

Perspectives on Knowing in a Human Science

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Before our mortal parents were privileged with God to clothe us in flesh, we were spirit. But even before our divine parents endowed us with bodies of spirit, we existed uniquely, autonomously, and with agency. We were called “intelligence.”¹

We learn from the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants that intelligence is “light and truth.”² We were “in the beginning with God” as intelligences that “[were] not created or made, neither indeed can be.”³ We always had substance, value, and agency. The scriptures tell us, “Otherwise there is no existence.”⁴ We are told that “the glory of God is intelligence”⁵ and that “whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.”⁶

These passages are often interpreted as the acquisition of external knowledge and skills, but that is a short measure of the full meaning of our potential. We have a marvelous

promise for expansion of our ways of knowing: the magnification of the soul, body, and spirit and intelligence—light and truth—in each of us. Thus God’s glory is the growth of our intelligence, our unique light, the original matter of our very being. Intelligences could grow and receive more light by cleaving to one another and could learn. I find it no coincidence and profoundly significant that our seminal divinity—that which makes you *you* and me *me*—is light and truth and is called by God “intelligence.”

As we become entangled in a telestial world, our lights meet with earthly bushels. When we speak of the parable of bushels,⁷ we often refer to the hiding of talents or skills. But I believe the real danger of bushels is that our ways of thinking, of pursuing knowledge, become narrow and obscured. As we cover our lights with false or rigid assumptions and futile intellectual pursuits, our intelligence may be diminished. We forget who we are: we are intelligence.

This is an excerpt of a forum address delivered by Elaine S. Marshall, a BYU professor of nursing, on May 25, 1998.

C. S. Lewis affirmed the pursuit of knowledge “in the sure confidence that by so doing we . . . advancing to the vision of God.”⁸ He said:

The intellectual life is not the only road to God, nor the safest, but we find it to be a road. . . .

*. . . The life of learning, humbly offered to God, [may be] . . . one of the appointed approaches to the Divine reality.*⁹

It is my dream and my passion as a scholar that we who have the blessing and privilege to study may open our visions to learn from each other both as scholars and as human beings, expand our perspectives of knowing, and recognize the promise of the divine in our learning and God as the source of our knowing.

Notes

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:29; Abraham 3:21–22.

2. Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 93:29.

4. Doctrine and Covenants 93:30.

5. Doctrine and Covenants 93:36.

6. Doctrine and Covenants 130:18.

7. See Matthew 5:15–16; Mark 4:21–25; Luke 8:16–18; Luke 11:33–36; 3 Nephi 12:15–16.

8. C. S. Lewis, “Learning in War-Time,” in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), 49.

9. Lewis, “Learning in War-Time,” 50, 54.