

THE JOSEPH SMITH LECTURE SERIES

Lecture 3: Joseph Smith and Spiritual Gifts

TRUMAN G. MADSEN

We have three classic scriptural statements about spiritual gifts: what they are, where they come from, and the spirit in which they are to be sought and manifested. Those three sources are Doctrine and Covenants 46, Moroni 10, which is also the last chapter in the Book of Mormon, and Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 12. These three are interrelated and can be studied profitably by comparison.

If we go through the scriptures as history and make note of ways in which the Spirit of God has been manifested in the lives of individuals, we find at least thirty ways. In the account of these gifts in section 46 the Lord makes the statement "to every man is given a gift," signifying, apparently, that each of us is entitled to at least one spiritual gift. The Prophet said elsewhere, "A man [he could equally as well have said 'a woman'] who has none of the gifts has no faith; and he deceives himself, if he supposes he has."¹ Orson Pratt made the same comment in a different way. "No one," he said, "who has been born of the Spirit, and who remains sufficiently faithful, is left destitute of a spiritual gift."² One follows from the other. "No man can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations," Joseph Smith explained. "The Holy Ghost is a revelator."³

Why spiritual gifts? The Lord says, "That ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best

gifts, always remembering for what they are given; for . . . they are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments." And then a very happy phrase: "and him that seeketh so to do."⁴ So not only those who are fully living the commandments can hope for these gifts but also those who are trying, seeking. The warning is clear: "always remembering for what they are given."

Then comes the caution: Saints are to "ask and not for a sign that they may consume it upon their lusts."⁵

In the same revelation the Lord promises that "unto some" (the bishop, for example, and such others as are called to preside in the Church) "it may be given to have all those gifts."⁶ Elsewhere the Prophet said: "The gift of discerning spirits will be given to the Presiding Elder. Pray for him that he may have this gift."⁷ This is the precious, almost indispensable gift for any leader in the Church. But "unto some it may be given to have all those gifts [not just one, but all], that there may be a head."

Truman G. Madsen, Richard L. Evans Endowed Professor and BYU professor of philosophy, delivered eight lectures on the Prophet Joseph Smith at BYU Education Week in August 1978.

With that as a premise, I have gone through the life of Joseph Smith and singled out instances in that life when these gifts were manifest. It is no surprise that he did, in fact, experience all the spiritual gifts.

With a desire to improve our awareness of spiritual possibilities and to increase our recognition of ways in which Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of the Lord Jesus Christ, let us consider in serial fashion the more prominent, though in some cases less well-known, experiences of the Prophet in this respect.

One of the first gifts Moroni mentions is that of “*exceedingly great faith*.” As section 46 puts it, “to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.”⁸ The Prophet Joseph Smith certainly had exceedingly great faith. We have the demonstration over and over of his coping with trials that sorely tested his endurance, his perseverance. We also have, at the outset of his ministry, his testimony of the effect the verse James 1:5 had on him. (One wonders whether James, when he wrote the verse way back in the first century, could have had any notion of the impact it would have.) The following two verses are similarly powerful: “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”⁹ We are often willing to say what we would like to receive of the Lord, even what we would do *for* it, but we are not as eager to say what we will do *with* it once it is given. The Prophet proved himself willing on both counts.

In connection with that gift it is said, “To others it is given *to believe on their words*”—“their” meaning those who have great faith—“that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.”¹⁰ Some people are gifted to know, and others are gifted to believe on what those people know. Or, to put it differently, some people have secondhand testimonies. My own conviction is that this is a preparatory gift. It is not sufficient unto itself. You cannot live and endure and overcome simply on

the basis of believing the word of another. Sooner or later, and preferably sooner, you too will come to firsthand and direct knowledge for yourself.¹¹

The Prophet did believe on the word of other trustworthy souls. He was sponsored and nourished and strengthened thereby. He pored over the records of the past until they became part of his nature. A study of his sermons, for example, on the question of how often he slipped almost inadvertently into the language of the New Testament, shows that a great deal of his thinking and feeling was conditioned in the phrases of Paul and also in the writings of John and other New Testament books.¹² The same would go for the Old Testament and such books as he himself became an instrument in translating. He trusted the revealed word and in that sense proved himself a believer secondhand.

The gift of prophecy. This is the gift of anticipating future events. Elder John A. Widtsoe, after making a study of the Doctrine and Covenants, concluded that it contains nearly eleven hundred statements about the future.¹³ If one extends beyond the Doctrine and Covenants to other scripture, to the personal promises the Prophet gave in blessings, to comments made in sermons, to his counsels in the midst of his own brethren and sometimes in private and sacred circumstances, and to predictions he wrote in letters, they would far exceed that eleven hundred.¹⁴

The Prophet said on one occasion that “the Lord once told me that if at any time I got into deep trouble and could see no way out of it, if I would prophesy in His name, he would fulfill my words.”¹⁵ One can discern, therefore, times in his life when he almost despaired and when that state of mind was the symptom, or the background, of his uttering prophecy. In Kirtland, for example, in that period of mass apostasy when perhaps half of the Church members were falling away, including many of the Twelve, he rose in tears after prayer in a meeting one night and said, “I prophesy in the name of the Lord that those who have thought I was in transgression shall have a testimony this night that I am clear and stand approved before the Lord.” Many in whom this prophecy

was fulfilled bore their witness in later testimony meetings.¹⁶

Prophecy can be a burden as well as a blessing, for as a person commits himself in the spirit to a certain course of action or a certain counsel of the Lord, he is by that very process making himself responsible to do all within his power to bring it to pass. It was so in the case of Joseph Smith, as it was with Heber C. Kimball, who was perhaps the second most prophetic man in LDS history.¹⁷ Often, even in trivial circumstances, Joseph slipped into a prophetic mode—as trivial, for example, as the question of whether it was going to rain enough to wet people’s shirt sleeves in the grove as they listened to a discourse, or whether they should break ranks while in a Nauvoo Legion parade and return to their homes.¹⁸ He would sometimes say, “It will not rain,” and he would sometimes say, “I prophesy that it will rain—you’ve only got a few minutes—go!”

To those who argued that there was no such thing as prophecy, ancient or modern, he would say (quoting John in Revelation 19:10): “The New Testament says that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. I am a servant of Jesus Christ. I have a testimony of Jesus. Therefore, I am a prophet.”¹⁹ Occasionally he tied his enemies into a logical paradox. He would say, “Have you discovered that there is no revelation? How?” They would say, “Does not the Bible end all revelation?” He would reply, “If so, there is a great defect in the book or it would have said so.”²⁰ Pointing out that it takes revelation to know that there will be no more revelation, he once asked, “Have ye turned revelators? Then why deny revelation?”²¹

As a prophet he said things which to me are “keys that never rust.” When he said, “I will give you a key that will never rust,” he meant that what he would say would last in its power till the end of time. An example:

In the midst of the leadership struggle, the apostasy of a group in Nauvoo led by William Law, and the claim of others to have special prerogatives of leadership, he said, “I will give you a key that will never rust.” This is a test. “If you will stay with the majority of the Twelve Apostles,

and the records of the Church, you will never be led astray.”²² Not one offshoot group can pass that test. How many were on the stand, for example, at Nauvoo in August 1844, after the Prophet’s death, when Sidney Rigdon wanted to be the guardian and, in effect, the leader of the Church? How many of the Twelve were on the stand when the decision was made to follow the Twelve? There were seven, a bare majority (John Taylor was recovering from his wounds, and four had not yet come back from missions to the East). Again and again, in Church history the Twelve in unity have made the revelatory decisions, under the prophet, which have been binding upon us all. And the records? Which records are most important? Likely, I suggest, the records of temple ordinances. We have them, we preserve them, and they are a mark of authentic transmission of divine authority and power to our day.

Joseph Smith made many prophetic statements that last to our day.²³ Some of them seemed preposterous at the time. Lillie Freeze recalls one such. “He said the time would come when none but the women of the Latter-day Saints would be willing to bear children.”²⁴ In large measure this is already happening today—before our eyes. He said on another occasion that the Saints would be driven and would suffer, but they would go to the Rocky Mountains and there become a great and mighty people.²⁵ Other recollections of that prophecy do not say a great and “mighty” but a great and “wealthy” people who would be tried more with riches than they ever had been with poverty.²⁶ This too is happening before our eyes.

Joseph was prophetic in promises to individuals. “Your name,” he said to Brigham Young, “shall be known for good and evil”—just as Moroni had said to Joseph himself.²⁷ And it is so. He said to Eliza R. Snow, “You will yet visit Jerusalem.” She wrote it in her journal and forgot it. Forty years later it came to pass.²⁸ When death seemed near in the Carthage jail, Joseph uttered one of his last prophecies. To Dan Jones he said, “You will yet see Wales, and fulfill the mission appointed you before you die.”²⁹ Dan Jones later helped convert over fifteen thousand people in

Wales. “Have no fears, for you shall yet see Israel triumph and in peace,” Joseph said to fifteen-year-old Johnny Smith, whose feet were bloody from drilling with the Nauvoo Legion.³⁰ He did.

There was a beautiful moment when Dimick Huntington in a shoe shop was working on the Prophet’s boots. The Prophet recounted things Dimick had done for him, mostly physical and comforting things—rowing the boat across the Mississippi until his hands were blistered, carrying messages, and as the scriptures have it, “hewing wood and drawing water.” The Prophet expressed gratitude and finally said to Dimick, “Ask of me what you will, and it shall be given you, even if it be to the half of my kingdom.” Dimick did not want to impoverish the Prophet. He asked something else. “Joseph,” he said with his whole soul, “Joseph, I desire that where you and your father’s house are [meaning in eternity] there I and my father’s house may be also.” The Prophet put his head down for a moment as if in meditation, and then looked up. “Dimick, in the name of Jesus Christ, it shall be even as you ask.”³¹

The father of Dimick was named William. One night the Prophet learned from Shadrack Roundy, who stood guard at his gate, that a mob was on the river. Shadrack Roundy’s “rascal beater,” which we would call a billy club, would not be enough against twenty men. The Prophet went down the street to William’s house, woke him up, and said, “A mob is coming, counsel me.” William said: “I know what to do. You climb in my bed. I’ll go back and get in yours.” That is what they did.

The mob came and dragged William out. Down by the river they discovered they had the wrong man. Their viciousness knew no bounds. In wrath, they “stripped him, roughed him up, tarred and feathered him, and herded him back into Nauvoo like a mad dog.”³² When he finally staggered into his own home the Prophet embraced him and said with all the power of his soul, “Brother William, in the name of the Lord I promise you will never taste of death.” That prophecy was fulfilled.³³

To be able so to prophesy in the name of Jehovah was both the blessing and the burden of Joseph Smith. “Brethren,” he said—this is Wilford

Woodruff’s recollection—“I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother’s lap. . . . This church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world.”³⁴ Related to that, George A. Smith recalled hearing the Prophet once say “that we may build as many houses as we would, and we should never get one big enough to hold the Saints.”³⁵

Discernment. We have previously noted the Prophet’s words: “The gift of discerning spirits will be given to the Presiding Elder. Pray for him that he may have this gift.”³⁶ Discernment is the recognition of the spirit that actuates a person. “The way I know in whom to confide—God tells me in whom I may place confidence,” the Prophet said.³⁷ Jesse N. Smith records, “I felt when in his presence that he could read me through and through.”³⁸ Wilford Woodruff says that once he met him on the street. The Prophet took his hand, held him, and paused while he seemed to be searching the other man’s soul. Then he said, “Brother Woodruff, I am glad to see you. I hardly know when I meet those who have been my brethren in the Lord, who of them are my friends. They have become so scarce.”³⁹

A man acting, as it were, as an undercover agent came to Nauvoo, tried to work his way into the good graces of the Prophet, then invited him out for a walk. On the crest of a hill the Prophet stopped, called him by name, and said, “You have a boat and men in readiness to kidnap me, but you will not make out to do it.”⁴⁰ It was true. The man had planned to kidnap him, but instead he went away cursing. Joseph once wrote in a letter, “It is in vain to try to hide a bad spirit from the eyes of them who are spiritual, for it will show itself in speaking and in writing, as well as in all our other conduct. It is also needless to make great pretensions when the heart is not right: the Lord will expose it to the view of faithful Saints.”⁴¹

Despite the presiding officer’s discernment, Joseph Smith set up the law of witnesses, which requires that evidence and testimony must be

used to prove a person's acts.⁴² But the spiritual recognition that something is wrong or that something is right, he had. He once prayed to know whether a choir in Nauvoo was singing acceptable praises to God. The Lord made known to him that the director was immoral. Shortly the man resigned and left.⁴³ Joseph was discerning, although he trusted many beyond their trustworthiness—which perhaps was a function of what Brigham Young described as his “regarding everything according to the circumstances of the case and every person according to the intrinsic worth.”⁴⁴ Brigham himself once said, in the spirit of the Prophet: “If you have the spirit of God you can discern right from wrong. When a man is not right, even though his language is as smooth as oil, there will be many queries about him, he will not edify the body of the Saints.” And Brigham added, “I give this to you as a key.”⁴⁵ Yes, Joseph discerned.

Dreams. Some dreams result from pressure, from diet, from anxiety. Some psychological research indicates that we all need to dream, that our mental health depends upon it. But there are also dreams sent of the Lord. It is one of the spiritual gifts. Being warned in a dream, Joseph fled with Mary and Jesus into Egypt. The wife of Pilate had a dream that gave her much anxiety. She pleaded with her husband not to condemn Jesus.

Joseph Smith had prophetic dreams, as he once indicated to Levi Hancock. Levi started on a mission, was out one night, had a terrible night of nightmares, and returned in fear. “Don’t let that trouble you,” said the Prophet. “I have had dreams as bad as you ever had. You do as I now tell you to and you will come out all right.” Levi recalled that Joseph then “gave [him] to understand how the Comforter would comfort the mind of man when asleep.”⁴⁶

Then there was the dream—the ugly, ominous dream—at Nauvoo. He dreamed of William and Wilson Law. They had cast him into a pit, a pit higher than his head, so that there was no way for him to climb or spring out of it. Shortly both of them were attacked by serpents and were dying.

They cried out for his help. All he could say was, “I would help you if I could, but you have made it impossible for me to help.”⁴⁷ This dream was all too authentic. William and Wilson Law were the leading spirits in the *Nauvoo Expositor* and in the meetings of conspiracy that culminated in the Prophet’s death.⁴⁸

Visions. There are visions in open daylight, waking visions, as we say; and visions that occur in the night. Did Joseph have visions? “It is more than my meat and my drink,” he once said, “to know how I shall make the Saints of God to comprehend the visions that roll like an overflowing surge, before my mind.”⁴⁹ Frustrated at times in his effort to teach, though there is abundant testimony of his effectiveness, he sometimes felt, as he said to John Taylor, as if he were “shut up in a nutshell.”⁵⁰ Whenever he countered the traditions that people had accumulated, some would “fly to pieces like glass.”⁵¹

He said in frustration, talking about the Saints: “There has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger for a wedge and a pumpkin for a beetle.”⁵²

Now, that’s nineteenth century! Hemlock knots are tough. If you had a wedge made of cornmeal like a pancake, and if you tried to drive it in with a pumpkin, you know how well you might do at splitting hemlock knots. That’s how effective he felt his teaching sometimes was. And yet the Lord did reveal and unfold line by line the whole plan. “I have the whole plan of the kingdom before me,” he said, “and no other person has.”⁵³ Everyone else had parts, fragments, pieces. But over the training period the Lord gave Joseph Smith, he received it all.

Some of his visions were panoramic. He said of Doctrine and Covenants 76 on the three degrees of glory, “I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them.”⁵⁴ A hundred times more than the present length would be more than the full length of the Doctrine and Covenants.

More knowledge stored itself in his mind, I believe, than in any intellect since the time of the New Testament. And yet he said, "I am not learned, but I have as good feelings as any man."⁵⁵ Learned he was not in the standard bookish and university sense. But taught by the greatest teachers in the universe he was. It will not do if one is speaking of him in his maturity to say that Joseph was "an ignorant farm boy." He had by that time become a very informed, enlightened, and divinely taught man. "The best way to obtain truth and wisdom," he said, "is not to ask it from books, but to go to God in prayer, and obtain divine teaching."⁵⁶ He also said that "an open vision will manifest that which is more important."⁵⁷ But in another connection he said that the Lord "always holds himself responsible to give a revelation or interpretation of the meaning thereof."⁵⁸

As for the principles he had that placed him in communion with ancient worthies, John Taylor said he was as familiar with the ancient prophets and apostles and patriarchs, including those of the Book of Mormon, as we are with one another. Examples: He said one day of his brother Alvin, "He was a very handsome man, surpassed by none but Adam and Seth."⁵⁹ In the spirit of instruction in Nauvoo, Joseph described Paul: "About five foot high; very dark hair; dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated and then it almost resembles the roaring of a lion."⁶⁰ How did he know that? I've known a few scholars who claim to be the world's leading experts on Paul. One man, I suspect, knows more than they. That is Paul. Apparently he is one who taught Joseph Smith.

Doctrine and Covenants 128 tells of some of the ancient worthies who manifested themselves to the Prophet Joseph, declaring their keys and glories and dispensations and making possible the welding of authorities in this dispensation.⁶¹ He knew Peter, he knew James, he knew John. He knew Adam and Eve. He knew Abraham. He knew Enoch. He knew the Twelve who were

on the American continent. "He seemed to be as familiar with these people as we are with one another," said John Taylor.⁶² He had visions of the past as well as of the future. As a seer, he knew things about the past that are not part of our own scripture, but which he spoke of in discourse.

This indeed was a visionary man in the best and highest sense.

Tongues. Did the Prophet Joseph Smith ever speak in tongues? He did. Brigham Young met him for the first time in Kirtland. They had a meeting. Brigham was called upon to pray, and in the course of this prayer spoke in an unknown tongue. When he and the others rose from their knees and were seated, the Prophet addressed them: "Brethren, this tongue that we have heard is the gift of God, for He has made it known unto me, and I shall never oppose anything that comes from Him. I feel the spirit that Brother Brigham has manifested in this gift of tongues, and I wish to speak myself in the tongue that it will please the Lord to give me." After then speaking for a time in that tongue, Joseph declared: "Brethren, this is the language of our father Adam while he dwelt in Eden; and the time will again come, that when the Lord brings again Zion, the Zion of Enoch, this people will then all speak the language which I have just spoken."⁶³

As for interpreting tongues, on an occasion when the Prophet was subpoenaed and was leaving to attend the trial, he was met at the door by a sister named Sarah Cleveland, who spoke to him. The Prophet listened intently. When she was through, he said, "You need not fear for me, as Sister Cleveland says I shall have my trial and be acquitted."⁶⁴ She had spoken in tongues and prophesied. He was tried, and he was acquitted. It is recorded by John Nicholson that the Prophet once gave a blessing to Orson Pratt in the course of which he spoke in an unknown tongue, naming several worlds which he, as a servant of the most High, should visit in order to minister to their inhabitants.⁶⁵ One of the cries of this generation is the need for a religion for the Space Age, a religion that isn't earthbound but that takes account of the vast universe we now know about. Through the

Prophet Joseph Smith was revealed a religion for the Space Age, for the cosmos, for the whole universe. That brought division and opposition into his life.

To heal, and to be healed. These are separate gifts. The Prophet was called upon, over and over, to administer—sometimes with oil, sometimes not—to those who were sick, both in his own family and beyond it. On the occasion now known in LDS annals as “the day of God’s power” (July 22, 1839), he himself arose from a sick bed of cholera and went across the river to Montrose, Iowa.⁶⁶ Dozens were instantaneously healed that day. His journal says only, “Many of the sick were this day raised up by the power of God.”⁶⁷ He does not add, “and I was the major instrument.” We learn from others’ journals that he led that procession of faith.⁶⁸

He counseled his brethren in this matter. He pleaded with them, according to Parley P. Pratt, to “cease to minister the forms without the power.”⁶⁹ How one does that without having mighty faith, I do not know.

There were times when he had to give repeat blessings. Jedediah M. Grant had dyspepsia, perhaps what we would now call a stomach ulcer. He would feel better for a time when the Prophet administered to him, and then the pressures would arise, things would eat on him, and he would be back in the same condition. The Prophet one day said, “Brother Grant, if I could always be with you, I could cure you.”⁷⁰ This is testimony of the serenity of soul of the Prophet, and of the faith of Jedediah. Joseph’s personal presence might have overcome this uneasiness of stomach.

Was the Prophet himself faithful sufficiently that he was ever healed? Yes—repeatedly. He once was poisoned and then vomited so violently that his jaw was thrown out of joint. He was immediately administered to and healed.⁷¹ In another experience, this time with his brother Hyrum, at the end of the Zion’s Camp march, he prophesied that because the Camp was not repentant and not living as a modern Camp of Israel should, some of them would die. One account says, “like sheep with rot”—a terrifying statement.⁷² Thirteen

died. In spite of his prophecy, Joseph yearned to heal them. He and Hyrum tried, but they had no sooner laid their hands on the sufferers than they themselves were smitten with cholera. They felt its ravages, fell down prostrate together, and prayed for deliverance. Even at that moment, Mother Smith was praying for them.⁷³ In prayer they asked for a testimony that the Lord would relieve them and that healing would come. Within minutes they arose free of the disease which, in other cases, was fatal.

*To have knowledge and to teach it, to have wisdom and to teach it.*⁷⁴ I believe this involves four spiritual gifts. It is possible for a person to know much, and yet be ineffective in teaching. What is the distinction between knowledge and wisdom? I know of no final scriptural definition. But, clearly, just to have extensive knowledge—as the Prophet once said, “being puffed up with correct (though useless) knowledge”—is no great blessing.⁷⁵ It is about as vain as pride in other areas. But wisdom is something else. Wisdom is the insight that comes out of genuine, firsthand experience.

Some write that Joseph Smith seemed to possess, as Edward Stevenson put it, “an infinity of knowledge.”⁷⁶ Wilford Woodruff wrote that Joseph Smith was “like a bed of gold concealed from human view,” and that, as with Enoch’s, only God could comprehend his soul.⁷⁷ Jedediah M. Grant said that “Joseph could take the wisest Elder that ever travelled and preached, and, as it were, circumscribe his very thoughts,”⁷⁸ and others said that he would teach and testify with such power that no other man in the kingdom could match him. All that gives us indication of his wide knowledge.

A promise was given him in 1833 that he would have “power to be mighty in testimony.”⁷⁹ This promise was brilliantly fulfilled. Loren Farr said to his grandson, “Oh, my son, I have sorrow that you will never hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ taught in power.”⁸⁰ He meant that Joseph Smith was dead and gone, and that though there were giants in the kingdom, none of them could command the power of heaven as he had, standing between heaven and earth in witness, and in testimony.

Yes, he had knowledge. And he taught.

He was not a natural orator. Others of the brethren were more eloquent in the flowery sense; Sidney Rigdon certainly was, Parley P. Pratt was. Others were more orderly and systematic; Orson Pratt was. Others were more practical in their counsel; Brigham Young was. But it is a testimony to the Prophet's greatness that all of these, each superior in one way or another, yet sustained him as the greatest prophet of all time, apart from Jesus Christ himself.⁸¹

A final word on his wisdom. "I made this my rule: When God commands, do it."⁸² That took him all the way to Carthage—and to the glories of the eternities beyond.

To recognize the diversities of operations and the differences of administration. It is possible that the term "diversities of operations" refers to the recognition of the movements, the trends, the activities, the ongoing processes of history, recognition as to which are centered in the light, in the influence of the living God, and which are simply of man, and which, if any, are from the lower regions. "Lying spirits are going forth in the earth," the Prophet said. "There will be great manifestations of spirits, both false and true."⁸³ The adversary always sets up his kingdom in opposition to the kingdom of God.⁸⁴ The multiplicity of variegated religions in our generation is, indeed, a sign of the times.

Joseph Smith felt and taught, and it is the testimony of this Church, that as Latter-day Saints we must recognize that the Lord's Spirit has worked upon all generations and all cultures. This is confirmed by the First Presidency statement of February 15, 1978, wherein they mention some of the great religious leaders, such as Mohammed and Confucius, as well as ancient philosophers. These, they say, received a portion of God's light.⁸⁵ While often condemned for being "exclusive," Latter-day Saints belong to the one Church that has the capacity to retain its roots and still relate to, and eventually embrace, all mankind, sifting through the error and offering the truth in its place.

The Prophet Joseph had that kind of expansive soul. "We should gather up all the good

and true principles in the world," he said, "and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true 'Mormons.'"⁸⁶

To have communion with the heavens, to see both angels and spirits. Section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants says that the Melchizedek Priesthood, in holding the keys of the spiritual blessings of the Church, is to have the privilege of holding communion with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn.⁸⁷ Who are they? Apparently they are the most righteous, who have filled their missions on earth and are now serving worthily in the spirit world or have inherited celestial glory. Did Joseph have communion with them while he was on earth? Yes. The only other man in LDS history who enjoyed a comparable richness of communion was Wilford Woodruff, who seemed to have had that gift from birth, and who seemed to live as if with one foot in the spirit world and one foot in this one. Only Wilford Woodruff could say to a brother as he went down the street in Salt Lake City, "Brother John, it's good to see you," and then could add as an afterthought, "You know, I don't think I've seen your father since he died."⁸⁸

Finally, though there are other gifts, I mention the working of miracles. Someone asked the Prophet once, "What was the first miracle Jesus performed?" He answered, "He made this world, and what followed we are not told."⁸⁹ *Miracle* is the term we use for the operation of divine power beyond our understanding. It is not a violation of law. Every miracle that Christ performed, including the creation of the earth, was executed in harmony with eternal principles. We will one day know that whatever we call miraculous was, in fact, lawful.

Joseph was promised that upon him would be laid much power.⁹⁰ When someone who had known him was asked to name the greatest miracle she had seen in the first generation of the Church, she replied that it was Joseph Smith.⁹¹ The Prophet was a God-made man. It will never do to say, as critics are beginning to say, "This man was a genius." So saying, they wish to reduce a most remarkable movement to its leader, its founder, and, as they believe, its origin. True, he

was a genius; he was a brilliant man. It takes a brilliant man even to comprehend, let alone to write, as he comprehended and wrote, the glorious insights that came to him, even granting that they came from the Lord. He was a man of superb intelligence.

Nevertheless, that does not explain Mormonism. What explains Mormonism is that Joseph Smith at his greatest, as a prophet, was not merely Joseph Smith. He was a prophet, made so by the power of God. He was a modern miracle.

Notes

1. *TPJS*, p. 270.
2. *Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt*, p. 570.
3. *TPJS*, p. 328; *WJS*, p. 256.
4. D&C 46:8–9.
5. D&C 46:9.
6. D&C 46:29.
7. *TPJS*, p. 162; *WJS*, p. 12.
8. D&C 46:13.
9. James 1:6–7.
10. D&C 46:14; italics added.
11. “Every word that proceedeth from the mouth of Jehovah has such an influence over the human mind—the logical mind—that it is convincing without other testimony. Faith cometh by hearing.” (*WJS*, p. 237.)
12. “I have felt since, that I felt much like Paul” (Joseph Smith—History 1:24). “I, like Paul, have been in perils” (*WJS*, p. 373). Pauline phraseology is sprinkled throughout his sermons and writings. Yet he said, “Peter penned the most sublime language of any of the apostles” (*TPJS*, p. 301; *WJS*, p. 202).
13. Eleven hundred statements about the future appear in the Doctrine and Covenants alone. Seven hundred are “of a spiritual nature” and many are conditional; for example, “It shall come to pass that he that asketh in Spirit shall receive in Spirit.” The remaining four hundred deal “more directly with things of earth.” (See Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith: Seeker After Truth, Prophet of God*, p. 277.)
14. An annotated list of three thousand Mormon journals, mostly of the first and second

generations, has been compiled by Davis Bitton in his *Guide to Mormon Diaries and Autobiographies*. It is a compendium of prophetic incidents.

15. Recollections of Daniel Tyler in *Jl 27* (February 15, 1892): 127.

16. See recollection of Daniel Tyler in *Jl 27* (February 15, 1892): 127–28.

17. Heber C. Kimball writes: “I have heard Joseph say many times that he was much tempted about the revelations the Lord gave through him—it seemed to be so impossible for them to be fulfilled” (cited in Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, pp. 391–92).

18. See recollection of Daniel Tyler in *Jl 27* (February 15, 1892): 128. Once as Joseph spoke in the grove west of the unfinished temple he was interrupted by rain and hail. The people began to run for cover. Joseph called to them to sit down and pray that the Lord would stay the winds and the storm. They did so, and the Prophet spoke for an hour and a half, untouched by the downpour that continued nearby but not in the grove. (See journal of Amasa Potter, p. 494.) A similar account is given by Mary C. Westover in *YWJ 17* (December 1906): 545. This may have been the occasion of the King Follett discourse.

19. See *TPJS*, p. 269; compare p. 289.

20. See *TPJS*, p. 121; *HC* 3:30.

21. *TPJS*, p. 308.

22. See recollection of William G. Nelson in *YWJ 17* (December 1906): 543. Ezra T. Clark recalled: “I heard the Prophet Joseph say he would give the Saints a key whereby they would never be led away or deceived, and that was: the Lord would never suffer the majority of this people to be led away or deceived by imposters, nor would he allow the records of this Church to fall into the hands of the enemy” (*IE* 5 [January 1902]: 202). Edward Stevenson remembered the statement as “a key by which you may never be deceived” and that it was that “a majority of the saints and the records and history of the Church also” would remain with the Church (see Jenson and Stevenson, *Infancy of the Church*, p. 5).

23. The least spectacular but most personal prophecy of Joseph is this: “If you will obey the

Gospel with honest hearts, I promise you in the name of the Lord, that the gifts as promised by our Savior will follow you, and by this you may prove me to be a true servant of God” (as recalled by Edward Stevenson in his *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon*, p. 4).

24. YWJ 2 (November 1890): 81. One can refuse to bear (beget) children. And one can refuse to bear (love and nurture) begotten children. Both refusals are epidemic in our time.

25. See *TPJS*, p. 255.

26. “You will build cities to the North and to the South, and to the East and to the West; and you will become a great and wealthy people in that land” (“Life Story of Mosiah Lyman Hancock,” pp. 27–29; compare the phrase, “a large and wealthy people,” in Mosiah 27:7). The statement that the people would be tried by riches more than by poverty is remembered by Angus M. Cannon in *The Deseret Weekly*, January 11, 1890, p. 103.

27. *JD* 10:297; *Discourses of Brigham Young*, p. 471.

28. See Snow, “Sketch of My Life,” *The Relief Society Magazine* 31 (September 1944): 504.

29. *HC* 5:601.

30. See journal of John Lyman Smith, p. 7.

31. See diary of Oliver B. Huntington, vol. 2, p. 168; Andrus, *They Knew*, pp. 65–66.

32. “Brother Joseph,” said William, “you were right to come. You get in my bed and don’t you worry. The Lord will protect you.” In the light of dawn the mob saw their mistake. “When Brother Joseph saw what they had done [to William] he clasped him in his arms and said, ‘Brother William, in the name of the Lord I promise you will never taste of death.’” (See diary of Oliver B. Huntington, p. 9.)

33. William Huntington went west with the exodus and settled eventually in Springville, Utah. One night, forty-three years after the Nauvoo incident, just after going to bed he was conversing with his wife in the darkness. He said something and she replied. She said something and he did not reply. After two or three repetitions she lighted a lamp. Without a sigh or a shudder he had died. The family believed this was the

fulfillment of Joseph’s promise, which is universalized in the Doctrine and Covenants: “And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them; and they that die not in me, wo unto them, for their death is bitter” (D&C 42:46–47). See diary of Oliver B. Huntington, vol. 2, p. 271, entry of March 19, 1887.

34. *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, pp. 38–39. This happened in Kirtland in 1834. Wilford Woodruff recalled that each of the brethren bore five-minute testimonies and were then told by the Prophet that “they did not have any idea of the magnitude of the work in which they are engaged. It will go to the Rocky Mountains, and will eventually fill all of North and South America. When this prediction was made we were all in a little log cabin.” It was fourteen feet square and held “all the priesthood in that city.” Another journal says it took place in Father Johnson’s home, one room, twelve-by-fourteen feet. (See Wilford Woodruff, cited in journal of Abraham H. Cannon, entry of April 19, 1894, p. 86. See also diary of Oliver B. Huntington, vol. 2, p. 211.)

35. *JD* 2:360.

36. *TPJS*, p. 162.

37. *TPJS*, p. 301.

38. *Jl* 27 (January 1, 1892): 24. See also *Journal of Jesse Nathaniel Smith*, pp. 454–56.

39. See Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors*, p. 68. This took place during the financial distress in Kirtland in 1837.

40. See diary of Oliver B. Huntington, vol. 2, pp. 169–70. Joseph related this incident to Huntington two days after it occurred. The man was an adventurer named Joseph H. Jackson. His name appears on almost every page of the account of the Carthage tragedy. See, for example, Thomas Gregg’s account in *HC* 6:149 and John Taylor’s in Appendix 4 of Roberts, *The Rise and Fall of Nauvoo*, p. 455.

41. *HC* 1:317. The letter was to W. W. Phelps, who, as he later acknowledged, was not being completely forthright in his letters.

42. John Taylor says Joseph taught: “A man may have the gift of the discernment of spirits; he may

see what is in the heart; but because that has been revealed to him he has no business to bring that as a charge against any person. The man's acts must be proved by evidence and by witnesses." (*JD* 26:359; *The Gospel Kingdom*, p. 202.)

43. See O. B. Huntington, in *YWJ* 5 (July 1894): 490–91.

44. See unpublished discourse of Brigham Young, October 8, 1866, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

45. As cited in Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, p. 226.

46. Journal of Levi Ward Hancock, p. 75; Andrus, *They Knew*, p. 19.

47. See *TPJS*, p. 369.

48. John Taylor says of Law that, though a counselor to Joseph in the First Presidency, he became "his most bitter foe and maligner"; that it was afterwards shown he had conspired with some Missourians to take Joseph Smith's life, and that he made the attempt. See affidavit in *Journal History* for 10 June 1844; Roberts, *Rise and Fall*, p. 406. The Laws threatened to destroy the Temple (see journal of William Clayton, 1841–44, p. 47).

49. *WJS*, p. 196.

50. *JD* 10:148. On the Prophet's feelings of frustration in teaching, see John Taylor in *JD* 1:176 and 21:94; Wilford Woodruff in *JD* 5:83; and George Q. Cannon in *MS* 61 (October 5, 1899): 629.

51. "We frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions; they cannot stand the fire at all" (*TPJS*, p. 331; *WJS*, p. 319).

52. *TPJS*, p. 331; *WJS*, p. 319.

53. *HC* 5:139.

54. *TPJS*, p. 305.

55. *TPJS*, p. 296; *WJS*, p. 196.

56. *TPJS*, p. 191; *WJS*, p. 77.

57. *TPJS*, p. 161; *WJS*, p. 12.

58. *TPJS*, p. 291; *WJS*, p. 185.

59. *HC* 5:247.

60. *WJS*, p. 59.

61. D&C 128:20–21. These verses name Moroni; Peter, James, and John; Michael; Gabriel; Raphael; and Michael, or Adam.

62. In addition to the Father and the Son, John Taylor names Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, Adam, Seth, Enoch, and the Apostles that lived on this continent as well as those who lived on the Asiatic continent (*JD* 21:94).

63. See Joseph Young, *Enoch and His City*, pp. 10–11; *HC* 1:297. Compare *HC* 1:323.

64. As recalled by M. Isabella Horne in "Joseph Smith a True Prophet," *YWJ* 31 (April 1920): 211–12.

65. *YWJ* 10 (January 1899): 22.

66. See "A Day of God's Power" in Roberts, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 39–42. Compare *CHC* 2:18–22; *HC* 4:3–5.

67. *HC* 4:3.

68. See records of Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, and Brigham Young, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

69. "Let the elders either obtain the power of God to heal the sick, or let them cease to minister the forms without the power" (as quoted in *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 294).

70. "I used once to be troubled with dyspepsia and had frequently to call upon the Elders to administer, and on one occasion, brother Joseph Smith says to me, 'Brother Grant, if I could always be with you, I could cure you'" (Jedediah M. Grant, in *JD* 3:12).

71. This occurred in Greenville, Indiana, where Joseph was caring for Newell K. Whitney, whose leg had been broken in a carriage accident. Joseph replaced his own dislocated jaw with his hands, went to the bedside of Bishop Whitney to receive an administration, and was healed. (See Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:225.)

72. George A. Smith wrote that Joseph said "a severe scourge would come upon the camp, and many would die like sheep with rot" (see Jarvis, *Ancestry, Biography and Family of George A. Smith*, pp. 48–51). Edson Barney recalled him as saying that "some of them would die off like rotten sheep" (*Jl* 27 [April 15, 1892]: 256). Zera Cole and Jacob Gates likewise speak of it as a "scourge" (see Jacob Gates, *The Deseret News Weekly*, April 11, 1891).

73. When Joseph and Hyrum returned from Zion's Camp, they sat down with Mother Smith, each took one of her hands, and they recounted this healing which occurred when Hyrum had a vision of Mother Smith praying for them (see *History of Joseph Smith*, pp. 227–29).

74. See D&C 46:17–18.

75. *TPJS*, p. 287.

76. Journal of Edward Stevenson, p. 157; Andrus, *They Knew*, p. 87.

77. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff*, p. 68.

78. *JD* 3:10.

79. D&C 100:10.

80. As recalled to the author by T. Earl Pardoe, author of the book *Lorin Farr, Pioneer*.

81. "Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it" (D&C 135:3). This statement was written by John Taylor after the martyrdom.

82. *HC* 2:170.

83. *TPJS*, p. 161.

84. *TPJS*, p. 365.

85. The statement of the First Presidency says in part: "The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as

well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals." (Cited in Palmer, *The Expanding Church*, p. v.)

86. *TPJS*, p. 316; *WJS*, p. 234.

87. D&C 107:18–19.

88. See journal of Wilford Woodruff for instances.

89. This according to Addison Everett, who says Joseph had this conversation with the justice while waiting for trial at Colesville (see *YWJ* 2 [November 1890]: 75–76).

90. D&C 113:4.

91. This was Martha Knowlton Coray, whose husband records: "I have frequently heard her say that he [Joseph] himself was the greatest miracle to her she had ever seen; and that she valued her acquaintance with him above almost everything else" (Coray, *Autobiographical sketches*, p. 11).

For full citations see "Author's Note on Sources, Abbreviations, and Bibliography" in the Joseph Smith Lecture Series.