

THOUGHTS ON FAITH

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FAITH IS AN ORDINANCE

In the Wentworth Letter, where Joseph Smith first published the Articles of Faith, he wrote Articles 3 and 4 as follows:

“We believe that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

“We believe that these ordinances are 1st, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; 2nd, Repentance; 3rd, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; 4th, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.”¹

FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Faith in Jesus Christ is not the first thing one must do, or have, to come to salvation. Instead, faith in Christ is the first principle and ordinance of the Gospel, in that it is the foundation on which one must stand and act in order to come to salvation. In this sense faith is first.

Alma explained, “Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.”² This fact sets the foundation for the process which one must apply to acquire saving faith.

In this process, the first thing a person must do in order to stand on the foundation of faith in Christ, Alma said, is to desire to come unto Christ. In appealing to some people, he stated: “If ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words.”³

To illustrate his point, he compared the word of God to a seed which may be planted in the heart of a person who has the proper desire. And he said, “If it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.”⁴

¹ TS, vol. 3, p. 709.

² Alma 32:21.

³ Alma 32:27.

⁴ Alma 32:28.

When genuine desire begins to work in a person's heart and soul, Jesus then extends His Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth, which shines⁵—to the desiring person, which illuminates the mind, heart and soul. And the light of truth of the Spirit gives the person assurance that Christ is truly real, for the person's desire has produced an enlightenment of mind and soul as a witness that attests to this divine truth.

Thereby, desire is matured into a hope in Christ, which hope, by definition, is desire plus assurance, which assurance is given by the light and truth of the Spirit that attests that Christ is real—that He is true—and that His word embodies the truth, light, and life of His Holy Spirit; and that He will answer the sincere appeal of each person who truly desires to come unto Him in the right way.

Thus, desire matures into hope. And the Prophet Mormon then asked, “How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?”⁶ which is the next upward step to the scriptural plane of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When a person begins to act by desire, matured by the light and truth of the Spirit to become hope, then begins to stand on the foundation of faith, which is one of revelatory truth, light, and power. Actions perform by the light and truth of the Holy Spirit are those of faith.

Thus faith, as Paul wrote, “is the gift of God,”⁷ given by and through Christ, for it comes only by the light and truth of the Holy Spirit which centers from the Eternal Father in Him.

Faith in Christ is therefore the capacity, or power of soul in a desiring, hoping person, to reach up to Christ to enable Him to release His Spirit of truth, light, love, and renewing power into a person's life, as a gift which He gives freely to all those who come to Him in the right way,—in the way of truth, light, love, power and service to others by and through the Holy Spirit—which is the way of salvation.

And when the Spirit of God acts within one who possesses this power of soul, the combined powers of soul and of the Spirit make the individual a person of power, Spirit, or glory, to the degree he or she acquires the Spirit and acts on this upward scale of regenerating truth and life.

To make faith in Jesus Christ and repentance toward God principles of the Gospel is to make them mere matters of belief, and to disregard the ultimate need to offer Christ a sacrifice of “a broken heart and a contrite spirit,”⁸ which requires faith in Christ and repentance from sin as inward ordinances by which penitent souls may receive a baptism “with fire and with the Holy Ghost,” said Jesus, “even as the Lamanites [to whom Nephi and Lehi taught the Gospel⁹], because of their faith in me, at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost.”¹⁰

The first option above tends to permit an individual to contentedly take the injunction to “receive the Holy Ghost,” as one receives the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of authorized hands, to mean that they should merely seek to have the light and

⁵ See D&C 88:7.

⁶ Moro. 7:40.

⁷ Eph. 2:8.

⁸ 3 Ne. 9:20.

⁹ See Hel. 5:21-49.

¹⁰ 3 Ne. 9:20.

truth of the Spirit guide them in the ways and decisions of life. While this is appropriate, it lacks the further greater need to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire which Jesus promised above, and of which He said through Joseph Smith to Martin Harris, who was to teach His Gospel: “Of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost.”¹¹

In this statement, the Lord mentions two methods of remitting sin: one by baptism in water, and the other “by fire... even the Holy Ghost.” The first gives the individual legal acquittal from sin, by the power of Christ’s infinite atonement in which He paid the debt of divine justice for all repentant sin. The second is a more thorough acquittal, by cleansing the individual inwardly by the purifying enlivening power of the Holy Ghost, which operates by the fire of celestial glory to do two things. To cleanse the individual inwardly from the effects of sin, and to rebuild the substance of virtue in the individual and infuse him with the divine ingredients of eternal life, or celestial glory.

These latter actions may be illustrated by likening acts of sin as pounding nails into clean spotless board, thereby preventing it from being used as a proper item to construct a house. The first type of remission, above,—that of mere legal acquittal—merely pulls out the nails, leaving the holes in the board, making it useful some place where its condition will not be seen to embarrass the individual. The baptism of the Holy Ghost and of celestial fire burns up the inner effects of sin and knits the substantive materials back together, then fills the individual with pure holy attributes and power of the Holy Spirit or glory of God. The Lord therefore promised, through Isaiah, as He spoke to all Israel, with His focus on those identified with the American Gentiles whom He calls to repent in the latter days, stating: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”¹²

George Q. Cannon stated: “It is through faith that people are saved in the kingdom of heaven. Not a dead, but a living faith, which is a faith to which its legitimate product is allied—works of righteousness.” He added: “An unproductive faith is absolutely impotent to save.”¹³

Faith is the exercise of heart and soul power, which, by centering faith in Jesus Christ, is coupled with the power of the Holy Spirit, to realize a desired blessing or perform a given work.

The saints grow spiritually by walking in the “Light,” “Truth,” and “Life” about which Alma speaks.¹⁴ In doing so they plant the words of God, like a seed, in their hearts and souls, which words are those “of eternal life,”¹⁵ made so by the Holy Spirit. “For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ Like a seed, the word brings forth life, even eternal life. By acting with integrity on the word of truth, following the direction of its light, the saints may grow in the divine substance of eternal life, which is the glory which the exalted Man of Holiness has given to Jesus Christ.

When Jesus was asleep on a ship in the midst of a great tempest in which “the

¹¹ D&C 19:31.

¹² Isa. 1:18.

¹³ MS, 42:473.

¹⁴ See Alma 32:27-42.

¹⁵ D&C 84:43.

¹⁶ D&C 84:45.

ship was covered with the waves,” His disciples wakened Him with the plea, “Lord, save us, else we perish.” Jesus then said, “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” He then “arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.”¹⁷

When Christ’s disciples marveled at a withered fig tree that Jesus cursed, He said, “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, in faith believing, ye shall receive.”¹⁸

Said Lehi of Christ: “Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.”¹⁹

The prophet Moroni in the book of Ether declared:

There were many whose faith was so exceedingly strong, even before Christ came, who could not be kept from within the veil, but truly saw with their eyes the things which they had beheld with an eye of faith, and they were glad.

And behold, we have seen in this record that one of these was the brother of Jared; for so great was his faith in God, that when God put forth his finger he could not hide it from the sight of the brother of Jared, because of his word which he had spoken unto him, which word he had obtained by faith.

And after the brother of Jared had beheld the finger of the Lord, because of the promise which the brother of Jared had obtained by faith, the Lord could not withhold anything from his sight; wherefore he showed him all things, for he could no longer be kept without the veil.

And it is by faith that my fathers have obtained the promise that these things should come unto their brethren through the Gentiles; therefore the Lord hath commanded me, yea, even Jesus Christ.

And I said unto him: Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou hast not made us mighty in writing; for thou hast made all this people that they could speak much, because of the Holy Ghost which thou hast given them;

For the brother of Jared said unto the mountain Zerin, Remove—and it was removed. And if he had not had faith it would not have moved; wherefore thou workest after men have faith.

Moroni declared: “Wherefore thou workest after men have faith. For thus didst thou manifest thyself unto thy disciples; for after they had faith, and did speak in thy name, thou didst show thyself unto them in great power.”²⁰

FAITH IS CYCLICAL

¹⁷ Matt. 8:23-26.

¹⁸ JST, Matt. 21:19-20.

¹⁹ 2 Nephi 2:7.

²⁰ Ether 12:19-23, 30-31.

Having once been applied, with revelatory results, it can be applied again and again, reaching up to higher and higher planes of enlivening truth, light, and life.

When, by faith, one permits the Word to be planted within his heart, the Holy Spirit connected with the Word gives the true believer the light of divine truth which attests that he is pursuing a true path, and gives witness of the truth which the individual has received. The Spirit also communicates Christ's peace and love to the open-hearted individual. Then, with these divine endowments as foundation, the believer has a greater and more firm base on which to act, to acquire further truth and light and spiritual life from Christ, with a closer union with the Son of God. This process, being cyclical, can continue ever upward to the presence of God and the soul's endowment with eternal life--the glory of the celestial kingdom.²¹

Salvation is the effect of faith, and without faith there is no salvation. A saved person is one whose faith has become perfect enough to lay hold upon eternal life, which is celestial glory or the fulness of the Spirit—the attributes and powers of the Spirit, or life, which God possesses.

Those who are saved have the faith to enable them to act in God's presence, to be ministers of God in the midst of his glory and to fully do the will of the Father.

How often did Jesus groan within Himself and exclaim, "O ye of little faith," including the time when Peter started to walk on water, then feared and began to sink into the sea. What did Jesus truly mean and what was truly involved in His statement, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you."²²

Joseph explained that faith, grounded in assurance that God knows all things, is "the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness." He therefore mentioned three things: "First, faith itself—what it is. Secondly, the object on which it rests. And, thirdly, the effects which flow from it."²³ Since some of these points are best treated at a later time, with other related truths, the present discussion is limited to faith as an attribute of God.

Faith is not mere belief. And Paul is said to have only stated in Hebrews 11:1, that it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."²⁴ But the Joseph Smith Translation renders this passage: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,"²⁵ which portrays the quality of "sureness, confidence, certainty,... as a promise, positive statement, etc.; guarantee."²⁶ And because God acts by faith, as assurance, in ordaining and bringing to pass His creations, by and through the Holy Spirit, Joseph said of faith: "It is the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things."²⁷

Faith is therefore an attribute of God which is central to His life and character. And

²¹ See Alma 32.

²² Luke 17:6.

²³ *Lectures On Faith*, 1:1-5.

²⁴ *Lectures On Faith*, 1:8.

²⁵ JST, Hebrews 11:1.

²⁶ *Webster's New World Dictionary Of The American Language*, under "assurance."

²⁷ *Lectures On Faith*, 1:16.

were it not for God, faith would not exist, for, as stated, faith is faith because God is God. And since biblical faith pertains to the sure divine realm of eternal life, Joseph equated it with one's power to work by, in, and through the Spirit, or glory, of God. Said he: "The principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which worlds were framed, was faith; and ... it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity, that all created things exist; so that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth exist by reason of faith as it existed in Him."²⁸

Faith, as power, rises from the union of truth and light within God, and is the means by which He directs the various operations of His Holy Spirit.²⁹ In God, Joseph explained, "the principle of faith dwells independently; and," he added, "he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings center for life and salvation."³⁰

Joseph Smith, calling faith "the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness," proposed to discuss three things: "First, faith itself—what it is. Secondly, the object on which it rests. And, thirdly, the effects which flow from it." Modifying Paul's definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1, the Prophet defined it as "the substance [assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," then said: "From this we learn that faith is the assurance which men have of the existence of things which they have not seen, and the principle of action in all intelligent beings."³¹

He said: "If men were duly to consider themselves, and turn their thoughts and reflections to the operations of their own minds, they would readily discover that it is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action in them; that without it both mind and body would be in a state of inactivity, and all their exertions would cease, both physical and mental."

He then reasoned that if men would reflect "upon the history of their lives, from the period of their first recollection, and ask themselves what principle excited them to action, or what gave them energy and activity in all their lawful avocations, callings, and pursuits, what would be the answer? And he suggested: Would it not be that it was the assurance which they had of the existence of things which they had not seen as yet? Was it not the hope which you had, in consequence of your belief in the existence of unseen things, which stimulated you to action and exertion in order to obtain them?" He continued: "Are you not dependent on your faith, or belief, for the acquisition of all knowledge, wisdom, and intelligence? Would you exert yourselves to obtain wisdom and intelligence unless you did believe that you could obtain them? Would you have sown, if you had not believed that you would reap? Would you have ever planted, if you had not believed that you would gather? Would you have ever asked, unless you had believed that you would receive? Would you have ever sought, unless you had believed that you would have found? Or, would you have ever knocked, unless you believed that it would have been opened unto you? In a word, is there anything that you would have done, either physical or mental, if you had not previously believed? Are not all your exertions of every kind, dependent on your faith? Or, may we ask, what have you, or what do you possess, which you have not obtained by reason of your faith?"

²⁸ *Lectures On Faith*, 1:15.

²⁹ See D&C 50:27; 88:1-13.

³⁰ *Lectures On Faith*, 2:2.

³¹ *Lectures On Faith*, 1:1-9. See JST, Hebrews 11:1.

The same is true in the spiritual realm of existence. “As faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns,” he continued, “so it is in spiritual; for the Savior has said, and that truly, that ‘He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.’”³²

The Gospel is based on the need for mortal men to be renewed by divine truth, light, and power; and for this higher truth and quickekening light and power each person must seek by faith.

Faith is the way to knowledge and power in realms of life above the natural man. Like the life in a seed, when the living word of scripture is planted in the human soul, the Spirit of truth springs up into a higher realm of truth and life.

Faith requires the individual to develop the moral character to acquire and live by the Spirit of truth on a higher plane of life than the natural man.

With the decline of the Spirit of Truth, or Light of Life, after 1660, emphasis shifted in reform circles from a desire to base human associations on mutual love and mutual covenant, with their base in free and open union, to human reason alone and self-interest, which came to dominate the rising secular mind in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Alma’s challenge to engage in an divine experiment is an invitation to apply the processes of faith by which the Spirit of Truth leads to knowledge in a higher realm of life than the natural man alone can acquire, which knowledge is revelatory and certain.

Faith is not something a person accepts in the absence of reason and knowledge; it is the way to knowledge of truth above the natural plane of life on earth. It is the power of the soul to turn up the rheostat of quickening light and life within the soul and to learn and apply life and truth on a higher plane of existence. Such light, truth, and life is therefore even more sure and trustworthy than knowledge acquired by natural reason—the results are more surely perceived and are more certain.

So, faith to the Apostle Paul was a revelatory principle that led to knowledge and power. “Through faith,” he wrote, “we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.... By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.... By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.”³³

There are two ways to acquire knowledge—one by natural reason,— by the use of the five senses—and the higher method of faith, by the use of reason based on revelatory light and truth. This latter process brought forth the Age of Reason in the West. But when faith began to wane, beginning around 1660, human reason alone became the basis of rational thought.

The loss of faith and the rise of humanistic reason and logic then resulted in a warped view that faith was merely something to which people cling when they have no sure foundation of certainty, which was a perversion of the original principle of faith and the original idea of reason; and this perverted view implied that only ignorant people had to have faith, as a crutch.

But, instead, faith begins with a desire to know; it matures by the light of the Spirit of truth, to produce hope; and it ends with knowledge which, in its sphere, is certain and

³² Matt. 16:16, *Lectures On Faith*, 1:10-11.

³³ Hebrews 11:3-5.

perfect.

Reason as the means of applying rational thought is essentially intrinsic in man, for a revelation notes that at root “man is spirit;”³⁴ and an organized spirit has both innate and acquired intelligence, or light and truth.³⁵ Reason therefore has a spiritual base.

Through the Prophet Joseph, God brought back a true understanding of faith and reason, after the secularization of the latter, which gave it dominance in matters of truth and knowledge, and relegated faith with its Light of life to the realm of mysticism. A tendency also developed to separate faith from reason, and to make them two different approaches to differing types of understanding. And while the rise of science and technology enabled human reason to grow in power, faith became less powerful and was seen to be more ephemeral.

Humanistic secularized reason grew to great heights in the European Enlightenment of the 18th century. Rational certainty—that which was said to be impossible to doubt—had its day. As a result, faith was regarded as that which was uncertain and, hence, doubtful. Yet the Light of life could still be felt, where faith and hope were genuine.

Faith is the capacity of the mind and soul to probe the realm of the divine—the realm of eternal life—and release the truth and light of the Holy Spirit into one’s life. As such, faith is power in two ways. It is (1) the power within the mind and soul of man to align and center all desires, interests, hopes, and forces within one’s life in Jesus Christ, with an eye single to His glory, and to probe into the realm of the divine to release the truth, light, and power of Eternal Life into one’s life; and, (2) the power of truth, light, etc. of the Holy Spirit which one then receives and by which one can then act. As such, faith is not merely the “substance,” but the “assurance” of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

Both external and internal evidence may lead to faith, as “the power of God unto salvation,”³⁶ with internal evidence, that which is given by the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, being superior. And Alma 32 and 33 teaches us the way to plant the seed of faith so as to acquire the truth, light, power, etc., of God.

There are different types and levels of faith. To some faith is mere belief, which is the minimum level of faith, but can be a beginning to the higher and more meaningful scriptural type. Above the minimal level there is faith as belief coupled with the practice of the things in which one believes, which can be productive of many good things. Yet one who comes to this type of faith and does it well must not remain on this level. The higher and more genuine type of faith, true scriptural faith, is based on the acquisition of renewing Life in and through Jesus Christ.

In summary, to believe is to accept; to believe and practice may be to follow Christ and apply His teachings; and to have faith based on renewing life is to acquire and utilize the divine nature of Jesus Christ, the enlivening truth, light, and power of the Eternal Life which is in Him and which He gives others by and through the blessings of His Holy Spirit.

To come to scriptural faith and enjoy its blessings one must enter into a newness

³⁴ D&C 93:33.

³⁵ See D&C 93:26-29,36.

³⁶ Romans 1:16

of life, which can be acquired from Christ, and, finally, to live in Christ, by and through the power of the Holy Spirit; then grow up in Him, in the glory and power of his Eternal Godhood. In this way, the true believer becomes a son, or daughter, of Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, in the divine program and order of enlivening truth, light, power, and attributes which leads ultimately to a fulness of Eternal Life—to the full glory of the Celestial Kingdom of God.

Living faith in the gospel sense is the power which a person possesses to align all the feelings and powers of soul, mind, and body and bring them to a sharp focus of desire, then, by receiving a witness from the Spirit, of hope, and, then, to center them in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, thereby opening the way for the Holy Spirit from Christ to enter into the soul to do the will of God. To achieve this state of existence one must pay the price. And what is the price? It is to learn to work with the soul, to bring every desire, emotion, feeling, attribute, characteristic--all that one is in life, feelings, and power--into a focal point in Christ, and this by mental and spiritual exertion; then, by that intensity, the forcefulness of the soul, reach up to God to penetrate the veil of mortal darkness and its powers. Faith is to express this concentrated drive, this intensity, this exertion, in words, to bring the whole being into subjection to Christ's will so that in this way the sincere appealing person comes to know him--to know the reality of his living truth, the reality of his Holy Spirit, the reality of his divine character and, finally, to know the Son of God himself, personally.

True prayer is the basis of such faith, which is done with the whole heart, might, mind, and strength. To pray with real intent is therefore to pray in faith, which is to pray in Spirit and thereby to receive in Spirit. Joseph Smith exemplified the principle of faith. His mother said of him, that of all her children he was most given to deep study, contemplation and meditation--to the exercise of the forces of soul, mind and body, together, to focus on a specific issue; and thus he exercised faith. Early in his ministry, the Prophet Joseph wrote: "Search the scriptures...and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to his glory nothing doubting, he will answer you by the power of his Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and not for another. You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation."³⁷

To acquire faith, one must understand what is meant by the statement that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel. Faith is not the first thing one must do to enter gospel life. Alma teaches that to acquire faith one must first desire to believe, then let that desire work in him.³⁸ And Mormon asks further, "How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?"³⁹ So desire to believe, then hope, must precede the acquisition of faith.

What then is meant by the statement that faith is the first principle of the gospel? The answer is, that faith is the plane to which a person must first arrive--the plane on which one's life must first rest--to enter gospel life. Any act not performed on the foundation of faith is not part of gospel living, or of gospel experience. Hence, one must first come to act in faith in order to participate in gospel life, and in this sense faith in the

³⁷ TPJS, pp. 11-12.

³⁸ Alma 32:27.

³⁹ Moroni 7:40

Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel, or of gospel life. Faith is the indispensable basis of true gospel experience.

Faith in the sense that the Scriptures use it does not mean to merely believe something. It is the capacity and power of soul required to reach up to God as he is revealed in Christ. True faith is like the act that closes an electrical circuit; it is a power of soul--that inner power that taps the power of life and truth of God. And the flow of light, life, and truth which follows the act of faith is the best possible confirmation of the life and rationality of the act. Faith, therefore, is not a blind leap, a wild venture; it is an action of power that can be tested and proven by its living and enlivening effects, which are even more real to the person of faith than the effects of the spring-rays of sunlight to the plant kingdom. It is a principle of power, first, in the soul, and, second, in the release of enlivening light and energy coming from the presence of God.

In the Lectures On Faith, No. I, Joseph Smith speaks of faith as a principle of power--not simply as power, although the result of its operation (which is an action of power within the person of faith) is power. Faith is a principle of power within the individual, and the added power which one thereby receives is that of the Holy Spirit or glory of God.

Power and faith are a little like a kettle and its handle. They may both, together, be called a kettle; but the kettle should not be equated with the handle. Faith, more particularly, is the handle; it is the required means or process by which God manifests his power, which is his glory,--the divine substance called the Spirit--which is intelligence and which is made manifest as the Holy Spirit. Like a handle can be called part of a kettle, so faith can be called power. But it is not right to say that because faith is power, power is therefore faith in the sense that power is actually, in essence, faith.

It is true that a man of faith--this is the case with the Man of Holiness who is the supreme Man of Faith--is a man of power in two ways. First, the Father is a person of power, in the sense of his capacity and ability to align all the desires and powers within his being to propel his righteous appeal into higher realms of glory, to receive the Spirit by which to do the will of more exalted Gods, or Fathers above him in the Holy Order of Eternity. Faith is therefore the ability to acquire Spirit or glory and to use it in righteous endeavors. This is the power of soul which has its roots in a mature combination of elements, such as desire, hope, trust, and openness to the divine nature. Second, the Father is a Man of Power by reason of the Spirit which he acquires and by which he then ministers. This is power, and in this sense, faith is equated with power. When a person has faith, he is filled with the Spirit, and by and through the Spirit he can do all things.

The role evidence plays in relation to faith can be illustrated by a story of a young man who had been taught in youth to pray each night and morning and who was working for the Captain of a caravan traveling across an African desert. One night the Captain noticed the boy attending to his evening prayers behind a sand dune, and ridiculed him for his supplications. When the boy defended his practice, the Captain asked, "Have you seen God?" When the boy answered, "No," he asked, "Do you know anyone who has seen God?" When the boy again answered, "No," the man retorted, "Then how do you know there is a God?"

At this the boy returned to his tent pondering the incident.

That night the guard fell asleep and a lion prowled through the camp. He did no harm, but he left his tracks around the tents within the camp. The next morning the

Captain was furious, and great excitement prevailed.

Amid the furor of confusion, the boy asked, "Sir, Did you see the lion?"

"Of course, I didn't," the Captain responded, "I was asleep."

"Sir," the boy continued, "Do you know anyone who did see the lion?"

"No," the man replied, "Everyone was asleep."

"Then," the boy asked, "How, then, do you know there was a lion in camp last night?"

At this the Captain exploded, "You dummy! Haven't you seen his tracks!"

The boy then reminded the Captain of their conversation the previous evening. "I'm in the same situation you are in," he said, "I haven't seen God, and I do not know anyone among my friends who has seen him, but, like you, I have seen his tracks." Then, quoting the Psalm, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1), he explained, "Sir, faith is the evidence of things unseen."

With such evidence, a person of faith then acts on the assurance of things hoped for.

Paul's statement in Hebrews 11, however, is not a complete definition of faith, and of how to obtain it. Here a person must go to Alma 32 to learn the revelatory basis of faith, and the relationship of faith to the power of the Spirit.

The seed, Alma explained, is Christ.⁴⁰ "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made," Paul explained. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."⁴¹ Christ, that is, his divine nature--his truth, light and power--is the living Word. When planted in the believing human soul, it is the beginning of the indwelling relationship which the Gospel makes possible, in which Christ is in the true believer and the true believer is in Christ.

The Word is also like a seed in that both the Word and a seed have a principle of life within them. When a seed is planted in soil which is properly prepared, the life principle begins to germinate. So, also, does the Word contain a principle of life, by and through the Holy Spirit when it is either read or listened to with desire and openness of soul; and so, also, does it begin to germinate when planted in a believing soul.

As a principle of power, faith is a penetrating stream of light and life which flows to the individual from the Father of Light and of Life. Faith--the divine power within this divine relationship--is a gracious gift of God, through the Holy Spirit, to the humble person who expresses true desire for the righteousness of God and works conscientiously with Christ to bring about the infusion of the Spirit and its living power into his life. This is an emanation of God's divine nature, --his glory, power, goodness and majesty--which is that essence and divine substance that makes the Man of Holiness and his Only Begotten Son personages of deity.

The seed which Alma states must be planted in one's heart is the testimony of Christ in the two major divisions of his atoning sacrifice. Said Alma in defining the Word which the people were to plant in their hearts: "Begin to believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall

⁴⁰ See Alma 33:22-23.

⁴¹ Gal. 3:16

bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day, according to their works."⁴² Amulek then delivered his great discourse on Christ, prefacing his teachings with the statement: "My brethren, I think that it is impossible that ye should be ignorant of the things which have been spoken concerning the coming of Christ.... And as ye have desired of my beloved brother [Alma] that he should make known unto you what ye should do, because of your afflictions; and he has spoken somewhat unto you to prepare your mind; yea, and he has exhorted you unto faith and to patience--yea, even that ye would have so much faith as even to plant the word in your hearts, that ye may try the experiment of its goodness." The question, then, was "whether the word be in the Son of God, or whether there shall be no Christ." And to this Amulek added his testimony to that of Alma "that the word is in Christ unto salvation."⁴³

"The word," that is, the explanation of life, of mercy in forgiveness, of spiritual renewal, of resurrection and of an eternal judgment, "is in Christ unto salvation."⁴⁴

"Christ ... shall atone for the sins of the world."⁴⁵

There is need to see the whole exchange of Alma and Amulek with the people on the hill Onidah. Alma first defined faith and explained the experimental process by which faith can operate in the life of an individual. He then defined the word, or seed, which they were to plant in their hearts, by which spiritual life grows within the true believer. Amulek then arose and reviewed the central points of Alma's explanation and declared the doctrine of the Word--the infinite atonement of Jesus Christ.

FAITH AND PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT

Some people try the experiment of faith without putting themselves in to the formula, but this will not do. The operation, says Moroni, requires one to "ask with a sincere heart, with real intent."⁴⁶ In a revelation given through the Prophet Joseph to Oliver Cowdery, the Lord stated that one must "ask in faith, with an honest heart, believing that you shall receive knowledge."⁴⁷ And in a revelation given to Hyrum Smith he said: "If thou wilt desire of me in faith, with an honest heart, believing in the power of Jesus Christ, or in my power." The Lord therefore counselled: "Put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good--yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit... which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy."⁴⁸

All these statements indicate the need for genuine personal commitment and involvement in order for faith to rise and be part of ones life. A scientist may act external to a given experiment which he is performing, but the person of faith must act with commitment, with an eye single to the glory of God

⁴² Alma 33:22.

⁴³ Alma 34:2-6.

⁴⁴ Alma 34:6.

⁴⁵ Alma 34:8.

⁴⁶ Moroni 10:4.

⁴⁷ D&C 8:1.

⁴⁸ D&C 11:10, 12, 13.

FAITH

The individual must begin from the premise of Alma 32:21, and engage in an experiment based on the following points.

First, the Word is the living Word--the Holy Spirit in its revelatory character, made manifest through a commissioned saint or oracle who speaks by the power of the Holy Ghost. A revelation explained: "The word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ."⁴⁹ So the word of the Lord is 1) truth, 2) light, 3) Spirit, and 4) the Spirit of Jesus Christ. In another revelation the Lord stated: "These words are not of men nor of man, but of me,... for it is my voice which speaks them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them.... Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words."⁵⁰

Second, the Word/Spirit as an enlightening power of revelation and prophesy must be planted in the open and honest heart.

Third, the revelatory power of the Word/Spirit are attested to by Alma when he states: "O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea, because it is light; and whatsoever is light is good, because it is discernible."⁵¹

From this explanation, it become clear that faith is the capacity to plant the Word/Spirit, or the seed of life and truth, in one's heart and cultivate the Spirit in its growth in human life.

Faith as "the substance [assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,"⁵² must be exercised by desiring that which is not seen in this mortal sphere, but which is true.

To act in faith, one must act according to truth. General Mormon poured out his soul to God all day long in behalf of his people. "Nevertheless," he wrote, "it was without faith, because of the hardness of their hearts."⁵³

THE ROLE OF TESTIMONY IN THE INDUCEMENT OF FAITH

Joseph Smith taught that "faith comes by hearing the word of God, through the testimony of the servants of God; that testimony is always attended by the Spirit of prophecy and revelation."⁵⁴ This statement can be understood by noting that Alma makes it clear that in the operations of the power-and-truth-relationship of faith one acts in a realm above the natural realm of life. There is a higher realm of life in which God dwells and to which the person of faith looks and seeks to achieve. The truth, light, and life in this higher realm is not part of the natural experience of man on earth. Thus, Alma

⁴⁹ D&C 84:45.

⁵⁰ D&C 18:34-6.

⁵¹ Alma 32:35.

⁵² Heb. 11:1.

⁵³ Morm. 3:12.

⁵⁴ TPJS, p. 148.

declared that one must begin with the premise that "faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore, if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true."⁵⁵

There must therefore be preparatory actions taken by God in order to lay a foundation for the acquisition of faith by man. And these actions include the work done by angels to prepare the way for men to have faith. Mormon explains: "They are subject unto him [Christ], to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness." The ministry of angels to persons of strong faith, etc., is the beginning by which others can come to enjoy faith and its many blessings. Mormon continues: "And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfill and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him."⁵⁶

The true relationship of Gospel life is one of enlightenment, liberty, and covenant union with God and one's fellow men, and the principle of testimony must operate to bring the free individual to this high plan of life, liberty, and open union. It is in this sense that the Prophet Joseph taught that "faith comes by hearing the word of God, through the testimony of the servants of God."

Mormon thus concluded: "And by so doing, the Lord prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men." The goal being a faith relationship with God, which is a power relationship, Mormon then stated: "And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me."⁵⁷

THE PLACE AND ROLE OF ASSURANCE IN FAITH

In Hebrews Chapter 11 the Apostle Paul is reported to have written: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," but in his Inspired Translation Joseph Smith changed the word "substance" to "assurance," making the statement to read: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."⁵⁸ Faith is an action-relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, and the place of assurance and the role it plays in the operations of faith are matters of great importance. Alma indicates that true desire must proceed the achievement of faith,⁵⁹ and that when one looks to God with desire the word, as a seed, opens is life and power into the human soul. "It will begin to swell within your breasts," he explained. The person who begins to exercise desire unto faith will then begin to say: "It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it begainneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth

⁵⁵ Alma 32:21.

⁵⁶ Moroni 7:30-31.

⁵⁷ Moroni 7:32-3.

⁵⁸ Heb. 11:1; JST, Heb. 11:1.

⁵⁹ Cf. Alma 32:27.

to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me."⁶⁰

The exercise of true desire in planting the word within one's heart brings the Holy Spirit into his life with its revelatory power of light, truth and life, which is the assurance of which Paul wrote. Thus, faith is "the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," which evidence is that which is given by the Spirit.

The person is then operating in a power relationship with God, which is what Joseph Smith meant when he equated faith with power.

Among advance reformers of the seventeenth century, reason was born of faith. Then, when men turned away from faith, for whatever reason, they made reason paramount, and the true idea and application of faith diminished.

To learn about faith and how to exercise it one must start with the root elements of human life and his relationship to God. "Man is spirit," a revelation states, "... and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy."⁶¹

To properly analyze and learn about faith one must start from the right premise, which has two basic points: 1) Man is an organized being, beginning with the root element of spirit, with the capability of thought and reason; 2) The end goal of man is to become a glorified being and thereby acquire a fulness of joy.

Here one feature of faith in the ultimate sense of meaning is, Faith is the capacity to utilize the full faculties of one's being as a glorified person. Yet this is one feature of faith, not faith itself, which is the power of the human mind and soul to probe the realm of the infinite to acquire and utilize the power of the Holy Spirit, or glory of God, in worthwhile endeavors. Faith is therefore the power to act in the processes that bring man into union with the Spirit or glory of God, and in the ultimate sense on the plane of eternal fulness in the perfection of these processes.

Faith is the capacity to assimilate the Spirit or glory of God and use it in righteous endeavors. Faith and Spirit cannot be separated. Faith is power, which power comes from the Spirit. The man of faith is therefore a man of power. When one has faith he is endowed with the Spirit, and by and through the Spirit he can do all things.

Faith is therefore different from belief. No matter what Peter may have believed, if he had not actually received power he could not have walked upon the water. If Joshua had not actually received power, or glory, the sun would not have stood still. If Jesus had not actually possessed the power of the Spirit, his belief in the Father would not have resulted in the performance of many miracles.

Thus, faith is the capacity to exert the energy of the soul to reach up and acquire the power or glory of God. As a person receives Spirit, or power, his faith is increased. The very emotions and drives and swellings of his soul are intensified so that he can exert more energy of soul. And by so doing he can be endowed more fully with the Spirit of God and his power, until, like Enos, he can raise his voice unto God all day and all night to obtain the revelation of God; or until, like Enoch, his heart swells wide as eternity and cause all eternity to shake. Faith is power to be filled with the Spirit, and by receiving a fulness of the Spirit man receives a perfection of his faith.

⁶⁰ Alma 32:28.

⁶¹ D&C 93:33.

Salvation is the effect of faith, and without faith there is no salvation. A saved person is one whose faith has become perfect enough to lay hold upon eternal life, which is celestial glory or the fulness of the Spirit—the attributes and powers of the Spirit, or life, which God possesses.

Those who are saved have the faith to enable them to act in God's presence, to be ministers of God in the midst of his glory and to fully do the will of the Father. Thus God's salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power, and dominion which he possesses. This is godhood. If man would obtain godhood, he must possess or obtain the same glory, authority, majesty, power, and dominion as Jehovah, or else he cannot become like God.

The scriptural promise is that those who are the sons of God shall be like him when he appears, for they shall have purified themselves. If they are not holy as he is holy and perfect as he is perfect, they cannot be like him. One cannot possess Christ's glory without possessing his perfections and holiness, just as one cannot reign in his kingdom without possessing his power.

Faith is an attribute of God which is made manifest by the Spirit. When man's faith is perfected, it will dwell in him as a glorified man in its fulness; and it will exist in him independently. As a god, he will then live and act by faith, which is power.

Faith is a gift of God, given by the desire of the recipient, in whom it is wrought by the Spirit of God. By desire, with assurance given by the Spirit, the individual rests upon Jesus Christ for justification. And when faith works, by obedience, self-denial and love, one begins to be sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewal of his or her body.

FAITH AND SIGNS

Sign seekers are wicked and adulterous in their nature. Not having faith, they seek signs to fill the void that is within them. For those who have faith, signs follow them to their edification. But those without faith seek signs not to their edification but to their condemnation.

Living faith in the gospel sense is the power which a person possesses to align all the feelings and powers of the soul, mind and body so as to bring them to a sharp focus of desire and hope, and center them in Christ as the Son of God, thereby drawing Christ's Holy Spirit into one's life to be used to do the will of God. To do this, the person must pay the price. And what is the price? It is to learn to work with the soul. It is to learn to bring every desire, every emotion, every feeling, every desire, every attribute, every characteristic--all that one is in life, feelings and power--into a focal point in the heart, mind and soul, and this by mental and spiritual exertion; then, by that intensity, the forcefulness of the very soul, reach up to God to penetrate the veil of mortal darkness and its powers. Faith is then to express that concentrated drive, that intensity, that exertion, in words, to bring the whole being into subjection to Christ's will that, in this way, the appealing person might come to know him--to know the living reality of his truth, his character, his Spirit and, finally, the Son of God personally.

True prayer is the basis of such faith, which is done with all one's heart, mind and soul. To pray with real intent is therefore to pray in faith,

which is to pray in Spirit and thereby receive in Spirit. Joseph Smith exemplified the principle of faith. His mother said of him, that of all her children he was most given to deep study, contemplation and meditation--to the exercise of the forces of soul, mind and body, together, to focus on a specific issue; and thus, he exercised faith. Early in his ministry, the Prophet Joseph wrote: "Search the scriptures ... and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to his glory nothing doubting, he will answer you by the power of his Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves and not for another. You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation."⁶²

To acquire faith, one must understand what is meant by the statement that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel. Faith is not the first thing one must do to begin gospel living. Alma teaches that to acquire faith one must first desire to believe, then let that desire work in him.⁶³ And Mormon asks, further, "How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?"⁶⁴ So desire to believe, then hope, must precede the acquisition of faith.

What then is meant by the statement that faith is the first principle of the gospel? The answer is, that faith is the plane to which a person must arrive--the plane on which one's life must be based--to begin gospel life. Any act not performed on the foundation of faith is not part of gospel living, or of gospel experience. Hence, one must come to act in faith in order to participate in gospel life, and in this sense faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel, or of gospel life. Faith is the beginning of true gospel experience.

Orson Pratt explained:

FAITH being the first rule of adoption, we shall now proceed to show what faith is, and how it is obtained. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews says, "Faith is the substance (assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."⁶⁵ Faith, in a more extended sense, is the assurance of the mind in relation to what has been, what is or what will be. This faith or assurance of the mind is obtained only through evidence. It is not a knowledge of things, but the belief of things of which the mind has no certain knowledge. All belief is founded on evidence. A true faith is founded on true evidence; a false faith on false evidence. And in no case can a man have faith, either true or false, unless it is the result of true or false evidence. The greater the evidence, the greater will be the faith resulting from that evidence. Hence there are various degrees of faith both true and false; as for instance, when Europeans first discovered America, and came back and

⁶² TPJS, pp. 11-12.

⁶³ Alma 32:27.

⁶⁴ Moroni 7:40.

⁶⁵ Heb. 11:1

reported the same to the nations of the old world, they had a certain degree of faith in their testimony. When the discovery was confirmed by the additional testimony of numerous other witnesses, the faith of the nations was greatly increased: as evidences multiplied, faith was made perfect; so that in process of time, millions who never saw America, believed there was such a place, without the least shadow of a doubt. Those who visited America obtained a perfect knowledge of its existence through the evidence of their senses.⁶⁶

Again, from Elder Pratt:

Every man must perceive that before sinners can repent, they must believe, first, in the existence of God; secondly in His revealed law; and thirdly, in the sufferings of the Son of God, as the only possible way by which justice could be satisfied and mercy be granted to sinful man. Faith, as before stated, in any or either of these things, comes only through evidence.⁶⁷

Faith in Jesus Christ is not the first principle and ordinance of the Gospel in the sense that it is the first thing one must do to come to salvation. Faith in Christ, instead, is the first principle and ordinance of the Gospel in that it is the foundation on which one must stand to come to salvation. In this sense faith is first.

Alma said, "Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true."⁶⁸ This sets the process by which one must acquire saving faith.

The first thing a person must do in order to stand on the foundation of faith in Christ, Alma said, is to desire to come unto Christ. And in appealing to some people he explained: "If ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words."⁶⁹

He then compared the word of God to a seed, which is planted in the heart of a desiring person. And he said, "If it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves—It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me."⁷⁰

When genuine desire starts to work in a person's heart and soul, Christ then extends His Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth, which shines⁷¹—to the desiring person, which illuminates the mind, heart, and soul. And the light and truth of the Spirit gives the person assurance that Christ is truly real, for the person's desire has produced an enlightenment,

⁶⁶ Orson Pratt's Works, p. 49.

⁶⁷ Orson Pratt's Works, p. 51-52.

⁶⁸ Alma 32:21.

⁶⁹ Alma 32:27.

⁷⁰ Alma 32:28.

⁷¹ See D&C 88:7.

as a witness which attests to this divine truth.

Thereby, desire is matured into a hope in Christ, which hope, by definition, is desire plus assurance, which assurance is given by the light and truth of the Spirit which attests that Christ is real—that He is true—and that He will answer the sincere appeal of each person who truly desires to come unto Him in the right way.

Thus, desire matures into hope. And the Prophet Mormon could ask, “How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?”⁷²

And when one begins to act, by desire matured by the light and truth of the Spirit to become hope, the person then begins to stand on the foundation of faith. And actions perform by the light and truth of the Holy Spirit are actions of faith.

Faith, then, as Paul wrote, “is the gift of God,”⁷³ given by and through Christ, for it comes only by the light and truth of the Spirit.

Thus, faith is the capacity, or power of soul in a desiring, hoping person, to reach up to Christ so that Christ can release His truth, light, love, and renewing power into one’s life, as a gift which He gives freely to all those who come to Him in the right way,—in the way of truth, light, love and power—which is the way of salvation.

And when the Spirit of God acts within one who possesses this power of soul, the combined powers of soul and of the Spirit make the individual a person of power, Spirit, or glory, to the degree he or she acquires the Spirit and acts on this upward scale of regenerating truth and life.

Getting to understand the light and truth of the Holy Spirit is not mere theology; it is the true essence of Christian life. This inner light of truth brought forth freedom and encouraged recipients to work toward the higher goal of liberty and eternal life. And by its illuminating power it brought forth a desire to progress. Free and open union were also its fruits; and such union brought forth the principle of consent and an age of mutual covenant and, in its secular expressions, the ideas of society by compact and by social contract.

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⁷² Moro. 7:40.

⁷³ Eph. 2:8.