



# NEWSLETTER

· RELIGIOUS STUDIES CENTER ·

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## LECTURES ON FAITH SYMPOSIUM

A symposium on the Lectures on Faith was held at Brigham Young University on 18–19 March 1988. In the winter of 1834–35, the seven original lectures were delivered to the "School of the Elders" to prepare the brethren for missionary work. Initially published with the Doctrine and Covenants, from 1835 until 1921, the *Lectures on Faith* were not published again until 1940, when they were printed separately by N. B. Lundwall. Consequently, they are less well-known today than in the past. For this reason, the symposium was timely and was met with great interest.

The seven symposium papers followed the sequence of the *Lectures*:

*Introduction* - Historical background.

*Lecture 1* - defines faith.

*Lecture 2* - establishes God as the source and object of real faith and discusses how man can know God.

*Lectures 3–4* - describe God's attributes that enable man to trust and exercise faith in him.

*Lecture 5* - defines the Godhead.

*Lecture 6* - identifies the only means of acquiring faith strong enough to grasp eternal life—through a willingness to sacrifice all earthly things.

*Lecture 7* - shows the effects of faith.

In the introductory paper, **Professor Larry E. Dahl**, of the BYU Religion Faculty, reviewed the "History and Authorship of the Lectures on Faith." In September 1834, Sidney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, Frederick G. Williams and the Prophet Joseph Smith were appointed as a committee to "arrange the items of the doctrine of Jesus Christ." One year later, the results were published as the Doctrine



*Pictured above are the presenters for the Lectures on Faith Symposium. Left to right front: Robert J. Matthews, Ardeth G. Kapp, Rodney Turner; back, Larry E. Dahl, Joseph F. McConkie, Dennis F. Rasmussen, Robert L. Millet.*

and Covenants containing the *Lectures on Faith* and 102 sections consisting of revelations and inspired declarations. The Prophet himself prepared the Lectures for publication and sanctioned them. Elder James E. Talmage said one reason for discontinuing printing the Lectures with the Doctrine and Covenants was to avoid theological confusion which may have resulted from the discussion of the Godhead in *Lecture 5*.

Anticipating that some may object to formulating a systematic and reasoned explanation of the Latter-day Saint faith, the committee of four asserted that if there were a faith, it should be rendered intelligible. In the Symposium, Robert J. Matthews, Dean of Religious Education at BYU described the *Lectures* as "one of our greatest possessions for explaining a systematic theology."

**Professor Dennis F. Rasmussen**, of the BYU Department of Philosophy, initiated the discussion of the individual lectures beginning with "Lecture First on Faith." In a series of ques-

tions, premises, and answers, Professor Rasmussen built a logical argument to demonstrate "What Faith Is." It is action to obtain a goal assured but as yet unseen. The best goal of this faith, according to prophets and philosophers, is happiness: "men are that they might have joy" (2 Nephi 2:25). But happiness cannot be found if sought directly for itself; it comes through virtuous living and serving. The words to the hymn, "Do What is Right; Let the Consequence Follow" are literally true (*Hymns* No. 237). If we live righteously, happiness is assured.

There is a pattern by which man comes to know God. In discussing *Lecture 2*, **Professor Joseph F. McConkie**, of the Religious Education Faculty, described this pattern in his paper on "Chosen Vessels and the Order of the Priesthood." The chosen vessels are the prophets who receive direct knowledge of and from God. Others receive that knowledge by believing the prophets, studying their words, and receiving their own revela-

tion. This is the order of the priesthood. Added knowledge is built upon the foundation of previous knowledge. Thus, there is order in obtaining knowledge of God.

In "The Imperative and Unchanging Nature of God," **Professor Rodney Turner**, also of the Religious Education Faculty, discussed *Lectures 3 and 4*, which delineate God's attributes. When we know these attributes, they allow us to feel a confidence in God so we may develop faith in him and in his plan of salvation. This plan is an extension and reflection of God's nature. Effective faith must be founded on the real God and his real plan. Faith in the fictitious deities and idols of the ancient world, for example, produced only temporary results because they were erroneous.

In his paper, "The Supreme Power Over All Things: The Godhead in Lectures on Faith," **Professor Robert L. Millet** focused on what appears to be a different view of God from that taught in *Doctrine and Covenants 130*. In *Lecture 5*, the Father is described as a personage of spirit, which statement seems to deny his corporeality. However, as Professor Millet explained, the Father is a spirit, but is *not only* a spirit. So the concept of the Godhead, as taught in *Lecture 5*, can be seen as compatible with the further light and knowledge received in *Doctrine and Covenants 130:22*. Furthermore, Professor Millet concluded, Joseph knew much that he was not at liberty to disclose. We should, therefore, not restrict our measure of what had been revealed to him by what others knew or thought he knew.

*Lecture 6* contains a riveting statement: "A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation." In "Great Faith Obtained Only Through Personal Sacrifice," **Dean Robert J. Matthews** asked "why is this willingness to sacrifice necessary?" He concluded, first, that because the natural man knows only the things of this world, he cannot know things of the next until he is willing to put aside or sacrifice all mortal things. Second, only by coming to know the supernatural realm, which knowledge comes from God, after sacrifice, can men endure the trials of this life.

In "The Fruits of Faith," **Ardeth G. Kapp**, Young Women's General President, discussed *Lecture 7*. She treated three aspects of faith—first, as a prin-

ciple of power which brings things to pass; second, as spiritual insight that helps men endure trials; and third, as the source of man's eternal perfection. All visible creation is a product of faith and is sustained by it; so faith truly is the first principle of theology. Behind every miracle is faith. The Prophet Joseph's faith opened the heavens. Nothing is withheld from the man or woman who has sufficient faith. Faith is the power by which all saved beings work.

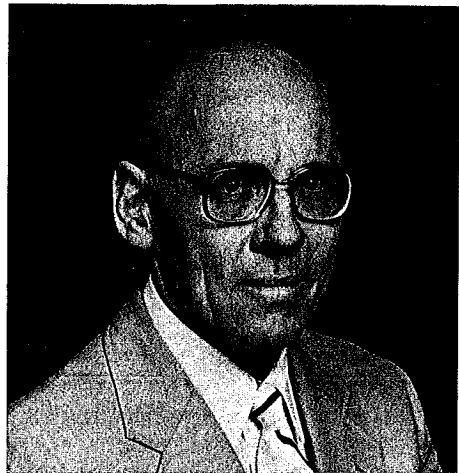
At the close of the symposium, Professor Dahl again expressed his love for the *Lectures on Faith*. He spoke of their unique "spirit," the spirit of the early brethren of the Church. One can drink from these *Lectures* as deeply as one has a mind to.

Cassette recordings of the symposium will be available through the Religious Studies Center, 156 JSB. In addition, the papers, together with the 1985 version of the *Lectures on Faith*, will be published in a book through the Religious Studies Center.

## BOOK REVIEW

### THE CALL OF ZION and A DESCRIPTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Religious Studies Center is pleased to announce the publication of two of its most recent books—*The Call of Zion: The Story of the First Welsh Mormon Emigration and Welsh Mormon Publications From 1844–1862: A Descriptive Bibliography*, both written by **Professor Ron Dennis**. *The Call of Zion* is a descriptive detailing of the early Welsh Saints' numerous journeys to Zion. Using many different sources, Dennis pieces together the story of the trials and disappointments of sea, river and overland travels for the Welsh emigrants as well as the joys as they encountered new beginnings. The five appendices of the book are of value: Appendix A is an alphabetized list of the 326 Welsh passengers on the *Buena Vista* and the *Hartley* in 1849; Appendices B and C combine information about emigrants from passenger lists with information gleaned from other sources, i.e., letters; Appendix D is a series of biographical sketches of some of the



Ron Dennis, author of *The Call of Zion and A Descriptive Bibliography*.

emigrants; and Appendix E is the English translation of the complete text of thirty items originally written in Welsh—twenty three letters, four poems, and three periodical articles—dealing with the 1849 crossing.

The *Bibliography* is a marvelous source of information about the early days of the Church in Wales, particularly through the Welsh publications covering approximately 150 titles. There are complete lists and detailed descriptions of each item as Professor Dennis explains the history of how each came to print including the circumstances and accompanying bitter debates. The format is well-designed and makes comfortable reading as each publication is identified by the author's name (assumed or known), the original title, the English translation of the title, publication information, a physical description of the publication, and of the wrapper if extant. Dennis then discusses the circumstances surrounding the publication, describes the contents, provides a precise publication date and dates of previous printings, and even lists the original selling price.

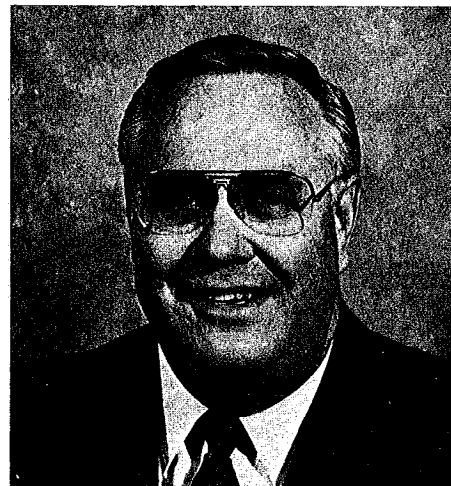
This book, too, has four appendices: Appendix A lists the chronological item numbers for easy reference with the title in the original language; Appendix B is the same listing in English; Appendix C is an alphabetical listing of titles; and Appendix D is a list of the repositories where the different publications were found. There are also one hundred seven pictures of extant items.

These two books are a significant contribution to the history of the Mormon mission in mid-nineteenth-century Wales, revealing pieces of history previously hidden in the Welsh language.

## BOOK REVIEW

### THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE: REVELATIONS OF GOD

The Religious Studies Center is also pleased to announce the publication of *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations of God*. Perhaps the least understood of the standard works, the Pearl of Great Price has varied sources that fascinate readers, but a deeper knowledge of the circumstances surrounding its acquisition and compilation helps us better appreciate the great spiritual value of this gem of scripture.



H. Donl Petersen, editor of *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations of God*.

*The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations of God* is composed of several lectures given at the **Brigham Young University Pearl of Great Price Symposium** held in 1986, and each chapter expounds on a different aspect of the revelations, translations, and testimonies of Joseph Smith which make up the Pearl of Great Price. They are insightful discussions that convey the spirit of their messages as well as the history.

**James R. Moss** discusses how the unique conversion stories of the prophets from Adam to Joseph Smith as told in the Pearl of Great Price, serve as a springboard for the spreading of the gospel today. He enumerates the covenants made between God and the great prophets from whose achievements we gain inspiration as we read the scriptures. In addition to the blessing of inspiration is the blessing of missionary work, and Professor

Moss shows that these scriptures provide the basic doctrines necessary to teach and warn the people as effectively as the prophets of old did.

**Monte S. Nyman** explores the life and testimony of Abraham, whose posterity is to bless all the children of the God, as promised in the great Abrahamic covenant. When we read of all the blessings in store for Abraham's posterity, as Professor Nyman relates them, and of Joseph Smith's role in bringing them to pass, we can in turn better see our own role as Latter-day Saints to make ourselves worthy to receive those blessings and be adopted into Israel.

Of great interest is **H. Donl Petersen's** research into the historical background of the papyri which led to the book of Abraham. Professor Peterson begins in Africa with the ravaging of Egypt at the time of Napoleon and traces the journey of a few recovered papyri all the way to the hands of Joseph Smith, where they were discovered to have been written by Abraham. It is a captivating and well-documented article.

Joseph Smith's translation of Matthew 24 is the subject of a discourse by **George A. Horton, Jr.**, who notes the differences between the King James and the Joseph Smith versions of that prophetic chapter, and emphasizes the latter's enlightened distinction between ancient and modern signs of the last days. No man knows the hour of Christ's coming, and Professor Horton reminds us that signs are not physical phenomena for us to sit and watch, but they are warnings to use to prepare us for the day He comes.

Other contributors to the book (in order of appearance) were **Oscar W. McConkie, Robert J. Matthews, S. Kent Brown, Joseph F. McConkie, Rodney Turner, Paul Y. Hoskisson, Keith H. Meservy, Kenneth W. Godfrey, and Milton V. Backman.**

### APARABATOS: A WORD STUDY

**Aparabatos**—"Unchangeable"

Several English translators of the New Testament translate the Greek word **aparabatos** in Hebrews 7:24 as "non-transferable." This has suggested to some that the priesthood cannot be bestowed upon mortals or held by anyone except Christ. A care-

ful examination shows that this suggestion is in error.

In an important sense, of course, Jesus' authority and role are unique. He alone was the great high priest capable of offering the ultimate atoning sacrifice, once for all mankind (Heb. 7:27; 8:1; 9:28; 10:21). As the Epistle to the Hebrews explains, Christ's sure (7:22) and eternally continuing sacrifice (7:3) is superior to the temporal rituals of the Levitical priesthood, which stand in need of repeated renewal (7:27) and are made by priests who are subject to infirmity (7:28).

The uniqueness of Christ's atoning priesthood power, however, does not imply that Melchizedek priesthood power cannot be bestowed upon mortals. The New Testament itself records several instances when priesthood power was given by Christ to his disciples (e.g., Matt. 10:1; 16:19; John 20:23; Eph. 4:11). Moreover, the meaning of the word **aparabatos** is not consistent with those instances. The word does not imply "non-transferability." Although sometimes translated as "without a successor . . . this meaning is found nowhere else" (Arndt and Gingrich, *Greek English Lexicon*, 80).

**Aparabatos** is a rare word, occurring only this one time in all the New Testament and Septuagint. Its meaning is "permanent or unchangeable," as is attested in a number of late Greek texts. It is an adjective and is used to describe unalterable laws, legal judgments, immutable fates, infallible mathematicians, unchanging motions of the stars, and undeviating piety (see Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 5:742). Hence it conveys a strong sense of incorruptible, unshakable, and inviolable. These meanings fit the context of Hebrews 7:24 especially well, while "non-transferable" does not.

The root word related to **aparabatos** is **parabaino**, which means "to go by or beside." From this one can see that **aparabatos** might also convey a sense of being "without parallel," or incomparable. **Parabaino** also means "to overstep," "transgress," or "to turn from the right way," especially to go against the commandments (Kittel, 5:736–739; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18, 266). Thus **aparabatos** can further entail the notion of "being authorized," or "according to law," or "following the right way."

These meanings are powerful de-

scriptions of the holy priesthood after the order of the Son of God. They in no way limit God's power to bestow priesthood authority upon his agents and servants. For further information, see Richard L. Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 1983), 214-15; J. Carver, "How do Latter-day Saints support the doctrine of Melchizedek Priesthood authority from the Bible?" *Ensign* (January 1986), 54-56. 🐦

—John W. Welch

## SYMPOSIUM DATE CHANGE

The **Fourth Annual Book of Mormon Symposium** has been rescheduled for 28-30 October 1988, and will end with a Fireside on Sunday evening. The symposium topic will be "Jacob-Words of Mormon: To Learn with Joy." Those interested in presenting a paper should submit a proposed outline to Monte S. Nyman, 156 JSB, BYU, Provo, Utah 84602, by 1 June 1988.

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