catholic goodwill.

Consistent with that goodwill, I intend to describe the development of doctrine from the perspective of a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am a member, in good standing (as I understand the matter). Certain that the board's invitation is to discuss what Church members think, and not what others think of them, I will speak from a position of faith. On the topic at issue, I would not want to speak from any other position. Of course, my mere membership does not mean that I speak for the Church or that the Church endorses anything I say here. I speak only for myself. However, I believe that what I write is widely held by Church

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This article cites four works accepted as canonical scripture within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (1) The translation of the Bible used by the Church is the authorized King James version, Holy Bible (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1979). (2) The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ (1981) is itself divided into individual books, each named for its principal author, similar to the books of the prophets in the Old Testament or to the four Gospels in the New. Citations to The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ will be to the individual book, followed by a reference to chapter and verse within that individual book, and identified as coming from The Book of Mormon by a parenthetical so stating, as follows: *Moroni 10:4-5* (Book of Mormon). (3) The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1981) is divided into sections, and each section into verses. Citations to this book will be to a shortened form of the title, followed by section and verse, as follows: *Doctrine and Covenants 130:20-21*. (4) The Pearl of Great Price (1981) is divided into individual books, also, and will be cited similarly to The Book of Mormon, i.e., *Moses 1:39* (The Pearl of Great Price). Each of these books can be read and searched digitally at <http://scriptures.lds.org/>.

members. Most of it comes from the canon of scripture accepted by the Church and the writings of those with recognized authority to speak for the Church. I believe it is the Church's doctrine.

That is an irony here. This paper is about the development of doctrine, but the Church has doctrine about such things: doctrine about the development of doctrine. So, to a large extent, this is a doctrinal paper.

That this is a doctrinal paper makes a caveat necessary: This paper will be necessarily incomplete, for more than one reason. First, the doctrines of the gospel are all interconnected, and I can write only a few of them here. Second, and more importantly, religious doctrine itself is but a small part of a much more expansive stance regarding what is real. Doctrine is the more word-centered part of what is real, and perhaps that is why the topic attracts legal scholars. But there is much more to faith than doctrine. The apostle John thus quotes Jesus: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man *shall do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."<sup>1</sup> Doing God's will precedes (or accompanies) the true appreciation of his doctrine. So this paper is not exhaustive. Even if I could write all of the doctrine about the development of doctrine, which I cannot, I could not write the doctrine clearly enough that it would be understood by all readers as it is understood by those who are prepared through such "doing."<sup>2</sup>

There is another way to say this. If one's primary objective is to do the will of God, there is with respect to that objective no qualitative difference between belief in and the speaking of doctrine, on the one hand, and action in accordance with doctrine and commandments, on the other. God, in fact, equally commands belief in his doctrine,<sup>3</sup> the teaching of his doctrine and commandments (which are the same),<sup>4</sup> and the keeping of his doctrine and commandments (again, which are the same).<sup>5</sup> So doctrine to

1. *John* 7:16-17 (King James) (emphasis added).

2. This point reminds me of Wittgenstein's comment that the "common behavior of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* § 206 (G.E.M. Anscombe trans., 2d. ed., Macmillan Co. 1953). Those who do not engage in common behavior have no system of reference by which to interpret. Nonbelievers do not engage in believing behaviors, so religious language for this reason cannot be fully translated into non-religious language. Those of different faiths have a similar problem. We do different things, and this means that our language—which is part of that doing—does not fully translate.

3. *Mark* 16:16 (King James) ("He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."); *John* 7:16 (King James) ("My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.").

4. *Doctrine and Covenants* 68:25 (enjoining parents to teach their children "the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands"); *Doctrine and Covenants* 6:9 ("Say nothing but repentance unto this generation."); *Doctrine and Covenants* 11:9 (same as *Doctrine and Covenants* 6:9); *Doctrine and Covenants* 88:77 ("I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.").

5. *John* 14:15. Several passages equate doctrine and commandments. E.g. *Matthew* 15:9; *Mark* 7:7; *Colossians* 2:22.

Latter-day Saints is a part of what God commands us to do. It is the part that is thought and spoken, that which we should believe and teach. There is no merely theoretical or metaphysical doctrine in the Church.

This observation leads me to a second irony. Though the Church has doctrine about the development of doctrine, doctrine in the Church is not developed “doctrinally.” That is, doctrine is not the result of casuistic, legalistic, or deductive process.<sup>6</sup> Rather, the Church’s doctrinal teaching about doctrine is this: God has “revealed its doctrine.”<sup>7</sup> The doctrine of doctrine that I will discuss is doctrine about revelation.

Continuing, latter-day revelation is the premise of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the spring of 1820, Joseph Smith, a farm boy in upstate New York, prayed to God for wisdom.<sup>8</sup> God the Father and his son Jesus Christ appeared to young Joseph and gave him directions.<sup>9</sup> Other direction from Christ and angelic ministers followed. Many of Joseph’s acts thereafter were as directed by revelation<sup>10</sup>—to retrieve and translate The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ; to organize the Church; and to serve the Church as its presiding priesthood officer and apostle, prophet, seer, and revelator until his death in 1844. Following Joseph Smith’s death, his successors in the presiding office continued as apostles, prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church. President Gordon B.

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6. Intellectual methods—study and reason—are essential to our progress toward eternal life, but they are not sufficient. They can prepare the way. They can get the mind ready to receive the Spirit. But what the scriptures call conversion—the change of mind and heart that gives us the direction and strength to move resolutely toward eternal life—comes only by the witness and power of the Holy Spirit.

Dallin H. Oaks, *Nourishing the Spirit*, Ensign 7, 13 (Dec. 1998). Thus, revelation trumps theory. Just as one can do what is right without being able fully to explain why it is right, one can teach what is right even when one cannot fully explain it theoretically. Doctrine in the Church is revealed. Only God knows fully why he requires it to be said in the way that it is said. Thus, doctrine will necessarily be somewhat ahead of what disciples can explain. This must be true in a revealed religion. If the doctrine never got beyond the knowledge and righteousness of disciples, they would not grow, and their teaching would be merely the commandments of men. Thus, Church members are far more concerned with whether a doctrine is revealed by God and is true than with whether it makes sense at the moment or can be fully rationally defended. In fact, whether a revelation from God makes sense has more to do with individual righteousness than with rational defense.

On the other hand, that does not mean that the doctrines are irrational. Far from it. Time and time again as I have matured, learned more, and become more obedient, I have come to understand doctrines that I could not fathom earlier. Following them in faith has brought blessings to my life that I could not imagine before. Then I know that the doctrines are true, because they produce the promised blessings, and through such experiences I begin to see more fully the connectedness of the doctrines with other things that I know are true. I reach a fuller understanding of what is real as I become more obedient and learn.

7. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Loyalty*, Ensign 58, 60 (May 2003).

8. Joseph Smith, Jr., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* 10-11 (Dean C. Jessee ed., Deseret Book Co. 1984).

9. *Joseph Smith—History* 1:15-20 (The Pearl of Great Price).

10. Joseph conceded, “I am your servant, and it is only through the Holy Ghost that I can do you good. God is able to do his own work.” Joseph Smith, Jr., *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings* 528 (Larry E. Dahl & Donald Q. Cannon eds., Deseret Book Co. 2000).

Hinckley now holds that office. He is the Lord's "mouthpiece."<sup>11</sup> "The principle of present revelation, then, is the very foundation of our religion."<sup>12</sup> To describe doctrine as "developed" is therefore reductive. Doctrine "develops" only as revelation is received from the Lord. Doctrine is itself revealed fact.

So, for instance, the name of the Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is revealed and doctrinal. The appropriate name for the Church was given by revelation to the prophet Joseph Smith in 1838, eight years after the Church was organized.<sup>13</sup> Prior to that time, the Church was called the Church of Christ<sup>14</sup> or the Church of the Latter-day Saints.<sup>15</sup> The announcement, in revelation, of the proper name appears without prior fanfare, reasoning, or justification. Joseph Smith's history for the day records only, "I received the following."<sup>16</sup> The announcement of the Church's name takes only one verse of a 19-verse revelation. The revelation has been followed since that time.

Though the Church's doctrine does not develop "doctrinally," it does develop according to principles, because God gives revelation according to principles he has established. This is true of revelation as it is true with any blessing received from God. The prophet Joseph Smith instructed, "There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated."<sup>17</sup> The blessing of revelation is thus predicated on our obedience to certain laws. When those laws are obeyed, the Lord can bless. If those laws are not obeyed, he will not, for he does not go back on what he has said about revelation. Revelation is given consistently with principle over time.

As a result, one can identify principles on which revelation is given. I discuss the doctrinal reasons why revelation is necessary (Part A) and the process by which one seeks revelation from God (Part B.9 especially). I also identify (Part B) nine primary principles by which revelation can be recognized as revelation. Because doctrine in the Church is revealed, these principles governing the recognition and receipt of revelation *are* the parameters within which doctrine is established in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Illustrations accompany each principle.

The principles by which revelation is recognized work together. One may be insufficient without the others. For example, the primary test of

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11. Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Follow Me*, Ensign 15, 17 (May 2002).

12. John Taylor, *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* 159 (Intell. Reserve 2001).

13. *Doctrine and Covenants* 115:4.

14. *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:1.

15. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* vol. 3, 23-24, n.† (rev. ed., Deseret Book Co. 1980).

16. *Id.* at 23.

17. *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:20-21.

whether an experience is revelatory is whether placing faith in the experience affirms and strengthens one's faith and hope in Christ (Part B.1). Using that test alone may in some cases seem circular and irrational (such as when determining whether a vision affirming Christ's divinity is itself from God). However, revelation will also encourage clean and pure and charitable action (Part B.2), teach truth and light (B.3), be available to others (B.4), allow free moral agency (B.5), be granted to those willing to follow it (B.6), not be forced (B.7), come through the proper authority (B.8), and be given to those properly prepared (B.9). So circular reliance on a single test is incorrect and unnecessary. And the list is not exhaustive (again, no doctrinal list ever is). But with time, experience, and obedience, one comes to know the Lord's voice. Following revelation received and seeking greater revelation sanctifies one's life and builds trust with God and a desire to serve him, making greater revelation possible and necessary. Repeating the process lifts one willing to follow God in all things, until one knows God's will in all things and indeed knows God in full.

Before I begin, I want to explain my sources. Members of the Church accept as canonical scripture the Bible (both the Old and New Testaments) and The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. Church members also accept as canonical certain revelations given to Joseph Smith and his successors recorded in a book called The Doctrine and Covenants of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or, briefly, the Doctrine and Covenants. A fourth book, called The Pearl of Great Price, is also accepted as scripture. It contains materials Joseph Smith translated by revelation from ancient records and a brief history of a few of the first revelations he received. These four books are considered the "standard works" of scripture.

In addition, my sources include some teachings of Joseph Smith and his successors in the presiding office in the Church. These men are ordained as apostles of Jesus Christ and called by the Lord to be prophets, seers, and revelators to the Church. My sources also include statements by those in the next presiding council in the Church, the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, also ordained as apostles and called by revelation as prophets, seers, and revelators. The Church sees *apostle* as denoting an ecclesiastical office, not merely a group of historical figures. Acceptance of present revelation requires that the canon be open-ended—that words spoken by prophets "as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost" be equivalent to scripture.<sup>18</sup> Not everything a presiding officer says is scripture, of course. One called as a prophet does not always speak as a prophet.<sup>19</sup> But the passages I cite are widely regarded in the Church as inspired by God.

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18. *Doctrine and Covenants* 68:3-5.

19. Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 528 ("This morning, I . . . visited with a brother and sister . . . who thought that 'a prophet is always a prophet;' but I told them that a prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such.").

## I. THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION

God is known only by revelation. Jesus taught that to know God the Father, "the only true God, and Jesus Christ," whom he sent, is life eternal.<sup>20</sup> And "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to [whom] the Son will reveal him."<sup>21</sup> Joseph Smith explained, "[W]hatever we may think of revelation, . . . without it we can neither know nor understand anything of God."<sup>22</sup>

First, and most profoundly, we need revelation so that knowledge of God is our own. Speaking in first person, one might describe this necessity as follows: Whatever my church knows, whatever those I accept as my leaders know, or my friends, or my spouse—if I am to be saved, it will be my eternal life that I receive. If eternal life is to know God, then I can be saved "no faster than" I obtain this knowledge.<sup>23</sup> No one else's knowledge will do. So I must receive this revelation. Joseph Smith explained, "Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to them, can never give us a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God."<sup>24</sup> No other person can teach me to know God. None but God can teach me the movement of the mind, heart, and soul necessary to put me in communion with him.<sup>25</sup> One can teach another to shoot a basketball. The learner can copy another's movements. A coach can watch and correct. Success is measured in percentage of shots made. But the mind and soul of a saved individual is mostly hidden from the coach. She can watch my spiritual movements and correct me only with great time and effort and a certain amount of inspiration, but she cannot do so all of the time. Nor can she explain it to me. Just as one cannot describe the taste of salt nor the sound of a didgeridoo to someone who has never tasted it nor heard one,<sup>26</sup> one cannot describe a prompting of the Holy Spirit and the revelation of the Redeemer to someone who has never experienced it. "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going."<sup>27</sup> Similarly directed "is every one that is born of the Spirit."<sup>28</sup> Others are left wondering what guides them and what it feels

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20. *John* 17:3 (King James).

21. *Matthew* 11:27 (King James).

22. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* vol. 4, 574 (2d. rev. ed., Deseret Book Co. 1976).

23. Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 373.

24. *Id.* at 577.

25. Reading the experience of others, or the revelation given to *them*, can never give *us* a comprehensive view of our condition and true relation to God. Knowledge of these things can only be obtained by experience through the ordinances of God set forth for that purpose. Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject.

*Id.* (emphasis in original).

26. Boyd K. Packer, *That All May be Edified* 333-35 (Bookcraft Inc. 1982).

27. *John* 3:8 (New Intl.).

28. *Id.*

like to be so guided. The result is that each of us must learn the most vital part of our seeking God—the part about our success, that we have found God—only from God. Salvation is, in fact, God’s full revelation to an individual. Jesus taught,

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . .

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.<sup>29</sup>

We have no salvation until we have God’s word on it to us.<sup>30</sup> If eternal life is to know him, then “[i]t is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.”<sup>31</sup>

There is another way to say this same point. It is this: we are unable to sanctify ourselves. We may have the words of doctrine written in “tables of stone,” but only the “Spirit of the living God” can write the doctrine and commandments “in the fleshy tables of the heart.”<sup>32</sup> Again, God wants us—commands us—to believe and speak his doctrine. Just as coming fully to live his will in other ways may require a change of heart on our part, so coming to believe and speak doctrine may require a change of heart—but more than a change of heart: because believing and speaking is at issue, our hearts *and minds* both must change. Church members recognize this kind of mind-and-heart-changing grace as revelation. My righteousness depends on the Spirit of God placing in my mind and heart a testimony of whatever God wants me to believe and speak. My thoughts and speech are sanctified by revelation or not at all. The knowledge I speak of is not some gnostic mystery but the enlightenment and understanding that is part of a more complete righteousness.

Revelation is necessary to the Church for the same reasons. Without revelation, no way exists to move Christians together toward God. Paul taught that the Lord “gave some . . . prophets” so that we would “all come in the unity of the faith.”<sup>33</sup> The Spirit of God plays a primary role in this unity. Paul explained, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”<sup>34</sup> This passage does not describe Christianity lately. I do have faith, though, that those who listen to that “one Spirit” will gather in “one body” and share “one faith.” A house built on “apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ

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29. *John* 14:21-23 (King James).

30. *2 Peter* 1:10 (King James) (discussing making one’s election “sure”); *2 Peter* 1:19 (King James) (“a more sure word of prophecy”).

31. *Doctrine and Covenants* 131:5-6.

32. *2 Corinthians* 3:3 (King James).

33. *Ephesians* 4:11-13 (King James).

34. *Ephesians* 4:4-6 (King James).



himself being the chief corner stone," will bring "strangers and foreigners" to be "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; . . . builded together for an habitation of God *through the Spirit*."<sup>35</sup> In fact, a sign of discipleship of Christ is unity of faith, for "through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."<sup>36</sup> Jesus prayed that we may be one as he and his Father are one.<sup>37</sup> He has also commanded us to "be one" and warned, "[I]f ye are not one ye are not mine."<sup>38</sup> The Lord calls a people Zion when they are "of one heart and one mind, and [dwell] in righteousness."<sup>39</sup> That kind of unity is possible only if and when a people follow "one Spirit."

Finally, we need revelation because prior revelation does not always address our problems. We do not live in the days of Moses or Peter. Pork<sup>40</sup> and falling off roofs<sup>41</sup> are not our difficulties. We "are differently situated from any other people that ever existed upon this earth; consequently those former revelations cannot be suited to our conditions."<sup>42</sup> Artificial birth technologies, stem cell research, rampant pornography—we have different problems than did those in ages past. Even if we might be able to reason to results that would be moral, if our utmost concern is what God wants, the only way to be sure in choosing our course of action is to obtain his word.

So whether our individual salvation or our salvation as a Church is at issue, revelation is required. "Where there is no vision, the people perish."<sup>43</sup> Doctrine is part of this necessary revelation, because we must know what to speak. Jesus said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me."<sup>44</sup> Any doctrine not obtained by revelation is "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" and is followed in vain.<sup>45</sup>

## II. PRINCIPLES OF REVELATION, OF RECOGNITION, AND OF PREPARATION

Of greatest concern to those receiving and recognizing revelation from God for the first time (as well as to those who doubt that it is possible) is that what seems like a revelation might be something else. A vision might, in the words of Scrooge the skeptic, be "an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato."<sup>46</sup> These concerns are rational. The source of revelation may rationally be doubted.

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35. *Ephesians* 2:19-22 (King James) (emphasis added).

36. *Ephesians* 2:18 (King James).

37. *John* 17:20-23; *Doctrine and Covenants* 35:2.

38. *Doctrine and Covenants* 38:27.

39. *Moses* 7:18 (The Pearl of Great Price).

40. *Leviticus* 11:7.

41. *Deuteronomy* 22:8.

42. Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 568, no. 9.

43. *Proverbs* 29:18 (King James).

44. *John* 7:16 (King James).

45. *Matthew* 15:9 (King James).

46. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* 21 (Pocket Books 1939).

The Lord does not give us signs in order that we might believe. Signs rather “follow them that believe,”<sup>47</sup> and are given not to “speak . . . before the world” but for believers’ “profit and . . . salvation.”<sup>48</sup> But Scrooge’s concerns betray a novice’s uncertainty about the matter and perhaps an unrepentant sinner’s unwillingness to learn from the Holy Spirit’s prompting. The faithful seeker can, through experience and effort, learn to recognize revelation by the principles that guide both its form and its substance.

I will focus on substance here. I am less concerned about the form of a revelation than its substance, because both the devil and perhaps mental illness can mimic some forms of revelation.<sup>49</sup> Neither mimic the substance of revelation, however. Nor does the undigested bit of beef or underdone potato. So while revelation might come in a variety of forms—visions,<sup>50</sup> dreams,<sup>51</sup> voices,<sup>52</sup> promptings of the heart and mind,<sup>53</sup> sudden strokes of ideas,<sup>54</sup> understanding,<sup>55</sup> peace and comfort<sup>56</sup>—revelation is more recognized by its content and effect than by its form.<sup>57</sup> Jesus’ counsel “Ye shall know them by their fruits”<sup>58</sup> applies fully to revelatory experiences. Thus introduced, revelation from God may be recognized for the following substance:

#### A. Revelation Will Testify of Christ

The primary distinguishing characteristic of a revelation from God is that it will testify of Christ, that Jesus is the Savior, the Messiah, the Son of God:

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit

47. *Mark* 16:17 (King James) (emphasis added).

48. *Doctrine and Covenants* 84:73.

49. *Doctrine and Covenants* 128:20.

50. *Acts* 10:9-18; *Revelation*; *Joseph Smith—History* 15-20 (The Pearl of Great Price); *1 Nephi* 8:11-14 (Book of Mormon).

51. *Genesis* 28:12; *Joel* 2:28; *1 Nephi* 3:2 (Book of Mormon).

52. *Matthew* 3:17; *Enos* 1:5 (Book of Mormon); *3 Nephi* 11:3-7 (Book of Mormon).

53. *John* 16:13; *2 Peter* 1:21; *1 Nephi* 17:45 (Book of Mormon); *3 Nephi* 11:3 (Book of Mormon); *Doctrine and Covenants* 6:23 (“Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?”); *Doctrine and Covenants* 9:8.

54. Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 570.

55. *Ephesians* 1:17-18; *Alma* 32:28 (Book of Mormon); *Doctrine and Covenants* 11:12-14; 76:10, 12.

56. *John* 14:26-27, 15:26.

57. Also, the form in which revelation comes may depend on spiritual preparation. See e.g. *John* 12:27-30 (reporting a voice speaking but that the people heard only thunder); *Acts* 9:7 (noting that those with Saul on the road to Damascus heard a voice but saw no one); *2 Kings* 6:13-18 (reporting that Elisha’s servant could not see the hosts of angels round about the prophet until the Lord opened the servant’s eyes).

58. *Matthew* 7:16 (King James).

that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.<sup>59</sup>

[T]he Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.<sup>60</sup>

This testimony may be direct. The Savior appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus and said, "I am Jesus."<sup>61</sup> In the earliest vision given to Book of Mormon prophet Nephi, the Spirit of the Lord showed him first and foremost the birth and ministry of Christ.<sup>62</sup> All the prophets have testified of Christ.<sup>63</sup> That is their mission. It is what prophecy means, for "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."<sup>64</sup>

Less directly, the Spirit of God speaks peace to the heart and soul of those who believe in Christ and truly will to follow him. That is why Jesus introduces the Holy Ghost as the Comforter just before announcing to his disciples: "Peace I leave with you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."<sup>65</sup> And a short time later Jesus reiterates that "when the Comforter is come . . . , even the Spirit of truth . . . , he shall testify of me."<sup>66</sup> The Spirit's testimony of Christ makes him the Comforter. Those who, in faith, truly will to follow the Lord in all things receive this peace. One account in the Book of Mormon is typical. A repentant people prayed, "O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God."<sup>67</sup> And after they had thus prayed, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of their exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come."<sup>68</sup> The Lord's sheep know his voice.<sup>69</sup> Those who truly will to follow him in all

59. *1 John* 4:2-3 (King James).

60. *Moroni* 7:16 (Book of Mormon).

61. *Acts* 9:5 (King James).

62. *1 Nephi* 11 (Book of Mormon).

63. This includes ancient prophets. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." *John* 8:56 (King James). The promises God made to Abraham during his life—seed as the stars of the heaven, *Genesis* 13:16, 15:5, 22:17, would have carried little meaning without a literal resurrection in which Abraham could actually receive the promised blessing. Abraham surely asked how he would receive the promises and obtained a knowledge of Christ by revelation. Jesus also said, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me," *John* 5:46 (King James), something Moses could not have done had he not like Abraham seen the Savior in vision.

64. *Revelation* 19:10 (King James) (emphasis added).

65. *John* 14:26-27 (King James).

66. *John* 15:26 (King James).

67. *Mosiah* 4:2 (Book of Mormon).

68. *Mosiah* 4:3 (Book of Mormon).

69. *John* 10:1-16, 26-28.

things recognize that this peace that follows obedience to him and sacrifice for him is the Holy Ghost's testimony of Christ.

That is the first and primary test of a revelation. If one follows the revelation (the prompting of the heart or mind, or the impression that a scriptural passage makes, or whatever form in which the revelation comes), and if doing as the revelation directs persuades the one so doing to believe in Christ—increases belief in him and love for him—then that prompting is from God.

### *B. Revelation Will Persuade To Do Good*

Revelation from God will persuade us to do good. Again, Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"<sup>70</sup> And also: "And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me."<sup>71</sup> The prophet Mormon explained that "every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God."<sup>72</sup>

What is the fruit of the Spirit of God, the good that the Spirit teaches? The Spirit will teach devotion to God. Nephi wrote, "[I]f ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray."<sup>73</sup>

The Spirit will also teach a host of good character traits. The Lord advised Hyrum Smith in 1829, "[P]ut your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit."<sup>74</sup> Paul explained that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, [m]eekness, temperance: against such there is no law."<sup>75</sup> The "fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness."<sup>76</sup> Love is particularly telling as a fruit of the Spirit. Jesus wrote, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."<sup>77</sup>

One can list categories of good fruit, which help as signposts to assist in recognizing the Holy Spirit, but Jesus also taught that the Holy Ghost

70. *Matthew* 7:16 (King James).

71. *Ether* 4:12 (Book of Mormon).

72. *Moroni* 7:16 (Book of Mormon). On the other hand, whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

*Moroni* 7:17 (Book of Mormon).

73. *2 Nephi* 32:8 (Book of Mormon).

74. *Doctrine and Covenants* 11:12.

75. *Galatians* 5:22-23 (King James).

76. *Ephesians* 5:9 (King James).

77. *John* 13:35 (King James).

“shall teach [us] all things.”<sup>78</sup> If so, the Holy Ghost shall teach us all things that we should do.<sup>79</sup> Undoubtedly, the Spirit will teach us to keep all the commandments of God, because the Spirit will teach the love of God and, as Jesus said, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them . . . loves me.”<sup>80</sup> If, in following a prompting of the heart or mind or a dream or vision, one more closely and with more complete purpose of heart keeps the commandments of God; that effect indicates that the prompting, dream, or vision is a revelation from God.

Conversely, because the Spirit will teach righteousness, the Spirit will “reprove the world of sin.”<sup>81</sup> Because the Spirit teaches righteousness, those guilty souls touched by the Spirit of God may learn clearly where they have fallen short. The Book of Mormon contains a wonderful example of this, in the story of a paradigmatic repenting sinner named Alma. Alma was an active enemy to the church of God until an angel sent from God, in response to the prayer of Alma’s righteous father, commanded Alma to “seek no more to destroy the church of God,” even if “thou wilt of thyself be destroyed.”<sup>82</sup> Convinced that he might actually be destroyed,<sup>83</sup> Alma began to examine his life. Seeing from a new perspective, he wrote:

I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and racked with all my sins. Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments. Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities, that the very thought of coming into the presence of God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds. And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.<sup>84</sup>

But the same Spirit that convicted Alma of his sins taught him faith in Christ and repentance:

And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remember also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone

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78. *John* 14:26 (King James).

79. *2 Nephi* 32:5 (Book of Mormon) (“if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do”).

80. *John* 14:21 (New Intl.).

81. *John* 16:8 (King James).

82. *Alma* 36:9 (Book of Mormon).

83. *Alma* 36:11 (Book of Mormon).

84. *Alma* 36:12-16 (Book of Mormon).

for the sins of the world. Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more. And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold . . . . Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.<sup>85</sup>

Because revelation teaches righteousness, reproving the world of sin and testifying of Christ, revelation teaches repentance.

### C. Revelation Will Teach Truth and Light

Revelation will teach truth. Jesus called the Spirit of God the “Spirit of truth”<sup>86</sup> and promised that “he will guide you into all truth.”<sup>87</sup> “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; and whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning. The Spirit of truth is of God.”<sup>88</sup> “[B]y the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”<sup>89</sup>

Thus, revelation can teach of things as they were. Details of Abraham’s life, for example, are known primarily by revelation. The account in the Book of Genesis of Abraham’s life was revealed (or confirmed by revelation) to Moses.<sup>90</sup> And Jesus while on earth revealed explicitly that Abraham was a Christian: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”<sup>91</sup>

To Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed the timing of Abraham’s vision of Jesus’ day: Abraham’s vision occurred as part of the conversation with God recorded in Genesis chapter 15:1-9.<sup>92</sup> Knowing the timing of Abraham’s vision clarifies several aspects of verses 1-9 and the Lord’s covenant with Abraham generally. After the Lord brought Abraham out of Ur into Canaan, the Lord promised to Abraham (i) the land of Canaan as an inheritance and (ii) posterity as numerous as the stars of heaven.<sup>93</sup> Genesis

85. *Alma* 36:17-20, 24 (Book of Mormon).

86. *John* 14:17, 15:26 (King James).

87. *John* 16:13 (King James).

88. *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:24-26.

89. *Moroni* 10:5 (Book of Mormon).

90. *Moses* 4:1, passim (The Pearl of Great Price). Legends about Abraham still abound. E.g. *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid & John Gee eds., Found. for Ancient Research and Mormon Stud., Brigham Young U. 2001). Which should Moses include in Genesis? Only a revelation could specify.

91. *John* 8:56 (King James).

92. *Genesis* 15:9-12 (Joseph Smith trans.).

93. *Genesis* 12:7, 13:15-16, 15:5.

chapter 15:1-9 records a vision in which the Lord confirms these promises to Abraham. Joseph Smith taught that, on receiving the Lord's promise, Abraham asked how it could be done.<sup>94</sup> The question makes great sense in context. Abraham surely wondered: How will I inherit the land, and even if my posterity inherits the land, why would that matter to me, if I am dead and gone or no longer their father? Joseph Smith taught that the following material added to the passage would render it more complete:

And Abram said, Lord God, how wilt thou give me this land for an everlasting inheritance? And the Lord said, Though thou wast dead, yet am I not able to give it thee? And if thou shalt die, yet thou shalt possess it, for the day cometh, that the Son of Man shall live; but how can he live if he be not dead? he must first be quickened. And it came to pass, that Abram looked forth and saw the days of the Son of Man, and was glad, and his soul found rest, and he believed in the Lord; and the Lord counted it unto him for righteousness.<sup>95</sup>

So Abraham had faith in Christ. That he did makes more sense of the Lord's promises to Abraham—the fulfillment of the Lord's promise of a land of inheritance depends on the reality of the resurrection. The Lord's promise to Abraham of endless posterity also depends on the resurrection and a continuation of family relationships—Abraham could only be father of an endless posterity if Abraham still lived and remained their father while they multiplied.<sup>96</sup> Thus, the fulfillment of both promises depends on the atonement of Christ, which redeems humankind from physical death and makes possible life eternal in which that which brings us a fullness of peace and joy, including family relationships,<sup>97</sup> continues eternally. Finally, the revelation to Joseph Smith clarifies Genesis 15:6, which says that "Abraham believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness." Belief that has the effect of righteousness—this can be understood as a belief in a Savior, one who does on our behalf good works that we cannot do for ourselves.<sup>98</sup>

The Holy Ghost also reveals things as they are, even mundane knowledge such as how to fix a leaking heart valve. Elder Russell M. Nelson, now serving as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church, relates the story of a faithful Church member with failing heart

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94. *Genesis* 15:9 (Joseph Smith trans.).

95. *Genesis* 15:9-12 (Joseph Smith trans.).

96. Abraham's covenant with God included God's promise that the family relationships necessary so that Abraham could continue to be father to the children of Israel, even after death, would in fact continue. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:30.

97. Family relationships entered into in the proper manner and by proper authority may continue beyond this life, eternally. *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:7-20; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, *Families Can Be Together Forever*, <http://www.mormon.org/learn/0,8672-1,00.html> (accessed Jan. 19, 2004).

98. *See Romans* 4.

valves. This member was active in Church service and living a clean and pure life. At the time, Elder Nelson was a cardiac surgeon at the University of Utah Medical Center, also actively serving the Lord in the Church. The Church member came to ask help of Elder Nelson, who relates:

Extensive evaluation revealed that [this patient] had two faulty valves. While one could be helped surgically, the other could not. Thus, an operation was not advised. He received this news with deep disappointment.

Subsequent visits ended with the same advice. Finally, in desperation, he spoke to me with considerable emotion: "Dr. Nelson, I have prayed for help and have been directed to you. The Lord will not reveal to me how to repair that second valve, but He can reveal it to you. Your mind is so prepared. If you will operate upon me, the Lord will make it known to you what to do. Please perform the operation that I need, and pray for the help that you need."

His great faith had a profound effect upon me. How could I turn him away again? Following a fervent prayer together, I agreed to try. In preparing for that fateful day, I prayed over and over again, but still did not know what to do for his leaking tricuspid valve. Even as the operation commenced, my assistant asked, "What are you going to do for that?"

I said, "I do not know."

We began the operation. After relieving the obstruction of the first valve, we exposed the second valve. We found it to be intact but so badly dilated that it could no longer function as it should. While examining this valve, a message was distinctly impressed upon my mind: *Reduce the circumference of the ring*. I announced that message to my assistant. "The valve tissue will be sufficient *if* we can effectively reduce the ring toward its normal size."

But how? We could not apply a belt as one would use to tighten the waist of oversized trousers. We could not squeeze with a strap as one would cinch a saddle on a horse. Then a picture came vividly to my mind, showing how stitches could be placed—to make a pleat here and a tuck there—to accomplish the desired objective. I still remember that mental image—complete with dotted lines where sutures should be placed. The repair was completed as diagrammed in my mind. We tested the valve and found the leak to be reduced remarkably. My assistant said, "It's a miracle."

I responded, "It's an answer to prayer."

The patient's recovery was rapid and his relief gratifying. Not only was he helped in a marvelous way, but surgical help for other people with similar problems had become a possibility. I



take no credit. Praise goes to this faithful [Church member] and to God, who answered our prayers.<sup>99</sup>

By answering this Church member's prayer uttered in Jesus' name, even this revelation of worldly knowledge testified of Christ.

Because the Spirit teaches all truth, Brigham Young said, quite rightly, "Our religion is simply the truth. It is all said in this one expression—it embraces all truth, wherever found; in all the works of God and man that are visible or invisible to mortal eye."<sup>100</sup> That revelation teaches truth is a test of the revelation's reality:

[F]or instance, when you feel pure intelligence flowing into you, it may give you sudden strokes of ideas, so that by noticing it, you may find it fulfilled the same day or soon; (i.e.) those things that were presented unto your minds by the Spirit of God, will come to pass; and thus by learning the Spirit of God and understanding it, you may grow into the principle of revelation, until you become perfect in Christ Jesus.<sup>101</sup>

Elder Nelson likewise knew of the truth of the revelation regarding how to fix the heart valve, because it affirmed what he already knew through science and experience and also because he could see the effects of the operation.

We can likewise test spiritual knowledge empirically. Again, blessings from God are predicated on obedience to principle.<sup>102</sup> Obedience to principles will bring the promised blessings,<sup>103</sup> and this confirms the faith of those who have put their trust in the Lord.<sup>104</sup> The testing of spiritual, eternal truth can be a long-term task, however. The blessings of righteous-

99. Russell M. Nelson, *Sweet Power of Prayer*, Ensign 7, 7-8 (May 2003). Another example of medical knowledge revealed by the Spirit is that tobacco is not for human use. *Doctrine and Covenants* 89:8 ("[T]obacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man."). This revelation the prophet Joseph Smith received in 1833, long before the dangers of tobacco use were known. *Id.*

100. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young* 3 (John A. Widstoe ed., Deseret News Press 1926). President Young made this point often, and in a variety of colorful ways:

"Where is your code, your particular creed?" says one. It fills eternity; it is all truth in heaven, on earth or in hell. This is "Mormonism." It embraces every true science; all true philosophy. . . . Every true philosopher, so far as he understands the principles of truth, has so much of the Gospel, and so far he is a Latter-day Saint, whether he knows it or not.

"Mormonism," so-called, embraces every principle pertaining to life and salvation, for time and eternity. No matter who has it. If the infidel has got truth it belongs to "Mormonism." . . . All that is good, lovely, and praiseworthy belongs to this Church and Kingdom. "Mormonism" includes all truth. There is no truth but what belongs to the Gospel.

*Id.* at 3-4.

101. Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 570.

102. *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:20-21.

103. "I the Lord am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise." *Doctrine and Covenants* 82:10.

104. *Alma* 32 (Book of Mormon).

ness are not always immediately apparent. I served as a missionary for nearly two years in Korea before receiving what I considered firm evidence that I had been called of God, and only now after many years do I see the multitude of blessings that such service has made possible. Conversely, we are often blind to the payment of the wages of sin. The Lord commands us not to look at pornography.<sup>105</sup> But months and years may go by before the addict realizes he has lost the Lord's Spirit and the peace, confidence, and joy that purity brings.<sup>106</sup>

Over time, all the Lord's words will be fulfilled. Their fulfillment teaches that revelation emanates from a single source and is truth, and is consistent with all other revelation. As Paul taught of prophecy, "God is not *the author* of confusion."<sup>107</sup> Things cannot be as they are and also as they are not, so knowledge imparted by the Holy Ghost will be in harmony with all other revealed knowledge and all other truth.

#### D. Revelation is Universally Available

Revelation is universally available to those who properly prepare for it: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."<sup>108</sup> My personal favorite passage along this line was written by Nephi, inspired by his father's example:

I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, which power he received by faith on the Son of God—and the Son of God was the Messiah who should come—I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men. For he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him. For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come.<sup>109</sup>

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105. See Matthew 16:4; *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:23, 63:16; Gordon B. Hinckley, *Overpowering the Goliaths in Our Lives*, Ensign 2, 6 (Jan. 2002); Thomas S. Monson, *Pornography, The Deadly Carrier*, Ensign 2, 2 (July 2001).

106. *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:23 ("he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit"); Names withheld, *Breaking the Chains of Pornography*, Ensign 55, passim (Feb. 2001); Howard W. Hunter, *Being a Righteous Husband and Father*, Ensign 49, 50 (Nov. 1994).

107. *1 Corinthians* 14:33 (King James).

108. *James* 1:5 (King James).

109. *1 Nephi* 10:17-19 (Book of Mormon).

Joseph F. Smith, prophet and president of the Church from 1830-1844, similarly taught that

the spirit of inspiration, the gift of revelation, does not belong to one man solely; it is not a gift that pertains to the Presidency of the Church and the Twelve apostles alone. . . . [I]t belongs to every individual member of the Church; and it is the right and privilege of every man, every woman, and every child who has reached the years of accountability, to enjoy the spirit of revelation, and to be possessed of the spirit of inspiration in the discharge of their duties as members of the Church. It is the privilege of every individual member of the Church to have revelation for his own guidance, for the direction of his life and conduct.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, "God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them."<sup>111</sup> Our greatest need for revelation—to know God—is a direct premise of this principle. If an individual obtains eternal life, it will be because the individual knows God, and that knowledge can come only by revelation. If eternal life is universally available, revelation therefore must be universally available. Revelation's universal availability to the repentant is a test that allows recognition of it. The claim that "God has revealed and only will reveal it to me" is a sign of a false claim.

#### *E. Revelation Allows Free Moral Agency*

God commands, but he does not force. If he did, few of us would live the lives we do. God will never force our minds or hearts. To do so would be inconsistent with his love for us.

Adam fell. . . . And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil.<sup>112</sup>

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110. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* 34 (11th ed., Deseret Book Co. 1959).

111. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* 149 (Joseph Fielding Smith ed., Deseret Book Co. 1979).

112. 2 *Nephi* 2:25-27 (Book of Mormon).

Revelation will respect this freedom to choose. To Alma, God gave a choice: "Alma, . . . seek to destroy the church no more . . . , and this even if thou wilt of thyself be cast off."<sup>113</sup> To Saul he noted, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads";<sup>114</sup> the Spirit was already reproving Saul of sin and the Lord acknowledged that Saul was pressing back, as was Saul's right. Nephi had two brothers, Laman and Lemuel, who at every turn murmured against him and their prophet father, Lehi. Once, Lehi sent the brothers to Jerusalem to obtain a copy of a collection of sacred writings, and, when the task became burdensome, Laman and Lemuel became angry with Nephi and began to beat him. An angel appeared and rebuked them, but immediately after the angel departed they "again began to murmur."<sup>115</sup> Nephi later chastened them:

Ye are swift to do iniquity but slow to remember the Lord your God. Ye have seen an angel, and he spake unto you; yea, ye have heard his voice from time to time; and he hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were past feeling, that ye could not feel his words; wherefore, he has spoken unto you like unto the voice of thunder, which did cause the earth to shake as if it were to divide asunder.<sup>116</sup>

Still, Laman and Lemuel did not repent. Clearly, revelation would not force them to repent. Nor will it force us to repent. It can be ignored at the danger of our becoming "past feeling," but God loves us enough that he would never force us to believe or conform. God's preserving to the person receiving the revelation the freedom to believe or disbelieve, to obey or disobey, is a test of whether an experience is revelatory.<sup>117</sup>

#### F. *God Grants Greater Revelation to Those Who Cherish It*

God grants greater light and knowledge to those who cherish that light and knowledge and live according to it, keeping his commandments. The converted Alma later taught:

[H]e that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full.<sup>118</sup>

And Nephi taught likewise, quoting Isaiah, who speaks in the Lord's voice,

I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who

113. *Mosiah* 27:16 (Book of Mormon) (the other account of Alma's conversion).

114. *Acts* 9:5 (New King James).

115. *1 Nephi* 3:29-31, passim (Book of Mormon).

116. *1 Nephi* 17:45 (Book of Mormon).

117. That the person receiving the revelation may have the moral agency to obey or disobey does not mean that the person has freedom to avoid the consequences of disobedience.

118. *Alma* 12:10 (Book of Mormon).

hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more.<sup>119</sup>

The Lord revealed the same principle to Joseph Smith: "He that keepeth [God's] commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things."<sup>120</sup> These commandments include baptism, which Peter named as prerequisite to the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>121</sup> The principle that revelation increases as humility and obedience increase also helps one recognize revelation.<sup>122</sup>

So those who heed the Spirit of truth will receive more, but the converse is also true. As Alma said, "[T]hey that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning [God's] mysteries."<sup>123</sup>

#### G. Revelation Comes by the Will of God and Cannot Be Forced

One of the greatest of Book of Mormon prophets, a humble man identified only as the Brother of Jared, once sought the Lord's will on a certain matter. He had received great revelations before. Called of God to lead his believing people righteously, he must have known that the Lord would continue to inspire him.<sup>124</sup> But his prayer is a plea for mercy:

Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires.

Behold, O Lord, thou hast smitten us because of our iniquity . . . ; nevertheless, thou hast been merciful unto us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people.<sup>125</sup>

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119. 2 *Nephi* 28:30 (Book of Mormon).

120. *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:28.

121. *Acts* 2:38, 8:15-17, 19:2-6; 2 *Nephi* 31:12 (Book of Mormon) ("He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me."); Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 286, no. 5. Other ordinances the Lord has revealed likewise bring about greater communion with God. E.g. 2 *Nephi* 32:2-3 (Book of Mormon); *Doctrine and Covenants* 13:1, 84:19-22, 124:25-41.

122. Those who cherish the Lord's word will also write it as they receive it. It has been "given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration." *Moses* 6:5 (The Pearl of Great Price); 2 *Nephi* 25:26 (Book of Mormon) ("[W]e prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.").

123. *Alma* 12:11 (Book of Mormon).

124. Joseph Smith showed similar confidence. *Joseph Smith—History* 1:29 (The Pearl of Great Price) ("I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation.").

125. *Ether* 3:2-3 (Book of Mormon).

Revelations come by grace. Faith requires that we prepare as fully as possible, but still, the Lord is wiser than any who seek his will. He has promised to guide us. Faith in him requires that he set the pace of our growth, not us. Another modern apostle, Boyd K. Packer, wrote,

You cannot force spiritual things. Such words as *compel, coerce, constrain, pressure, demand* do not describe our privileges with the Spirit.

You can no more force the Spirit to respond than you can force a bean to sprout. . . . You can create a climate to foster growth; you can nourish, and protect; but you cannot force or compel: You must await the growth.

Do not be impatient to gain great spiritual knowledge. Let it grow, help it grow; but do not force it, or you will open the way to be misled.<sup>126</sup>

One can draw as a conclusion from these last few principles that a full knowledge of the mysteries of God is not widely held. Most people are not obedient enough and do not cherish spiritual knowledge sufficiently to know the mysteries of God in full. None but the Lord knows all his works. So comparatively little is revealed to the world, and much has not been revealed to the Church generally. We know just a bit for our salvation and are ever learning as we become more obedient to what has already been revealed. That is why members of the Church “believe that [God] will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.”<sup>127</sup>

#### H. Revelation for Others Will Come To and Through Proper Authority

Revelation will come to and through proper authority. God gives authority to some on earth to do his work. The Biblical record illustrates this point, as Joseph Smith explained: “There is no salvation between the two lids of the Bible without a legal administrator.”<sup>128</sup> God’s work is the salvation or eternal life of his children.<sup>129</sup> Those with authority to assist in that work have the promise from God of the revelation necessary to it. Thus, the Old Testament generalizes, “Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”<sup>130</sup> And Jesus taught, “[H]e that receiveth my servants receiveth me.”<sup>131</sup> God’s servants are those who can obtain God’s will for others by revelation and declare it to them so

126. Boyd K. Packer, *supra* n. 26, at 338.

127. *The Articles of Faith*, art. 9 (The Pearl of Great Price).

128. Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 59.

129. *Moses* 1:39 (The Pearl of Great Price).

130. *Amos* 3:7 (King James).

131. *Doctrine and Covenants* 84:36-37 (continuing, “And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father”); see also *John* 13:20 (King James) (“He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.”); *3 Nephi* 28:34 (Book of Mormon).

that they may also have faith.<sup>132</sup> God's servants are also those who can act in God's name so that others may enter into the covenants necessary for salvation.<sup>133</sup> That is true today as it was in Biblical times. Not everyone has this authority, of course, nor can one take it upon himself, but, as Paul says, each such servant must be "called of God, as *was* Aaron."<sup>134</sup>

These principles are illustrated in the New Testament. Moses and Elijah, while alive, faithfully served God, wielding God's power. God did not reward them by stripping them of authority. During his mortal ministry, Jesus told Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."<sup>135</sup> Six days later the Lord took Peter, James, and John up into a high mountain, where Jesus was transfigured and Moses and Elijah appeared.<sup>136</sup> Elijah came to restore to the earth some keys of the kingdom, keys given to Peter to open the work of God.<sup>137</sup> Moses also brought keys. Of course, Jesus held these keys himself. I can think of nothing Moses and Elijah could do that Jesus could not. But even Jesus had such respect for the authority he had given to Moses and Elijah that he invited them there to restore to the earth priesthood keys necessary so that Peter could undertake the work of leading the church. This priesthood authority was restored for the benefit of all Jesus' church, so it came to Peter, James, and John—those the Lord had chosen and ordained to lead.<sup>138</sup> Later, when the Lord announced that the apostles should take the gospel to the Gentiles, the revelation came again to Peter, whom the Lord had chosen to lead.<sup>139</sup> Revelation for the church comes to and through those with proper authority.

We should expect God to take the same course now as he did in Old and New Testament times, neither the gospel nor human nature having changed in that period. Here I wish to thank my Catholic hosts, especially, for their tolerance and good faith. In the matter of authority to act in God's name, some difference exists between our faiths. We have different accounts of that authority. I understand the Roman Catholic position to be that, by virtue of an unbroken chain of ordination from Peter forward in time, the authority to speak for God and administer the ordinances of salvation has resided in Catholic bishops, and been delegated to the Pontiff.

In our account, the authority to speak in God's name to the church was lost when the church lost the last apostle, an officer with general rather than

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132. *Moroni* 7:29-32 (Book of Mormon).

133. *Id.*

134. *Hebrews* 5:4 (King James).

135. *Matthew* 16:19 (King James).

136. *Matthew* 17:1-13.

137. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." *Matthew* 17:11 (King James); cf. *Malachi* 4:5-6.

138. *John* 15:16.

139. *Acts* 10-11.

local authority. That meant that in order for the church of Jesus Christ to exist on the earth as an institution, that authority had to be restored. This restoration occurred throughout the 1820s and '30s. On May 15, 1829, an "angel, who announced himself as John, the same that is called John the Baptist in the New Testament," restored the Priesthood of Aaron to the earth by conferring it on Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith.<sup>140</sup> Peter, James, and John, also angelic ministrants, restored the Priesthood of Melchizedek and the apostleship soon thereafter.<sup>141</sup> Later, in Kirtland, Ohio, on April 3, 1836, Moses, Elias, and Elijah restored other priesthood keys, presumably those that Peter, James, and John received on the Mount of Transfiguration.<sup>142</sup> This restored authority has continued from that time forward in an unbroken chain of ordinations of apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This difference in the account of God's authority prompted what I think is one of the most interesting and colorful comments ever made of the Church, and by a Roman Catholic about the Church. The story is told by Orson F. Whitney, a latter-day apostle:

Many years ago a learned man, a member of the Roman Catholic Church, came to Utah and spoke from the stand of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. I became well-acquainted with him, and we conversed freely and frankly. A great scholar, with perhaps a dozen languages at his tongue's end, he seemed to know all about theology, law, literature, science and philosophy. One day he said to me: "You Mormons are all ignoramuses. You don't even know the strength of your own position. It is so strong that there is only one other tenable in the whole Christian world, and that is the position of the Catholic Church. The issue is between Catholicism and Mormonism. If we are right, you are wrong; if you are right, we are wrong; and that's all there is to it. The Protestants haven't a leg to stand on. For, if we are wrong, they are wrong with us, since they were a part of us and went out from us; while if we are right, they are apostates whom we cut off long ago. If we have the apostolic succession from St. Peter, as we claim, there is no need of Joseph Smith and Mormonism; but if we have not that succession, then such a man as Joseph Smith was necessary, and Mormonism's attitude is the only consistent one. It is either the perpetuation of the gospel from ancient times, or the restoration of the gospel in latter days."<sup>143</sup>

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140. *Doctrine and Covenants* 13.

141. *Doctrine and Covenants* 128:20; Larry C. Porter, *Dating the Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood*, *Ensign* 5, passim (June 1979).

142. *Doctrine and Covenants* 110.

143. LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* 3 (Deseret Book Co. 1976) (quoting Orson F. Whitney's pamphlet, *The Strength of the Mormon Position* (Zion's Printing & Publg. Co. 1917)). Whitney's pamphlet did not give the speaker's identity, which is less important than the statement's color and the stark way it states the two positions.



I beg to differ on the "ignoramus" point, and I will let my readers ask the Lord in prayer how to resolve the questions posed by this brother. I wish only to affirm that, when the Lord speaks to the Church, the revelation will come through the appropriate priesthood authority. This means that revelation which establishes doctrine in the Church will come only through the proper priesthood authority.

This principle is one of economy:

[I]t is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one, to receive instructions for those in authority, higher than themselves; therefore, you will see the impropriety of giving heed to them; but if any person have a vision or a visitation from a heavenly messenger, it must be for his own benefit and instruction; for the fundamental principles, government, and doctrine of the Church are vested in the keys of the kingdom.<sup>144</sup>

The principle is also one of order: "There is *only one man* in this Church, at a time, who has the right to receive revelation for the Church. The Lord has said that his house is a house of order, not a house of confusion, and therefore one is appointed to speak."<sup>145</sup> Thus, revelation for the Church will come to the President of the Church, who is the presiding High Priest (and most senior Apostle). He stands in the same position as Peter in the ancient church. Upon the death of the President of the Church, the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, who is then the most senior Apostle, becomes the presiding High Priest in the Church and is ordained and set apart as the President of the Church.<sup>146</sup>

This doctrine about revelation is, to be sure, hierarchical. I doubt there is any way for true religion to be anything but hierarchical. After all, God stands at the head. If he can be followed at all, and if he is received by receiving his servants, then the Church must be a hierarchy. And we all follow God better or worse than others. That is why the Lord calls

some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we . . . be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men . . . ; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even Christ*.<sup>147</sup>

The kingdom of God is hierarchical because it must bring a unity of the faith out of a diversity of other doctrines.

144. Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 564.

145. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* vol. 1, 85 (Bookcraft 1954).

146. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* vol. 3, 155-56 (Bookcraft 1956).

147. *Ephesians* 4:11-15 (King James).

But that the kingdom of God is hierarchical does not mean it is monolithic. It was not anciently. After all, Moses, who delivered God's call to Aaron, wished that all the Lord's people might be prophets.<sup>148</sup> Again, revelation is universally available. And in the Church, there is no paid ministry. Church members are called by revelation to serve in various ways in the Church—as evangelists, pastors, and teachers, for example. The Church is divided up, in diminishing geographic size, into areas, regions, stakes (named thus to recall stakes in the tent of Zion), wards (merely a smaller geographic area), and family units. Nearly every member of the Church who actively attends has a calling to serve. Each may be blessed with revelation necessary to fulfill his or her calling. “It is . . . the privilege of any officer in this Church to obtain revelations, so far as relates to his particular calling and duty in the Church.”<sup>149</sup> Revelation in the Church is therefore both centralized around leaders and decentralized throughout the Church. This decentralization is meaningful. So a “president of a stake has the right of revelation for the guidance of his stake.”<sup>150</sup> A bishop presiding over a ward may receive revelation for the ward. A president of the women's organization (the Relief Society) may receive revelation for the guidance of her sisters, a counselor regarding what counsel to give, a missionary for her investigators, a teacher for her class, and a youth leader for his youth. Most universally and vitally, a mother and father may receive revelation for each other and to help them teach, guide, and nurture their children, and children may receive revelation for themselves.

Revelation is thus a meaningful source of knowledge for each Church member. Because individual callings, righteousness, and knowledge vary widely, some members receive revelation not had by Church members generally. However, this revelation will be for the Church member's own benefit or for the benefit only of those whom that Church member is called to serve. It should not be shared outside of that limited circle and is not given for the benefit of the Church generally (which revelation would come only through the President of the Church). One principle by which revelation may be tested is whether a person speaks within his or her authority.

With all these people entitled to revelation and doing the day-to-day work of the Church, the Church—a completely voluntary organization—would have fallen apart long ago if it were to depend for its unity merely on its hierarchical structure. The Church now fields some 61,000 missionaries,<sup>151</sup> most between the ages of 19 and 23. If each missionary did not carry a portion of the same Spirit with her or him, the growth and unity of the Church would have ended long ago. The Church depends for its integrity on each member's following the Spirit of God.

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148. *Numbers* 11:29.

149. Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 569.

150. Smith, *supra* n. 145, at 285.

151. Michael F. Watson, *Statistical Report 2002*, *Ensign* 25 (May 2003).

This hierarchical structure of the Church, the Lord's command for unity, and the universal availability of revelation together make necessary the requirement that actions in the Church be taken by "common consent."<sup>152</sup> So, when a leader is called by revelation, the consent of the members must be obtained.<sup>153</sup> A President of the Church may not serve without the common consent of the Church,<sup>154</sup> and when doctrine is announced for the Church, the consent of the membership must be obtained before it is promulgated as such.<sup>155</sup> In fact, however, Church members nearly always sustain their leaders unanimously, with a few notable, historical exceptions.<sup>156</sup>

### I. *Preparation: Revelation Will Be Given in Such a Way that Faith in Christ Will Be Affirmed*

Faith is belief that causes action. It is "the principle of action in all intelligent beings."<sup>157</sup> Faith produces a "hope for things which are not seen which are true."<sup>158</sup> Those who plant crops have faith in the vitality of the seed, the fertility of the soil, that the sun will continue to shine, and that water will be available. Law students have faith—that the study of law will lead them to better lives, that their professors and bar examiners will not make their progress impossible, and so on. Without these beliefs, their actions and their hope would be irrational.

Faith in Christ is the first principle of the gospel of Christ.<sup>159</sup> This belief is the principle of action in all disciples of Christ. Faith in Christ produces a hope that he is what he said he is: the truth, the life, and the way, the only means whereby the human family can obtain lasting peace and the

152. *Doctrine and Covenants* 26:2 ("all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith"); *Doctrine and Covenants* 28:13 (same).

153. E.g. James E. Faust, *The Sustaining of Church Officers*, Ensign 23 (May 2003).

154. *Doctrine and Covenants* 26:2, 28:13; Smith, *supra* n. 145, at 255-56, 260-61; Smith, *supra* n. 146, at 123-24 ("No man can preside in this Church in any capacity without the consent of the people.").

155. See sources cited *supra* n. 152; *Doctrine and Covenants* Official Declaration-2.

156. See e.g. Faust, *supra* n. 153, at 23, 24 ("the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative"); Thomas S. Monson, *The Sustaining of Church Officers*, Ensign 22, 22 (May 1994) ("the voting has been unanimous in the affirmative"). The phrases quoted here are extremely common. Occasionally negative votes are voiced. E.g. N. Eldon Tanner, *The Sustaining of Church Officers*, Ensign 17 (Nov. 1977) (acknowledging a dissenter at the Church's general conference). A few times, the Church has rejected a leader proposed to them. E.g. Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Joseph Smith's Brothers: Nauvoo and After*, Ensign 30 (Sept. 1979) (suggesting that the public opposition of Parley P. Pratt of the Quorum of the Twelve to William Smith's serving as evangelist to the Church had some influence in Smith's rejection in that call, as did the members' knowledge that William Smith had, after accepting the call, begun to rebel against the Church's other leadership).

157. *Lectures on Faith: Lecture Seventh*, in *Discourses on the Holy Ghost* ¶ 2, 146 (N.B. Lundwall ed., Bookcraft Inc. 1960).

158. *Alma* 32:21 (Book of Mormon); see also *Hebrews* 11:1.

159. *The Articles of Faith*, art. 4 (The Pearl of Great Price).

other blessings that together are eternal life. The Book of Mormon prophet Ether taught,

[B]y faith all things are fulfilled—Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God.<sup>160</sup>

Eventually, the exercise of faith in Christ leads to charity, which is the pure love of Christ, which God “hath bestowed upon all who are true followers” of Christ.<sup>161</sup>

The principle of faith and the principle of moral agency noted above are related. God will not force our belief; neither will he force our action based on that belief. Rather, because he loves his children, he allows them—allows us—freedom to choose or not to choose to nourish faith in Christ. When we choose to exercise faith in Christ, God provides to us the blessings he promises to his disciples. Receipt of these blessings affirms that faith and encourages greater faith, hope, and obedience, on which, in turn, are predicated greater blessings. Continuing on in faith leads eventually to the love of God and to eternal life. Throughout this process, faith in Christ is the motivating force. Faith precedes blessings.

Just so, faith in Christ precedes revelation. The prophet Moroni taught: “I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness *until after the trial of your faith.*”<sup>162</sup> Receipt of revelation requires the preparation of faith.

How does one exercise faith in Christ so as to receive revelation? First, some idea must be planted in a person’s mind on which they can exercise faith.<sup>163</sup> For revelation, one must at least have the notion that God lives and can and will grant a prayer for revelation. Prophets are sent bearing this very message.<sup>164</sup> That is a prophet’s mission, to teach the gospel of Christ so that “the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof.”<sup>165</sup>

Second, one must “[a]sk, . . . seek, and . . . knock.”<sup>166</sup> Ask in prayer in the name of Christ. Seek out the word of God, in the scriptures and in the words of prophets of God, continually praying for understanding and a

160. *Ether* 12:3-4 (Book of Mormon).

161. *Moroni* 7:43-48 (Book of Mormon).

162. *Ether* 12:6 (Book of Mormon) (emphasis added).

163. *Lectures on Faith: Lecture Third*, in *Discourse on the Holy Ghost*, *supra* n. 157, at ¶ 1, 119; Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* 166-70 (Deseret Book Co. 1985).

164. *Romans* 10:17; *Doctrine and Covenants* 1:17.

165. *Moroni* 7:31-32 (Book of Mormon).

166. *Matthew* 7:7 (King James).

knowledge of the truth. The mind and heart must be prepared to receive. The "things of God are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out."<sup>167</sup> Perhaps God has already given the answer in scripture or will convey it through one of his servants, and the Spirit will confirm it when it is discovered.

Third, those who knock must be willing to enter the doors on which they knock. "The Lord does not satisfy the curiosity seeker who has no intention of acting upon the truth."<sup>168</sup> Rather, only those who submit their souls to God, willing to follow whatever revelation comes, can expect guidance. They must willingly subject their thoughts, words (including their doctrine), practices and habits, and possessions to his will. A repentant Book of Mormon king put it most eloquently in prayer: "I will give away all my sins to know thee."<sup>169</sup> The greater the will to obey and sacrifice earthly things, the greater the revelation.<sup>170</sup> Receiving the complete revelation of eternal life will in fact require the sacrifice of all earthly things.<sup>171</sup>

The prophet Moroni reiterated these principles of faith, specifically regarding revelation to know whether the Book of Mormon is of God:

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things [the Book of Mormon], if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men . . . , and ponder it in your hearts. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.<sup>172</sup>

This is God's promise that revelation will be given. Revelation cannot be forced, but as soon as we fully comply with these principles of preparation, revelation in God's time will come.

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167. Smith, *supra* n. 15, at 295.

168. Loren C. Dunn, *The Spirit of Conversion*, Ensign 7, 9 (July 2000).

169. *Alma* 22:18 (Book of Mormon).

170. *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:28.

171. Smith, *supra* n. 10, at 590-91.

[A] religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain.

*Id.*

172. *Moroni* 10:3-5 (Book of Mormon).

## III. EPILOGUE

The principles I have set forth here are the primary principles by which doctrine is established in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A prophet is called, and the Lord reveals doctrine to that prophet which testifies of Christ and is confirmed by revelation to the members of the Church who are prepared to receive revelation and are willing to be obedient to it. Revelation from the prophet will meet the parameters outlined in this paper. (Or, the Lord reveals doctrine to an individual, for his or her own guidance, that is confirmed by these same tests. In that case, the doctrine is established in the life of the individual member.) Over time, the doctrine becomes more complete, as the Lord reveals "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."<sup>173</sup> Much is not yet revealed, but when it is, Church members will recognize it, and it will be established as doctrine.

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173. *2 Nephi 28:30* (Book of Mormon).