

Chapter 9: The Sermon on the Mount—Part 1

Reading Outline:

- Matthew 5
(Parallel accounts: Luke 6:17-36; 12:58-59; B/M, 3 Nephi 12)
1. Introduction
 2. Sermon on the Mount, Sermon on the Plain, Sermon in Bountiful
 3. The Beatitudes
 4. The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ
 - 4.1. Murder and Anger
 - 4.2. Profanity
 - 4.3. Reconciliation Between Brethren
 - 4.4. Avoiding Legal Entanglements
 - 4.5. Adultery
 - 4.6. Casting Sins Away
 - 4.7. Divorce
 - 4.8. Gospel Oaths
 - 4.9. Retaliation
 - 4.10. Persecution by Legal Process
 - 4.11. The Law of Love
 - 4.12. Perfection
 5. Conclusions

1. Introduction

During this and the following chapter, we will focus our attention on the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon was first given by Christ on the Mount and/or Plains of Israel, and then repeated when He appeared, following His resurrection, to the members gathered at the Temple in Bountiful in the Americas. This sermon is found in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 13-14).

The sermon given by Christ stands in sharp contrast to the prevailing doctrine taught by the religious leaders of His day. It also stands in stark contrast to the prevailing attitude of many in the world today.

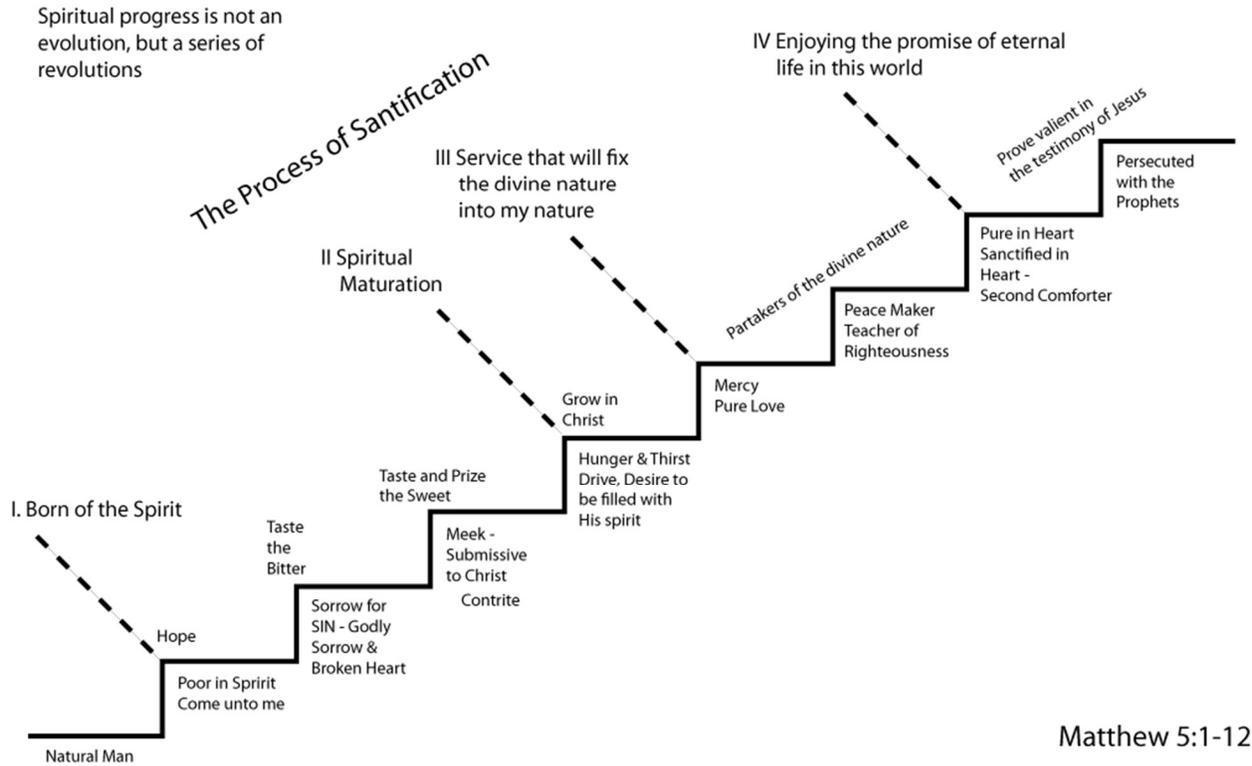
Robert L. Millet states,

“The process by which the children of God are purified and made free from the effects of sin, by which their *state* is changed, is sanctification...It is a lifetime process, one in which we gradually notice changes in our nature and disposition: we come to love the things we before hated (we begin to warm to and be attracted by goodness) and hate the things we before loved (we begin to find distasteful and to abhor such things as sin, uncleanness in its many forms, and the harsh, the crude, and the violent).”¹

The four main steps as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount include: (1) Being born of the spirit; (2) Spiritual maturation; (3) Service that will help fix the divine nature in our souls; and, (4) Enjoying the process of Eternal life in this world. This chapter and the next are designed to bring further clarity to this process.

The following chart is an effort to illustrate the aspects of the Sermon on the Mount as a step-by-step process of how an individual may receive “sanctification”.

The Sermon on the Mount



Reference²

We will begin by addressing the meaning of eight of Christ’s statements which begin with the word, Blessed. These are commonly known as “The Beatitudes.”

The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual states,

“Blessedness is defined as being higher than happiness. ‘Happiness comes from without and is dependent on the circumstances; blessedness is an inward fountain of joy in the soul itself, which no outward circumstances can seriously affect.’ (Dummelow’s Commentary).”³

We will next address twelve areas where the law that Christ taught replaces the Law of Moses which will remain in effect until the crucifixion of the Savior on Golgotha. This Sermon, given by Christ, outlines the higher law of the Gospel that, if incorporated into the lives of the hearers, will lead the individual to become “perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (B/M, 3 Nephi 12:48). This is the ultimate goal of each member of Christ’s Church, even though individual perfection will not occur in this life. It is, however, the path to follow as its precepts bring the individual joy during this life as well as will lead to eternal happiness hereafter.

2. Sermon on the Mount, Sermon on the Plain, Sermon in Bountiful

Matthew gives the location of what is commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount as being taught to his disciples on a mountain (Matthew 5:1), whereas Luke gives the location on a plain (Luke 6:17). In the Book of Mormon, the location is given at Bountiful (B/M, 3 Nephi 13). For the purpose of providing increased clarity to the Sermon we will also incorporate the words of the Sermon in the New Testament as found in the Joseph Smith Translation.

Bruce R. McConkie provides the following clarity regarding the varied location,

“...they are all one: all contain the same truths: all fell from the same lips: all were spoken by the power of the same spirit. We shall not hear the whole sermon...but we shall hear the words and feel the spirit of the portion that has come down to us in Holy Writ.”⁴

The Christian world and those biblical scholars who do not have access to revealed truth often fail to completely understand the purpose and intent of the Beatitudes or the restoration of the higher law which will replace the Mosaic law Jehovah gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. This law will find its fulfillment in Gethsemane and on the cross with the shedding of the Savior's blood.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“The blood of the last authorized paschal lamb [will be] spilt in similitude of his eternal sacrifice; [and following the Saviors' death], sacrifices by the shedding of blood will no longer be required or accepted.”⁵

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

“The Sermon on the Mount [containing the Beatitudes and the higher law], was preached to instruct and counsel the newly ordained apostles; to open the door of spiritual progress for all newly called members of the Church and kingdom of God on earth; and to stand as a beacon inviting men of good will of every doctrinal persuasion to come to the Fount of Wisdom and learn those things which will assure them of peace in this world and eternal glory in the world to come.”⁶

It is important to understand the three sermons were given to the Apostles; members of Christ's church; and, those who were seeking for spiritual truth. It was not meant for those who were not spiritually inclined. His initial instructions were meant and directed specifically to the Twelve who had just been called to fulltime service in the Lord's kingdom, and were not for the others who were gathered. In this sermon, the Savior also identifies the attributes and qualities each disciple must develop as they seek to ultimately become perfect.

3. The Beatitudes

As we proceed with this section, we will offer the words from the Holy Bible along with the Joseph Smith Translation. We will also draw upon the insights by Harold B. Lee.⁷

We begin this section with verses from the Joseph Smith Translation which begins the Sermon with the introduction that Jesus offered just prior to His giving the Beatitudes.

JST, Matthew 5:3-4

3 Blessed are they who shall believe on me; and again, more blessed are they who shall believe on your words [the Twelve], when ye shall testify that ye have seen me and that I am.

4 Yea, blessed are they who shall believe on your words, and come down into the depth of humility, and be baptized in my name; for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

Having clarified that Jesus is speaking specifically to the Twelve, those who have become members, new members as well as those who will yet receive the words of the Twelve and will be baptized, He offers the following words of strength and comfort. These eight verities are introduced with the word, Blessed.

The Holy Bible states,

“The Latin *beatus* is the basis of the English ‘beatitudes,’ meaning ‘to be fortunate,’ ‘to be happy,’ or ‘to be blessed.’”⁸

The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual states,

You will recall that in contrast to happiness which “comes from without and is dependent on circumstance; blessedness is an inward fountain of joy in the soul itself, which no outward circumstances can seriously affect.”⁹

Matthew 5:3	JST, Matthew 5:5
3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	5 <u>Yea</u>, blessed are the poor in spirit, <u>who come unto me</u>, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Harold B. Lee states,

“To be poor in spirit is to feel yourself as the spiritually needy, ever dependent upon the Lord...It is indeed a sad thing for one, because of his wealth or learning or worldly position, to think himself independent of spiritual needs. It is the opposite of pride, or self-conceit.”¹⁰

This disposition is exactly opposite from the pride found among many members of the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes. Only when an individual is in a state of humility and thereby sensitive to the whispering of the spirit, will they be willing to do all that is necessary in order to gain membership in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:4	JST, Matthew 5:6
4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.	6 <u>And again</u>, blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Harold B. Lee states,

“To mourn, as the Master's lesson here would teach, one must show that 'godly sorrow that worketh repentance' (2 Corinthians 7:10), and wins for the penitent a forgiveness of sins and forbids a return to the deeds of which he mourns.”¹¹

For those who have recently joined the Church or will yet join, it is likely it will be their sorrow for sin and desire to be forgiven that will bring them to the waters of baptism. Later, each time they partake of the

sacrament, their baptismal covenant will be renewed. They that mourn may also refer to those who, in grieving for the dead, will find comfort through the gospel as it sheds light regarding our life beyond the grave.

Matthew 5:5	JST, Matthew 5:7
5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.	7 <u>And</u> blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

Harold B. Lee states,

“A meek man is defined as one who is not easily provoked or irritated and forbearing under injury or annoyance. Meekness is not synonymous with weakness. The meek man...[is]the man of complete self-mastery. He is the one who has the courage of his moral convictions, despite the pressure of the gang or club. In controversy his judgment is the court of last resort and his sobered counsel quells the rashness of the mob. He is humble-minded; he does not bluster [get upset].”¹²

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“The meek--those who are the God-fearing and righteous--seldom hold title to much of that which appertains to this present world. But there will be a day when the Lord shall come to make up his jewels....”¹³

When the Lord comes again, those who are righteous will inherit all that that Father hath. They will become His leaders for they have been tried in the crucible of mortal life and have been found faithful to all the Lord has asked of them.

Matthew 5:6	JST, Matthew 5:8
6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.	8 <u>And</u> blessed are all they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Harold B. Lee states,

“Did you ever hunger for food or thirst for water when just a crust of stale bread or a sip of tepid water to ease the pangs that distressed you would seem to be the most prized of all possessions? If you have so hungered, then you may begin to understand how the Master meant we should hunger and thirst after righteousness...[This is manifest when we] seek the fellowship of other members when you are away from home [in order to attend worship services on the Lord’s day...[When we attend the] holy temple...[When we do not indulging in activities] contrary to God’s commandments.”¹⁴

Only when we truly hunger and thirst to become yet more righteous, will our spiritual craving be filled through celestial manna. Spiritual nourishment comes only through the Holy Ghost. As the third member of the Godhood, His responsibilities include serving as a testator of truth; protector from evil; and, comforter of pain. When our desire for righteousness is sincere and not based only on the wish to escape from the penalty of sin, then the Holy Ghost can minister unto us. It is then we truly feel inner peace and joy, in spite of the storm raging around us.

Matthew 5:7	JST, Matthew 5:9
7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.	9 <u>And</u> blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

Harold B. Lee states,

"Our salvation rests upon the mercy we show to others. Unkind and cruel words, or wanton acts of cruelty toward man or beast, even though in seeming retaliation, disqualify the perpetrator in his claims for mercy when he has need of mercy in the day of judgment before earthly or heavenly tribunals. Is there one who has never been wounded by the slander of another whom he thought to be his friend? Do you remember the struggle you had to refrain from retribution?"¹⁵

We are admonished by the Savior to be forgiving to those who have wronged us. One never knows when the day will come, but as we all err, that day will surely come when we will look to another to give us mercy. On that day, we will receive mercy to the degree we have given it to others.

Matthew 5:8	JST, Matthew 5:10
8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.	10 <u>And</u> blessed are <u>all</u> the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Harold B. Lee states,

"Only if you are the pure in heart will you see God, and also in a lesser degree will you be able to see the 'God' or good in man and love him because of the goodness you see in him. Mark well that person who criticizes and maligns the man of God or the Lord's anointed leaders in his church. Such a one speaks from an impure heart."¹⁶

Clifford Howard states,

"God regards the state of the heart as of supreme importance. It has a wonderful reward reserved for it alone—the vision of God... Sin blinds the soul; purity is clear-eyed in the spiritual world... it is only to the pure in heart that the vision of God can be a reward. The impure would be scorched by it, and would cry on the rocks and hills to cover them from its awful presence."¹⁷

Matthew 5:9	JST, Matthew 5:11
9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.	11 <u>And</u> blessed are <u>all</u> the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God.

Harold B. Lee states,

"Peacemakers shall be called the children of God. The troublemaker, the striker against law and order, the leader of the mob, the law-breaker are prompted by motives of evil; and unless they desist, they will be known as the children of Satan rather than God. Withhold yourselves from him who would cause disquieting doubts by making light of sacred things for he seeks not for peace but to spread confusion. That one who is quarrelsome or contentious, and whose arguments are for other purposes than to resolve the truth is violating a fundamental principle laid down by the Master as an essential in the building of a full rich life."¹⁸

B/M, 3 Nephi 11:29

29 For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"By this shall all men know the Lord's disciples: They are peacemakers; they seek to compose difficulties; they hate war and love peace; they invite all men to forsake evil, overcome the world, flee from avarice and greed, stand in holy places, and receive for themselves that peace which passeth understanding, that peace which comes only by the power of the Spirit."¹⁹

Matthew 5:10-12	JST, Matthew 5:12-14
10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	12 Blessed are <u>all they that are persecuted for my name's sake</u>; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.	13 <u>And</u> blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.	14 <u>For ye shall have great joy, and be exceeding glad; for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.</u>

Harold B. Lee states,

"May [members] everywhere remember that warning when you are hissed and scoffed at because you refuse to compromise your standards of abstinence, honesty, and morality in order to win the applause of the crowd. If you stand firmly for the right despite the jeers of the crowd or even physical violence, you shall be crowned with the blessedness of eternal joy. Who knows but that again in our day some of the saints or even apostles, as in former days, may be required to give their lives in defense of the truth? If that time should come, God grant they would not fail!"²⁰

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"The Sermon on the Mount, including the Beatitudes, was delivered to true believers; to the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb (it was their ordination sermon); to the saints of the Most High God; to members of the Church of Jesus Christ; to people who had been baptized and who were in the process of seeking the riches of eternity...Jesus now says: 'Ye are the salt of the earth...Ye are the light of the world.' That is to say: 'Ye are the choicest and best people on earth; and ye must now be an example to all men, that others, seeing your good works, shall come unto me and glorify your Father who is in heaven.'"²¹

These words of the Savior must have sunk deep into the hearts of those in attendance as the spirit bore witness of the spiritual truths they were being taught. Surely there must have been some who questioned their own ability to meet the requirements they had been taught, but in faith they held firm to the belief that the words He spoke contained the promises of eternal life and of the kingdom of God here on earth. It would not be easy to

fulfill what He was teaching, but where else could they go to hear the words of peace and promise. Here was the kingdom of God on earth and He was the Messiah, God's own Son.

4. The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"...the Messiah had come, and, soon he would--according to the promises--atone for the sins of the world and thus fulfill the law... [However, until that day] Even his disciples must continue to keep the law for the present. Sacrifices were still the order of the day. And he, with his disciples, would yet keep that final Passover feast when the sacrament of the Lord's Supper would be instituted; together they would then eat the paschal lamb, in similitude of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God; and they would do it during the last moments of the law's legal continuance; they would do it while the true Lamb of God was en route to Golgotha to be sacrificed. But for now, though true believers were beginning to receive the higher principles of the higher law, the law itself was still in force."²²

Though the Law of Moses yet remains in effect, it is part of the lesser law that was given to Israel because they were unable to live the higher or greater law the Lord desired to give them. In the remainder of His Sermon, Jesus will contrast for those who are in attendance and to all who would be partakers of the kingdom of God, twelve differences between the requirements of the lesser law given by Moses and the higher law of the kingdom of God.

4.1. Murder and Anger

Matthew 5:21-22	JST, Matthew 5:23-24
<p>21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.</p>	<p>23 Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time that, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment of God.</p>
<p>22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother <u>without a cause</u> shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [empty head], shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.</p>	<p>24 But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, or Rabetha, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.</p>

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Moses' law—more properly Jehovah's law given through Moses--forbade murder...this higher law, in addition, raises a higher standard. It strikes at the cause of murder, which is anger."²³

When we learn to control our anger, regardless of the cause, we have taken a major step on the path leading to the kingdom of Heaven. He or she who has learned to control their temper will never be guilty of a number of heinous crimes against their fellowman, including abuse or murder.

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert Millet, and Brent L. Top state,

"...the true disciple [is] one who acquires control over his emotions, such that he avoids anger...Our task in living the gospel is not simply to become more disciplined, as commendable as that might appear to be; our task is to have our dispositions changed."²⁴

4.2. Profanity

Matthew 5:22	JST, Matthew 5:24
<p>22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother <u>without a cause</u> shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca [empty head], shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.</p>	<p>24 But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, <u>or Rabcha</u>, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.</p>

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Raca, Rabcha, [are] profane and vulgar epithets...[that] when hurled at our fellowmen lead to damnation [eternal progression stopped] ...Men curse themselves when they think and speak ill of their brethren...Profane, vulgar, contemptuous, and unholy expressions degrade their author more than they taint the soul of the hearer."²⁵

The average individual is unaware that the words Raca, Rabcha, at the time of Christ, were expressions of degradation and reproach against another person. Over the centuries we have developed our own vulgar vocabulary whose meaning when spoken to others carries similar censure even though the words are spelled differently. When spoken, they harm all who hear their epithets, but the greater damage is to the individual or beast to which they are directed.

4.3. Reconciliation Between Brethren

Matthew 5:23-24	JST, Matthew 5:25-26
<p>23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;</p> <p>24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled [Quickly have kind thoughts for, or be well disposed toward] to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.</p>	<p>25 Therefore, <u>if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, or if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aought against thee,</u></p> <p>26 Leave <u>thou</u> thy gift before the altar, and go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.</p>

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top state,

"[The Master states] ...'Before you come unto me, if you should discover that *another has unkind feelings toward you*, then first go to that person and resolve them.' We might be prone to respond, 'But that's his problem!' No, the Lord answers, it is our problem as well. I am my brother's keeper, and if one has aught against me (and I know about it) then I have a Christian responsibility to do what I can to humbly set things

straight, to apologize if I am somehow at fault, and in general to rectify the situation. Should the offended one refuse my hand of fellowship, I have done what is expected of me."²⁶

Bruce R. McConkie adds,

"...our obligation, more important than the gifts we bestow, is to heal the wounded feelings of our brethren...No matter that we are the one who has been wronged."²⁷

You may say "this is a hard doctrine...I understand my need to seek forgiveness when I have harmed someone, but to go to my brother when I am the one who has been wronged...Shouldn't he be the one that comes to me instead?" The answer which the Lord has given is "No." Righting a wrong and restoring the relationship between two individuals is more important to the Lord than who goes first. If the individual rejects the offer, then the Lord will bless the one who sincerely sought reconciliation. Someone once said, "not to seek peace with your brother so they will suffer for their action, is like drinking poison and hoping that it will harm the other person." When we fail to serve in the role of the peacemaker, whether it is our fault or not, serves only to diminish our relationship with the Lord, and to limit the inner peace we could enjoy.

4.4. Avoiding Legal Entanglements

Matthew 5:25-26	JST, Matthew 5:27-28
<p>25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.</p>	<p>27 Agree with thine adversary quickly while that art in the way with him; lest at any time thine adversary deliver thee to the <u>judge</u>, and the <u>judge</u> deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.</p>
<p>26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.</p>	<p>28 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.</p>

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"This law has particular reference to the Twelve and others engaged in missionary work, in ministerial service, and in building up the kingdom...It was more important, in the social and political circumstances then prevailing, for the Lord's servants to suffer legal wrongs than that their ministries be hindered or halted by legal process."²⁸

In our own day, when legal suits and entanglements are rampant, even those not numbered among the Twelve or engaged in missionary work, might be well advised to prayerfully consider the Lord's admonition. In all instances, before initiating legal action, it is important to explore all alternatives, before taking legal action against another and to prayerfully count the costs before proceeding.

In some instances, the final verdict has not been in favor of the plaintiff thus resulting in further pain and regret. One can become so angry and headstrong they may even choose to ignore the counsel they have employed; refused the fair settlement that was offered; and then proceeded with the case, only to lose everything.

4.5. Adultery

Matthew 5:27-30	JST, Matthew 5:29-33
<p>27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:</p>	<p>29 Behold, it is written by them of old time, that thou shalt not commit adultery.</p>
<p>28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.</p>	<p>30 But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.</p>
	<p><u>31 Behold, I give unto you a commandment, the ye suffer not of these things to enter into your heart, for it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell.</u></p>
<p>29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.</p>	<p><u>32 Wherefore, if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.</u></p>
<p>30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.</p>	<p>33 Or if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.</p>

Just as anger leads to the act of murder, lustful desire precedes the act of adultery. What often begins with attraction and excitement, if acted upon, frequently ends in disappointment and dissatisfaction as unconscious guilt arises in regard to the immoral liaison. There is only one course of action available to the participants if they desire to have the spirit again in their lives. The word of the Lord is clear. Obedience to the law of sexual purity is primary if one desires to have the spirit of the Lord to be with them. This law requires sexual abstinence before marriage and complete fidelity after marriage. If this law is violated, there often follows a complete breakdown in trust and confidence between the partners. The spirit of the Lord is grieved and it withdraws until the individual seeks sincere and complete repentance. The loss of the spirit for the individual is “as if” they have lost their compass and now have no direction in their lives.

The process of repentance may seem “as if” they had severed a part of their physical body; it means they need to terminate all contact with the individual with whom they transgressed.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"When the Lord spoke of parts of the body, it is evident that he had in mind close friends or relatives who endeavored to lead us from the path of rectitude and humble obedience to the divine commandments we receive from the Lord. If any friend or relative endeavors to lead a person away from the commandments, it is better to disperse with his friendship and association rather than to follow him in evil practices to destruction... We should not... take such a statement as this... in the literal interpretation."²⁹

Not only may the individual be required to terminate all contact with the individual with whom they transgressed, but also, for a period of time, they will be unable to participate fully in the sacred ordinances of the gospel.

During the period of their repentance, it may again feel “as if” they had symbolically lost the function of an important and vital part of their physical body and are now severely limited in their functioning. While the price of complete repentance often has a powerful effect upon the individual and those who love them, it is a necessary requirement in order to receive complete forgiveness from the Lord.

For those who willingly seek forgiveness and are willing to do whatever is necessary in order for them to receive complete forgiveness, when that day comes, it is “as if” the part that was severed from them has now been restored and the individual feels whole once again. This is often a time of celebration and joy for the Lord has provided a way to begin anew with their life after the individual has taken the necessary steps of repentance.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“The higher law, [is directed] "not [to] the immoral act alone...[but] it also [includes] the lewd and lustful desires that lead to its commission.”³⁰

The words of “Oh, if I had not taken the first step, I would never have ended up where I am now,” are so true when it comes to sexual indiscretion. The powerful forces within each of us are not to be treated lightly regardless of what the prevailing opinion of the world may be. The word of the Lord is clear; consequences will follow if repentance is not sure.

4.6. Casting Sins Away

In the above noted scriptures (see Matthew 5:29-30; JST, Matthew 5:32-33), the Lord speak specifically about the removal of body parts (eye; hand) however it is important to understand the action is not to be taken literally as noted in the quote by Joseph Fielding Smith.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Jesus has spoken of sins of the heart [murder], and of the mind [adultery] and of the mouth [profanity]. Anger is as murder; profanity leads to hell; ill feelings against our brethren canker the soul; lewdness, evil thoughts--adultery committed in the heart--are as the very act itself. Gospel standards govern what is in the hearts of men as well as the deeds they do...The severity of such a course--plucking out an eye or severing a hand...show the need to cast away our sins, to cast them away lest we die spiritually, to cast them away lest our eternal souls be themselves cast into fire.”³¹

The Joseph Smith Translation adds the words, which are also included in the Savior’s presentation given in the Americas. He stated, “it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross” (JST, Matthew 5:31; 3 Nephi 12:30).

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Take up the cross of Christ, the standard of the gospel; bear the burdens placed on men because of their membership in the kingdom.”³²

“Taking up the cross of Christ” is to set your focus on the kingdom of God and do all you can to help the kingdom move forward. It means setting your life in order by keeping all the commandments. It means being

personally committed to doing the work of the Lord to the best of your ability. It also means putting the will of the Lord, caring for your family and for others as the most important priorities in your life.

4.7. Divorce

Matthew 5:31-32	JST, Matthew 5:35-36
<p>31 It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:</p> <p>32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.</p>	<p>35 It hath been <u>written</u> that, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.</p> <p>36 <u>Verily, verily</u>, I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.</p>

The first marriage between a man and a woman occurred under God’s direction in the Garden of Eden. Because it was done through the power and authority of God the Father, it was meant to be eternal. Following their expulsion from the Garden, Adam and Eve took up residence in the mortal world. When the opportunity for eternal marriage became available, many individuals chose to live as couples according to man’s law of marriage which is limited to this life only. In all instances, marriage continued to be defined under God’s law as a legal and binding contract between a man and a woman.

Through the passing of time, the contract of marriage was changed in that under the law, the marriage contract could, under certain conditions, be terminated. With the passing of time, the reasons for terminating the marriage varied dramatically to the point that almost any reason was acceptable. Women and wives had no rights and thus were discarded by their marriage partner with few if any options to care for themselves or their children. In the eyes of the Lord, this was an abomination and in direct opposition to the eternal law of marriage established by God the Father in the garden.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“[Jesus teaches that] divorce is totally foreign to celestial standards...If husbands and wives lived the law as the Lord would have them live it, they would neither do nor say the things that would even permit the fleeting thought of divorce to enter the mind of their eternal companions. [However] though we today have the gospel, we have yet to grow into that high state of marital association where marrying a divorced person constitutes adultery.”³³

In spite of the laws enacted today that protect the rights of the divorced, the pain and scars that often accompany the ending of a marriage, especially for children, should seriously be considered when divorce is being contemplated. There are few, if any, who truly escape the pain and sorrow that occur with the termination of a marriage. Today, the opportunity for divorce is available, and the potential for a new beginning if, in spite of the couple’s efforts, their marriage cannot be repaired. It is, however, recommended sufficient time be given for the individual self-evaluation and internal healing, before new relationships are begun.

4.8. Gospel Oaths

Matthew 5:33-37	JST, Matthew 5:37-39
33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.	37 Again, it hath been written by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths.
34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:	38 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; not by the earth, for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.	
36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.	
37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.	39 But let your communication be Yea, yea: Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

It is tragic that the trust between individuals in society has greatly deteriorated with the passing of the years. The day when a man's word was his bond is almost non-existent in today's society. In many ways we have tried to legalize morality and personal integrity as these qualities are often at a premium in today's society. By sad experience we have learned there are just not enough policemen today to have one on every corner in order to ensure that all will be honest in their dealings with their fellowman.

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top state,

"Jesus'...call [is] to a higher righteousness, and invitation to let our word be our bond...Essentially Jesus called for the cessation of oaths and counseled his followers to be people of their word, honest and trustworthy in every regard."³⁴

Can you imagine what a different world it would be if you could trust each individual to do as they promised?

4.9. Retaliation

Matthew 5:38-39	JST, Matthew 5:40-41
38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:	40 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for eye, and a tooth for a tooth.
39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.	41 But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
	JST, Luke 6:29-30
	29 And unto him who smiteth thee on the cheek,

	<p><u>offer also the other; or, in other words, it is better to offer the other, than to revile again. And him who taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also.</u></p> <p><u>30 For it is better that thou suffer thine enemy to take these things than to contend with him. Verily I say unto you, Your heavenly Father who seeth in secret, shall bring that wicked one into judgment.</u></p>
--	---

The additions offered by the Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 6:29-30, bring additional clarity to the admonition of the Lord. The condemnation that comes from our reviling or contending with our brother or sister is greater, in the eyes of the Lord, than our being physically struck or losing our coat. You may ask, “What would justify our passive non-violent action when we are being harmed or losing our possessions?”

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top state,

"Though the Saints [members of the Church] are in no way called upon to become the doormats of society, yet they are directed here to avoid reviling or striking back at an enemy. In short, it is better to be slightly inconvenienced or even to suffer some pain than to engage another in strife and tumult."³⁵

Bruce R. McConkie adds,

"Contention leads to bitterness and smallness of soul, persons who contend with each other shrivel up spiritually and are in danger of losing their salvation. So important is it to avoid this evil that Jesus expects his saints to suffer oppression and wrong rather than lose their inner peace and serenity through contention."³⁶

B/M, Third Nephi 11:29

29 For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me [Jesus Christ], but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

These are the words of the Savior as given to those who were assembled in the America’s. They add to our understanding regarding the importance, as disciples of Christ, we be willing to bear reviling or contention rather than to retaliate. With the devil as the source of all contention, we can be assured that retaliatory responses will only serve to escalate the existing circumstances. The peacemaker can take comfort their non-retaliatory action is noted by their Father in Heaven, who in the final analysis, will administer justice.

4.10. Persecution by Legal Process

<p style="text-align: center;">Matthew 5:40-42</p> <p>40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy</p> <p>41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile,</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">JST, Matthew 5:42-44</p> <p>42 And whosoever will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have it; and <u>if he sue thee again</u>, let him have thy cloak also.</p> <p>43 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile,</p>
---	--

<p>go with him twain.</p> <p>42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.</p>	<p><u>go with him a mile; and whosoever shall compel thee to go with him twain, thou shalt go with him twain.</u></p> <p>44 Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.</p>
--	--

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“[This directive was given], To his apostles and ministers--those whose talents and strength must be devoted, without hindrance, to the preaching of the gospel and the building up of the kingdom...The petty legal processes of that day must not be permitted to impede the setting up of the new kingdom.”³⁷

It is important for us to clarify those verities that were given to the chosen Apostles and others called to serve in the kingdom of God on earth with the directives given to the members of Christ’s Church. Those instructions given specifically to the Apostles were not applicable to the general membership.

It is excellent advice, however, to each of us that are willing to give service to others beyond that which we may be required to render. It is also important we be willing to share our goods with others who may be in need. To turn away those who petition us is in error, for as King Benjamin reminds us, “For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend on the same being, even God, for all the substance which we have...” (B/M, Mosiah 3:19).

4.11. The Law of Love

<p>Matthew 5:43-44</p> <p>43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love they neighbor, and hate thine enemy.</p> <p>44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;</p>	<p>JST, Matthew 5:45-46</p> <p>45 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.</p> <p>46 But I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless those that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;</p>
---	---

The doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is there is not one heaven, but three, referred to as kingdoms or glories. This doctrine was also taught by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 15:40-42

- 40 There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.**
- 41 There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.**
- 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead....**

The first two glories are identified by Paul as the Celestial, and Terrestrial. We later learned the name of the third kingdom or glory is the Telestial. They each differ in glory as the Sun from the Moon and the Moon from the Stars. The highest glory is the Celestial.

Each of these kingdoms have different requirements of righteousness in order to gain entrance. Not all would be comfortable in a kingdom if their standards of conduct were not in keeping with the standards of that kingdom. Today we are making choices in our lives that will play an important part in determining the kingdom of our choice. It is the desire of Our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, we return to live with them in the Celestial kingdom. In the final analysis, how we choose to live our lives on earth will be a major factor in the decision.

Those who are members of His earthly kingdom and wish to become members in the Celestial kingdom willing choose to live the higher law Jesus is teaching His disciples.

Bruce R. McConkie reminds us,

"All men will be judged [also] by what is in their own hearts. If their souls are full of hatred and cursing, such characteristics shall be restored to them in the resurrection. Loving one's enemies and blessing one's cursers perfects the soul."³⁸

This statement by Bruce R. McConkie, has application to each of the verities taught by Jesus Christ to His disciples. Our thoughts are a major contributor to our actions. We learn this truth in the book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 23:7

7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...

4.12. Perfection

Matthew 5:48	JST, Matthew 5:50
48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.	50 <u>Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.</u>

The addition in the Joseph Smith Translation changes the directive of being perfect to a commandment. For many it is "as if" Jesus is asking them to do something that is difficult which the Joseph Smith Translation has now made impossible. How could anyone in this life ever obtain perfection with the obstacles that are around us?

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"If the newly called saints overcome anger; if they are reconciled with their brethren; if they rise above lewd and lascivious thoughts and commit no adultery in their hearts; if they cast away their sins, as though severing an offending hand; if their every spoken word is true as though sworn with an oath; if they do not retaliate when others offend them; if they turn the other cheek and resist not evil impositions; if they love their enemies, bless them who curse them, and pray for those who despitefully use them and persecute them--if they do all these things, they will become perfect even as their Eternal Father is perfect. And perfection comes not by the law of Moses, but by the gospel."³⁹

I do not believe Our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ are asking us to do the impossible. They are, however, asking us to change our dispositions and become true disciples of Christ. We are to become even as they are. While it is true, we will not be able to accomplish this task during our life on earth, we will be given time to continue this process beyond our earthly existence. What is important is that we begin the process today. If we strive each day to live our lives a little better than we did the day before, repenting as necessary, having done all we can do, I believe Our Savior, Jesus Christ will make up the difference through the process of grace. Unlike others, I believe, however, His grace comes after all we can do, not before. I do not believe our works, good as they may become, alone will save us. The value of our works is that they demonstrate an outward expression of our inward desire to be true disciples of Christ.

5. Conclusions

During this chapter we have examined closely the sermon given by Jesus Christ to His disciples which is commonly known as “The Sermon on the Mount.” We began our discussion with an in-depth examination of the Beatitudes referencing the words of Harold B. Lee.

Harold B. Lee states,

“These declarations of the Master are known in the literature of the Christian world as the Beatitudes and have been referred to by Bible commentators as the preparation necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven...I speak of them as something more than that as they are applied to you and me. They embody, in fact, the constitution for a perfect life.”⁴⁰

Indeed, with the additional insight provided by Harold B. Lee, we were assisted in our effort to more clearly understand the words of Jesus as they apply to our lives today.

Next, we contrasted the Law of Moses as given to Moses by the pre-mortal Lord with the “Higher Law” being then taught by the mortal Lord. As we examined these concepts, we learned if we would incorporate these twelve verities into our daily lives not only our conduct would improve, but our dispositions would also be changed. We would have taken yet another step toward our ultimate goal which is to live once again with Our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

“[Perfection] will not come all at once, but line upon line, and precept upon precept, example upon example, and even then, not as long as we live in mortal life, for we will have to go even beyond the grave before we reach that perfection and shall be like God. But here we lay the foundation. Here is where we are taught these simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ...to prepare us for that perfection.”⁴¹

As previously noted, when we follow the admonition of Jesus to His disciples, the result will be an improvement in our character. As we continue daily to take these steps, some day we will reach the degree of perfection that will enable us to become even as Our Father and His Son, are now.

In the next chapter, we will continue to expand our knowledge and personal application of the lessons yet to be learned from the Sermon on the Mount. We will examine His teachings on discipleship and service; His example of heavenly communication as exemplified through the Lord’s Prayer, and the importance of learning to do the Lord’s will.

Footnotes

-
- ¹ Robert L. Millet, Camille Fronk Olson, Andrew C. Skinner, and Brent I. Top. *LDS Beliefs*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2011, 559-560.
- ² Latter-Day Saint Institute of Religion New Testament class. n.d. Copy in author's possession.
- ³ *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, [Second Edition Revised, 1979], 60.
- ⁴ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 115-116.
- ⁵ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 134.
- ⁶ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 116.
- ⁷ *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974, [1976], 343-348.
- ⁸ **Footnote 5:3a.** *The Holy Bible*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1979, 1192.
- ⁹ *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, [Second Edition Revised, 1979], 60.
- ¹⁰ *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. 1974, [1976], 343-344.
- ¹¹ *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. 1974, [1976], 344.
- ¹² *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. 1974, [1976], 346.
- ¹³ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 122.
- ¹⁴ *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. 1974, [1976] 344-345.
- ¹⁵ *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. 1974, [1976], 346.
- ¹⁶ *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. 1974, [1976],345.
- ¹⁷ *The Story of a Young Man*. Quoted in Course of Study: Teachers. Life of Christ. Prepared and issued under the direction of the General Authorities of the Church. Salt Lake City, 1922, 52.
- ¹⁸ *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. 1974, [1976], 347.
- ¹⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 124.
- ²⁰ *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co, 1974, [1976], 347-348.
- ²¹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 127.
- ²² *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 133-134.
- ²³ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 135.
- ²⁴ *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 73.
- ²⁵ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 136.
- ²⁶ *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 73.
- ²⁷ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 136-137.
- ²⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 137.
- ²⁹ *Answers to Gospel Questions*, Vol. 5. Compiled and Edited by Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1966, [Fourth Printing 1972], 79.
- ³⁰ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 137.
- ³¹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 137-138.
- ³² *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976, 225.
- ³³ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 139.
- ³⁴ *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 75.
- ³⁵ *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 75.
- ³⁶ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 139.
- ³⁷ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 141.

³⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 142.

³⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 143.

⁴⁰ “Constitution for a Perfect Life” in *Stand Ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974, [1976], 343.

⁴¹ *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol. 2. Compiled by Bruce R. McConkie. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955, [20th Printing, 1978], 18.