

HOLY WRIT: PUBLISHED ANEW

We are grateful beyond any measure of expression for the excellence of our new editions of the scriptures.

We feel that the three things that have happened in our lifetime which will do more than anything else for the spread of the gospel, for the perfecting of the saints, and for the salvation of men are:

1. The receipt of the revelation which makes the priesthood and the blessings of the temple available to all men without reference to race or ancestry;
2. The organization of the First Quorum of the Seventy as the third great council of the Church; and
3. The publication of the Standard Works in their new format and with the new teaching aids that accompany them.

We are somewhat saddened, however, that the generality of the saints have not yet caught the vision of what our new scriptural publications contain and are not using them as they should.

I hope and pray that all of us may have the spiritual maturity, and can attune our souls to the Spirit, so as to both understand and act upon the things I shall say relative to the holy scriptures.

✱ Our tendency—it is an almost universal practice among most church leaders—is to get so involved with the operation of the institutional Church that we never gain faith like the ancients, simply because we do not involve ourselves in the basic gospel matters that were the center of their lives.

We are so wound up in programs and statistics and trends, in properties, lands, and mammon, and in achieving goals that will highlight the excellence of our work, that we "have omitted the weightier matters of the law." And as Jesus would have said: "These [weightier things] ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Matt. 23:23.)

Let us be reminded of the great basic verities upon which all church programs and all church organization rest.

We are not saved by church programs as such, by church organizations alone, or even by the Church itself. It is the gospel that saves. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:16.)

Salvation comes because "Jesus Christ," as Paul said, "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. 1:10.) It is the gospel that raises men "in immortality" and "unto eternal life." (D&C 29:43.) The gospel is the plan of salvation by which we can change the souls we possess into the kind of souls who can go where God and Christ are.

But the Church and the priesthood administer the gospel. There must be an institutional Church so there will be order and system in all things. There neither is nor can be salvation without the Church. The Church is the service agency, the organization, the earthly kingdom which makes salvation available to men.

Paul tells us that the gospel comes to men in two ways—in *word* and in *power*. The word of the gospel is written in the scriptures; the power of the gospel is written in the lives of those who both receive and enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Before we can write the gospel in our own book of life we must learn the gospel as it is written in the books of scripture. The Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price—each of them individually and all of them collectively—contain the fulness of the everlasting gospel. They contain the words of eternal life which lead to immortal glory.

Is it any wonder, then, that we are commanded to search the scriptures and particularly the commandments that have come to us by revelation in our day?

Is it any wonder we are counseled to treasure up the Lord's word and to ponder in our hearts how merciful he has been from the creation of Adam to the present time?

Should it surprise us to read that the Lord commanded Joseph Smith and all the elders, and all the saints—over and over again—that they were to expound all scriptures unto the Church and unto the world?

Can men be saved without a knowledge of what God has revealed both anciently and in our day?

Gospel study and gospel knowledge and gospel scholarship are highly personal. Every person must learn the doctrines of salvation for himself and in his own way.

● My wife and I read out loud to each other every day for years on end until we had been through all of the Standard Works several times.

May I suggest, based on personal experience, that faith comes and revelations are received as a direct result of scriptural study.

Paul says 'faith cometh by hearing' the word of God. (Rom 10:17.) Joseph Smith taught that to gain faith men must have a knowledge of the nature and kind of being that God is; they must have a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes; and they must so live as to gain the assurance that their conduct is in harmony with the divine will.

Faith is thus born of scriptural study. Those who study, ponder, and pray about the scriptures, seeking to understand their deep and hidden meanings, receive from time to time great outpourings of ● light and knowledge from the Holy Spirit. This is what happened to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon when they received the vision of the degrees of glory.

However talented men may be in administrative matters; however eloquent they may be in expressing their views; however learned they may be in worldly things—they will be denied the sweet whisperings of the Spirit that might have been theirs unless they pay the price of studying, pondering, and praying about the scriptures. *

All of this applies to the scriptures as they are now printed and as they now exist in all languages. It also brings us to the new editions of holy writ which have just been published by the Church in English. The day is probably far distant in which all the helps available in English will be made available in other languages.

Never since the day of Joseph Smith; never since the translation of the Book of Mormon; never since the receipt of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants and the inspired writings in the Pearl of Great Price—never has there been such an opportunity to increase gospel scholarship as has ● now come to those who have our new English editions of the scriptures.

This opportunity arises for two reasons: One is the new teaching aids that have been made a part of each one of the Standard Works. The other is the imperative need, because of textual and other corrections, for all concerned to re-read and re-mark for reference all of our four volumes of scripture as they are now constituted and in their new format.

For the first time, chapter headings have been included for the Bible and the Pearl of Great Price. These summarize the contents of the chapters and set forth a correct view of the prophetic word. The Stick of Joseph mentioned in Ezekiel 37, for instance, is identified by name as the Book of Mormon.

There are new and greatly improved section and chapter headings for the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon. Numerous historical corrections have been made in the headings in the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. All of these chapter headings are a type of commentary on these holy scriptures.

Running heads at the top of each page in all four of the Standard Works name both the book and the chapters and verses.

There is a six-hundred page Topical Guide and Concordance with references to all of the Standard Works and also a two-hundred page Bible Dictionary prepared from a Latter-day Saint standpoint.

There are 24 pages of colored maps in the Bible, 4 pages of maps in the Doctrine and Covenants, and a 416-page index for the Triple Combination. This index is in effect a concordance.

A new footnoting system has been devised by chapters and verses with the cross references running to all of the Standard Works. It also points the student to the appropriate headings in the Topical Guide, shows the meaning of words in Hebrew and other languages, and records changes made by inspiration and found in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

Excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation too extensive to be included in the footnotes are contained in a 17-page appendix. As every student knows these inspired changes made by the Prophet throw a marvelous flood of light on a host of doctrines and are one of the great evidences of his divine calling.

There are also numerous important textual corrections in the Book of Mormon and Pearl of Great Price. All of these hark back to the original manuscripts or to corrections made by the Prophet. Two new sections and a second official declaration have been added to the Doctrine and Covenants. Clarifying wording and punctuation have been put in the Articles of Faith.

Without question our latter day scriptures are in a more nearly perfect form now than they have ever been since the beginning. These corrections and clarifications will now begin to show up in our lesson material.

We have many things to do to work out our salvation and to succeed in our ministries. Nephi gives us this summary: "Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men."

Then he gives us this promise: "If ye shall press forward, *feasting upon the word of Christ*, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life." (2 Ne. 31:20.)

Feasting upon the word of Christ! What a banquet of choice food is laid before us in Holy Writ! Feasting upon the word of Christ! How we ought to partake of the good word of God, and feast upon the bread from heaven which if men eat they shall never hunger more!

May I suggest for you and your families and all those with whom you labor in the kingdom, the following:

1. Study the scriptures daily. Drink directly from Holy Writ. Learn the word as it is found in the scriptures.
2. Mark a new set of the Standard Works. Learn to use the footnotes and teaching aids in our new editions of the scriptures. Pay particular attention to the inspired changes made by

the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Bible. Be sure any quotations you make include the new textual corrections.

3. Apply what you learn to your life and to your administrative assignments in the Church. Act and live as the scriptures decree.
4. Use the scriptures in all your sermons and teaching. Rely upon the scriptures. Quote the scriptures. Believe the scriptures. Choose your illustrations from them.
5. ● Ponder the revealed word in your hearts. Pray about its deep and hidden meanings. Let the things of eternity be your constant meditation.
6. Expound the scriptures. Explain their meanings. Let others know what you know. Raise your voice in testimony.
7. Get others to go and do likewise with reference to all these things.

Every stake president and every bishop should receive from you the instruction I am now giving. And from them it should go down to the end of the row.

Brethren: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward."
(Ps. 19:7-11.)

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.