

# LECTURES ON FAITH-MY WITNESS

written by Marco A. Martinez, 7/22/2017

## Brief Introduction

I was born and raised in El Paso, Texas, served an LDS mission in Munich, Germany, and thereafter moved to Utah where I have lived ever since, being married now almost twenty-six years. I am an adoptive father of two half brothers, now full grown and am a grandfather to a beautiful little girl who will turn four years old this Fall.

I have no Phd or college degree. I have no certifications or credentials to boast of. Yes, I realize that last sentence ends with a preposition. The extent of my education is limited to a high school diploma, which I received upon graduating high school, and a few semesters of college, which I started the day after graduating high school. After several semesters of history, political science and other classes, I quickly realized that college was a racket and I wanted no part of it any longer. I am fluent, however, in three languages: English, Spanish, and German.

After having served my mission and moving to Utah, I worked as a construction laborer. I eventually "graduated" to becoming a general contractor and incorporating my own construction company where I built many homes across Northern Utah. It wasn't until about the time I turned forty that I began to experience a profound sense of urgency, which I could not explain. But I knew that my life was not in order and, despite being active in church, I was not right with God. I would come to learn that He expected so much more of me and also for me. I began to earnestly search the scriptures in an attempt to fill this void. I did not know that the Lectures on Faith existed until I was in my early forties, but when I discovered them, I also discovered the controversies surrounding them. And so began my journey to study them and to understand them by the Spirit.

I have just recently translated the Lectures on Faith into Spanish and have felt the need to share my witness of them because of the growing number of accusations toward "spiritual fanatics" like me who espouse them. I understand that while the authorship has traditionally been attributed to Joseph Smith, it is Sidney Rigdon who likely wrote much of it. Personally speaking, I am not as concerned about who authored them as I am about its content and the effect it has had on me in my life. But I will address it, because I have grown to love

Sidney for his efforts on the matter. This is not an attempt to rebut scholars and apologetics nor is it an effort to engage in debates, disputations or contentions. I am not doing this just to become relevant as some might suppose. It is simply an essay on what I have found during my own studies concerning some of the history behind the publication of the lectures and also what I have learned by the Spirit especially concerning some of the controversial doctrines contained therein. Furthermore, this will not be a comprehensive thesis and will only cover some of the few things, which I find are relevant and meaningful to me. I hope they will be as meaningful to the reader.

### On Some of the History

Joseph Fielding Smith, who was called to a number of positions, including church historian (originally filled by Oliver Cowdery, then John Whitmer), apostle, church president and prophet, was the author of a number of books such as the five volume Answers to Gospel Questions. He also wrote a series of four volumes for use in church classrooms for the Melchizedek Priesthood in 1947. This series has long since been out of print, but can be found online. It is titled Church History and Modern Revelations. Lesson sixty-nine of this series, page 137, he writes the following:

“There were two schools conducted in Kirtland. One was a school of the Elders where they carried out some of the provisions of this revelation (Sec. 88) in seeking knowledge of countries and kingdoms and languages, all such information as may be gained in the regular daily school. It was in this school where many of the Elders, then residing in Kirtland, hired Dr. Seixas, a learned Hebrew scholar, and under his direction studied the Hebrew language. This school was conducted for several months and the Prophet, and others, became rather proficient in this language, due to the guidance of the Lord as much as that of the Hebrew scholar. This school proved to be of great benefit to these brethren in later years.

The other was the School of the Prophets, and a very good description of this school and its purpose is given in this section of the Doctrine and Covenants, verses 117 to the end of the section. In a letter written by the Prophet Joseph to William W. Phelps in Zion, January 14, 1833, the following appears: You will see that the Lord commanded us in Kirtland, to build a house of God, and established a school for the prophets, this is the word of the Lord to us, and we must, yea, the Lord helping us, we will obey: as on conditions of our obedience he has promised us great things; yea, even a visit from the heavens to honor us with his

own presence. In an epistle written by commandment by Elders Orson Hyde and Hyrum Smith they have this to say to the Saints: We now close our epistle by saying unto you, the Lord has commanded us to purify ourselves, to wash our hands and our feet, that he may testify to his Father and our Father, to his God and to our God, that we are clean from the blood of this generation; and before we could wash our hands, and our feet, we were constrained to write this letter. Therefore, with the feeling of inexpressible anxiety for your welfare, we say again, Repent, repent, or Zion must suffer, for the scourge and judgment must come upon her. (D.H.C. 1:320.) The Prophet further writes: This winter (1832-3) was spent in translating the Scriptures; in the School of the Prophets; and sitting in conferences. I had many glorious seasons of refreshing. (D.H.C. 1:322.) This School of the Prophets and the schools where the ordinary branches were taught continued in Kirtland until the exodus from that place. It was for this school that the lectures on Faith were prepared and which were delivered to the Elders. **The idea has been expressed that Sidney Rigdon wrote these lectures, but they were compiled by a number of the brethren and the Prophet himself had the final revision of them.** They contain a great deal of excellent teaching on the principle of faith.

The School of the Prophets is not something new to this dispensation. In ancient Israel, especially in the days of Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, there was such a school. We read in I Samuel, tenth chapter, that after Samuel had, anointed Saul to be king of Israel he met a company of prophets and prophesied with them. In II Kings, chapter two, where we have the account of the translation of Elijah, we are told that a company of the sons of the prophets accompanied Elisha who was determined to follow Elijah. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood in view afar off, and they two (Elijah and Elisha) stood by Jordan, and when Elisha returned to them after the departure of Elijah, these sons of the prophets discovered that the power of Elijah was upon Elisha.

The object for which this school was organized is plainly stated in the revelation. None could join except he was clean from the blood of this generation. The only way he could be clean was to be obedient to the covenants of the Gospel and labor in behalf of his fellows for the salvation of their souls. Thus the preaching of the Gospel was a requirement made of those who desired to join this school. The School of the Prophets continued in Utah for several years under the administration of President Brigham Young, but after that time it was discontinued."

Although Joseph Fielding Smith does not mention specifics regarding authorship, he attributes the final revision to Joseph Smith himself. He also distinguishes between two schools: The School of the Elders and The School of the Prophets. It is the School of the Prophets, which the Lord commanded be organized as we read in D&C 88, which was to become a house of order and a house of God. It

was for this effort that Joseph Smith was personally engaged in "preparing the lectures on theology for publication in the book of Doctrine and Covenants, which the committee appointed last September were now compiling." (D.H.C. 2:180)

On The School of the Prophets, Zebedee Coltrin, a president of the Quorum of the Seventy 1835-1837, gives the following account in 1883:

"Brother Zebedee Coltrin said: I believe I am the only living man now in the church who was connected with the School of the Prophets when it was organized in 1833, the year before we went up in Zion's Camp.

President Taylor: How many were then connected with the School at that time?

Brother Coltrin: When the Word of Wisdom [D&C 89] was first presented by the Prophet Joseph (as he came out of the translating room) and was read to the School, there were twenty out of the twenty-one who used tobacco and they all immediately threw their tobacco and pipes into the fire.

There were members as follows: Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, William Smith, Frederick G. Williams, Orson Hyde (who had the charge of the school), Zebedee Coltrin, Sylvester Smith, Joseph Smith, Sr., Levi Hancock, Martin Harris, Sidney Rigdon, Newel K. Whitney, Samuel H. Smith, John Murdock, Lyman Johnson and Ezra Thayer.

The salutation as written in the Doctrine and Covenants [D&C 88:136-141] was carried out at that time, and at every meeting, and the washing of feet was attended to, the sacrament was also administered at times when Joseph appointed, after the ancient order; that is, warm bread to break easy was provided and broken into pieces as large as my fist and each person had a glass of wine and sat and ate the bread and drank the wine; and Joseph said that was the way that Jesus and his disciples partook of the bread and wine. And this was the order of the church anciently and until the church went into darkness. Every time we were called together to attend to any business, we came together in the morning about sunrise, fasting and partook of the sacrament each time, and before going to school we washed ourselves and put on clean linen.

At one of these meetings after the organization of the school, (the school being organized\_ on the 23rd of January, 1833, when we were all together, Joseph having given instructions, and while engaged in silent prayer, kneeling, with our hands uplifted each one praying in silence, no one whispered above his breath, a personage walked through the room from east to west, and Joseph asked if we saw him. I saw him and suppose the others did and Joseph answered that is Jesus, the Son of God, our elder brother. Afterward Joseph told us to resume our former position in prayer, which we did. Another person came through; he was surrounded as with a flame of fire. He (Brother Coltrin) experienced a sensation that it might destroy the tabernacle as it was of consuming fire of great

brightness. The Prophet Joseph said this was the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I saw Him.

When asked about the kind of clothing the Father had on, Brother Coltrin said: I did not discover his clothing for he was surrounded as with a flame of fire, which was so brilliant that I could not discover anything else but his person. I saw his hands, his legs, his feet, his eyes, nose, mouth, head and body in the shape and form of a perfect man. He sat in a chair as a man would sit in a chair, but this appearance was so grand and overwhelming that it seemed I should melt down in his presence, and the sensation was so powerful that it thrilled through my whole system and I felt it in the marrow of my bones. **The Prophet Joseph said: Brethren, now you are prepared to be the apostles of Jesus Christ, for you have seen both the Father and the Son and know that they exist and that they are two separate personages.**

This appearance occurred about two or three weeks after the opening of the school. After the Father had passed through, Joseph told us to again take our positions in prayer. We did so, and in a very short time he drew our attention and said to us that Brother Reynolds Cahoon was about to leave us, and told us to look at him. He (Brother Cahoon) was on his knees and his arms were extended, his hands and wrists, head, face and neck down to his shoulders were as a piece of amber, clear and transparent, his blood having apparently left his veins. Upon the attention of the brethren being thus called to Brother Cahoon, the change seemed to pass away and Joseph said that in a few minutes more, Brother Cahoon would have left us, but he came to himself again." (Source: Minutes, Salt Lake City School of the Prophets, October 3, 1883.)

From this account, it is clear that Sidney Rigdon was present and that he participated in fruits for which the labors of preparation were made. Sidney Rigdon's apostleship was legitimized, having been an eye witness of the Godhead. Not only did he, along with the others become an eye witness of both the Father and the Son, he could testify boldly that they are "two separate personages." The year prior, in 1832, both Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were eye witnesses to the world of glory where they conversed with Jesus Christ as recorded in D&C 76:

"11. We, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Sidney Rigdon, being in the Spirit on the sixteenth day of February, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-two

12. By the power of the Spirit our eyes were opened and our understandings were enlightened, so as to see and understand the things of God—

13. Even those things which were from the beginning before the world was, which were ordained of the Father, through his Only Begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning;

14. Of whom we bear record; and the record which we bear is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Son, whom we saw and with whom we conversed in the heavenly vision..."

Joseph and Sydney were shown in vision concerning the mysteries of kingdoms and glories, which comprise the majority of this section concluding with:

"113. This is the end of the vision which we saw, which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit.

114. But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion;

115. Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter;

116. Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him;

117. To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves;

118. That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory."

This vision of glories happened after Joseph and Sidney moved to the John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, on September 12, 1831 to prepare texts of Joseph's translation of the Bible and had begun laboring with the Gospel of John. Upon examining John 5:29, they were shown a multifaceted vision beginning with a vision of the Father and the Son in the highest glory. One witness, Philo Dibble, present in the room recalled that the two men sat motionless **for about an hour**. One would say, "What do I see," and describe it, and the other would say, "I see the same" (Source: Juvenile Instructor 27 [May 15, 1892]:303-304).

Both Joseph and Sidney gazed into heaven for "about an hour." Furthermore, it is apparent that Joseph did not impart all that he saw in vision, for he later said, "I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them." (Source: TPJS, p. 305). He also said, "Could you gaze into heaven **five minutes**, you would know more than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject." (Source: TPJS, p. 324)

If one could know more than all that was ever written on the subject by just gazing into heaven five minutes, what kind of knowledge, then, did Joseph and Sidney possess after gazing into heaven "for about an hour?" Certainly more than has ever been written on the subject by students and scholars. In lesson ninety-five of Joseph Fielding Smith's Church History and Modern Revelations, previously cited, volume three, page 65, he also writes:

"These lectures on Faith which were published in the first edition and all subsequent editions up to the year 1921, were removed from the Doctrine and Covenants when that book was published in the double columns. The question is frequently asked why these lectures were taken out of the book. It was not because these lectures are unsound in principle, for they are just as valuable today as they were when presented before the school of the elders in Kirtland, under the guiding hand of the Prophet Joseph Smith. **They are, in fact, too valuable in the study of the principle of faith to be lost.** They were removed because they were not revelations, and it was felt that they should not be continued in the book with the revelations, but could be published separately..."

Since then, the Lectures on Faith have become lost, in a manner of speaking, except to people like me who have labored to help preserve them and bring them to light for the profit and understanding of those who are humble seekers of Jesus Christ. There are other reasons claimed by the committee in 1921 for removing them, but they are outside the scope of this work and as I am not laboring to make any case against them, I will not spend the time to address them here.

It was in these years that Sidney Rigdon along with others, because of their sacrifices and preparations, became apostles and prophets, qualified to write the things included in the Lectures on Faith as eye witnesses of heavenly things. I believe that Sidney knew exactly what he was talking about when he co-authored the lectures. He and Joseph could explain more than had ever been written on the subject of heaven. Were the lectures revelations? No. Were the lectures inspired and produced because of revelations given to the authors while in the flesh? Yes!

## On Some of the Doctrine

I have observed in many circles the most misunderstood and debated subject found in the Lectures on Faith. Because of this misconception, the lectures have been the source of a lot of controversy. I confess that when I first discovered the lectures about five years ago, it boggled my own mind. It perplexed me and left me utterly bewildered. But I also know that the things of God, though they may be transmitted by men, can only be understood by the power of the Holy Ghost. Perhaps it is no wonder that there never existed official interpretations in the church of these lectures. Neither committees (including correlation committees) nor prophets render the Holy Ghost obsolete, but the Holy Ghost bears witness of all truth.

The only reason to have "official interpretations" of the scriptures is to make them understandable without the Holy Ghost. The things of God, however, can only be understood by the power of the Holy Ghost, so if the interpretations are understandable without the Holy Ghost, then they are not of God and if they are of God, then they do not solve the problem for which they were supposedly produced, which is to make the scriptures understandable by those who don't have the Holy Ghost. Therefore, if one does not have the Holy Ghost, light and truth are not efficacious in one's life. It is imperative to understand the things of God by the power of the Holy Ghost, in spite of the seemingly flawed writings of men. Or as Moroni pleaded:

"17. And if there be faults they be the faults of a man. But behold, we know no fault; nevertheless God knoweth all things; therefore, he that condemneth, let him be aware lest he shall be in danger of hell fire."

But rather than cast aside the lectures because of my own ignorance and failing, I sought diligently to understand them and I prayed for understanding. Joseph Smith taught that the Holy Ghost "has no other effect than pure intelligence. It is more powerful in expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge, of a man who is of the literal seed of Abraham, than one that is a Gentile...for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene, and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence." (Source: TPJS, p. 149.)

The Lord has been merciful to me in enlightening my mind and storing my intellect with knowledge. I do not know all things, but I do know that what has been written concerning the Godhead in the fifth lecture are true and correct. The greatest misunderstanding, which I have observed is that God is a spirit. I have read articles and explanations attempting to expound on this error. It has been compared and contrasted with a passage found in D&C, which states:

"D&C 130:22 The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us."

What this verse does not say is that the Father's body is also that of glory and power. As such, it does not render the verse false or inaccurate. It only gives us so much information. Here is the verse in question from The Lectures on Faith:

"LoF 5:2 There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things—by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible: whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space..."

Because it was written this way, many have supposed that the authors have declared that there are only two personages in the Godhead. But that is not what this passage states. What it does state is that there are two (of the three) personages in the Godhead "**by whom all things were created and made.**" Because this part of verse two is referring two personages in one context, it does not render the verse false. It only gives us so much information. Indeed it was the Father and the Son who created man "in our image, after our likeness." (Genesis 1:26).

Continuing:

"LoF 5:2...They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power: possessing all perfection and fulness..."

This part of verse two does not state that the Father is a spirit as I have read many people argue. What it does state is that the Father is a "personage" of:

1. Spirit
2. Glory
3. Power

It does not say that the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's, but that does not render it false or inaccurate. It only gives us so much information. But let us consider another passage in the scriptures:

"D&C 93:33 For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy."

This verse states that we are spirit. But how can that be if we have physical bodies here on earth? Does it mean that the verse is wrong? No. it only gives us so much information. If we are spirit, then our physical bodies are elements, being made from the elements (earth). It has been said that we are not physical beings trying to experience spiritual things, but rather we are spiritual beings trying to experience physical things. And so it is. But we have not yet overcome all enemies including death as the scriptures say. But the "Father" has a fulness of

joy because He has overcome all things including death. As such, He is a "personage" of spirit and element inseparably connected who is also clothed in glory and power, possessing all perfections and fulness. Nowhere in these lectures does it state or imply that God is a spirit nor does D&C 93:33 imply that man is a spirit.

Continuing:

"LoF 5:2...The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made, or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man, or, rather, man was formed after his likeness, and in his image..."

During His ministry on earth, Jesus was mortal, not yet possessing all the attributes of the Father, although He was in the Father and the Father in Him. His tabernacle was that of flesh and blood unlike the Father who possessed a body of flesh and bones. This distinction is important. Also, before He was born, Jesus was in the bosom of the Father as Enoch who was also in the bosom of the Father:

"Moses 7:23 And after that Zion was taken up into heaven, Enoch beheld, and lo, all the nations of the earth were before him;

24 And there came generation upon generation; and Enoch was high and lifted up, even in the bosom of the Father, and of the Son of Man; and behold, the power of Satan was upon all the face of the earth..."

After Jesus Christ was resurrected, He attained all the same perfections and attributes as His Father. Essentially, Jesus became a Father who could receive a fullness of joy. And so we read when He visited the land Bountiful:

"3 Nephi 17:18 And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome.

19 And it came to pass that Jesus spake unto them, and bade them arise.

20 And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

21 And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them."

Abinadi explained how Jesus Christ is both the Father and the Son, which he declared to King Noah and his priests:

“Mosiah 15:1 And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

2. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son-

3. The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son-

4. And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.

5. And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged and cast out, and disowned by his people.”

Jesus Christ personally explained the following to the brother of Jared, indicating that He (Jesus) is a Father:

“Ether 3:14 Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; **and they shall become my sons and my daughters.**”

Jesus Christ also said as much to the saints at Fayette, New York in 1831:

“D&C 39:4 But to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons; and even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons.”

The people at Bountiful received Jesus just as the brother of Jared did. Abinadi succinctly explained what the fifth lecture on faith systematically expounds. The fifth lecture continues to state that the Holy Ghost is the mind of God. It does not attribute the term personage to the Holy Ghost, but like the scriptures I have quoted above, each of which provides some information, though not complete nor

inaccurate either, it does not mean that the Holy Ghost is not a personage. Thus, it does not render the lecture false or inaccurate. It only gives us so much information. Likewise does Abinadi only expound on two personages of the Godhead. It is no more inaccurate to state that there are two personages in the Godhead as it is to state that all twelve months of the year have twenty-eight days in them. So is it the failing of the readers who struggle to understand what the authors of the Lectures on Faith endeavored to teach to enlighten the saints' minds or is the failing of the authors to explain more perfectly the things they understood because of their miraculous experiences? Were they mighty in writing like unto Nephi or are we weak unto understanding as Laman and Lemuel? My witness to the world is that Nephi obtained further light and knowledge because he inquired of the Lord and Laman and Lemuel did not. Rather than inquire of the Lord, they inquired of Nephi and although Nephi answered their inquiries, the truth was not efficacious in their lives because they did not obtain it by the Holy Ghost. Nephi obtained the Holy Ghost and was led all his life by the Holy Ghost because he made the necessary sacrifices. Not only did he declare to his father that he would go and do the things the Lord commanded because he knew that the Lord would first prepare the way (1 Nephi 3:7), but he proved it time and time again. And it is sacrifice, which yields fruit.

The second controversial subject I have observed discussed is the sacrifice required to obtain such blessings as outlined in the sixth lecture. Just recently, someone stated having personally observed others use the teaching of the principle of sacrifice as a "pretext and justification for their spiritually fanatical sacrifices" and this person considers lectures six and seven to be "pure spiritual extremism."

I suppose I cannot blame people for thinking this. After all, who would be willing to sacrifice his own son to the Lord on an altar even after being rescued himself by God from the altar of a heathen god? What kind of rational being would submit to such a thing? But then again, Jesus Christ was a radical among a people of tradition, commanding they dropped what they were doing in order to follow Him. He frowned upon one who desired first to bury his father. He considered another unworthy who wanted to say good-bye to those back home first. To another,

Jesus required that he sell all his possessions. To a multitude that followed Him, He required first that each of them hate their mother, father, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even himself or they could not be His disciples. Such spiritual extremism demands that you believe or be damned. To quote the lecture:

“LoF 6:5 For a man to lay down his all, his character and reputation, his honor and applause, his good name among men, his houses, his lands, his brothers and sisters, his wife and children, and even his own life also, counting all things but filth and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, requires more than mere belief, or supposition that he is doing the will of God, but actual knowledge: realizing, that when these sufferings are ended he will enter into eternal rest; and be a partaker of the glory of God.”

Man was given dominion over the earth to help him in his journey to know good from evil, joy from sorrow, and to gain experience that he might obtain a fulness of joy with God as a redeemed soul. Instead, man takes of the earth to enrich himself and to exalt himself, exacting a price from his neighbor, forgetting that all things were given to him to be used not by extortion or excess (D&C 59:15-21). And so he creates inequality and poverty on the Earth and persecutes the poor for their poverty.

D&C 101:35 And all they who suffer persecution for my name, and endure in faith, though they are called to lay down their lives for my sake yet shall they partake of all this glory.

36 Wherefore, fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full.

37 Therefore, care not for the body, neither the life of the body; but care for the soul, and for the life of the soul.

38 And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life.

Such sacrifices are what is required in order that equality is created. This is how Zion becomes redeemed. When the saints make themselves equal in temporal

things, then will the Lord make them equal in heavenly things (D&C 78:5-6). This must happen from the least to the greatest until there is not one least or one great. King Benjamin understood this. Until the saints understand and do this, from the least to the greatest, they will remain unredeemed. But like the old tree in the allegory found in Jacob chapter five, the branches remain lofty and barren, taking the strength of the roots unto themselves, being good for nothing but to be burned because they did nothing more than cumber the vineyard. The Lord desires fruit, but He desires good fruit. So He labored tirelessly so that the tree might yield much good fruit.

“Jacob 5:72 And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their might; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them; and they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things.

73 And there began to be the natural fruit again in the vineyard; and the natural branches began to grow and thrive exceedingly; and the wild branches began to be plucked off and to be cast away; and they did keep the root and the top thereof **equal**, according to the strength thereof.

74 And thus they labored, with all diligence, according to the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard, even until the bad had been cast away out of the vineyard, and the Lord had preserved unto himself that the trees had become again the natural fruit; and they became like unto **one body**; and the **fruits were equal**; and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit, which was most precious unto him from the beginning.

75 And it came to pass that when the Lord of the vineyard saw that his **fruit was good**, and that his vineyard was **no more corrupt**, he called up his servants, and said unto them: Behold, for this last time have we nourished my vineyard; and thou beholdest that I have done according to my will; and I have preserved the natural fruit, that it is **good**, even like as it was in the beginning. And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, that my vineyard is **no more corrupted**, and the bad is cast away, behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard.”

There were no more lofty, barren branches. The fruits were good because they were equal. And because they were equal, they were no more corrupt. But the Lord did not force the fruit to be good and to be equal. He labored throughout the allegory to give the branches the opportunity to be equal and fruitful and did not joy in them when they had exalted themselves. In the allegory, we read:

"Jacob 5:60 And because that I have preserved the natural branches and the roots thereof, and that I have grafted in the natural branches again into their mother tree, and have preserved the roots of their mother tree, that, **perhaps**, the trees of my vineyard may bring forth again good fruit; and that I may have joy again in the fruit of my vineyard, and, perhaps, that I may rejoice exceedingly that I have preserved the roots and the branches of the first fruit..."

Throughout the allegory, the Lord uses the word "perhaps."

"...that, **perhaps**, the trees of my vineyard may bring forth again good fruit; and that I may have joy again in the fruit of my vineyard, and, perhaps, that I may rejoice exceedingly..."

"...that, **perhaps**, I may preserve unto myself the roots thereof for mine own purpose..."

"...that, **perhaps**, the roots thereof may take strength because of their goodness..."

"...I will prune it, and dig about it, and nourish it, that **perhaps** it may shoot forth young and tender branches, and it perish not..."

"...that **perhaps** it may bring forth good fruit..."

"...It grieveth me that I should lose this tree; wherefore, that **perhaps** I might preserve the roots thereof that they perish not..."

“...that when they shall be sufficiently strong **perhaps** they may bring forth good fruit unto me, and I may yet have glory in the fruit of my vineyard...”

As we read the allegory to the conclusion, eventually some branches begin to produce fruit equally. They are those who make the necessary sacrifices, who rather than take strength unto themselves, exalting themselves, they give freely to the poor until there are no more poor and all have made themselves equal in temporal things. It is then that the Lord of the vineyard rejoices and makes them equal in heavenly things. The rest are cast away into the fire, being barren, lofty, and unprofitable to Him, though profitable to themselves they may have been.

“LoF 6:7 Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things: it was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things, that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has, for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice, because he seeks to do his will, he does know most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not nor will not seek his face in vain. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on eternal life.”

Perhaps such are spiritual fanatics indeed. In a devotional at Brigham Young University, Professor Emeritus, Truman G. Madsen said:

“Said the Prophet Joseph Smith after one of the most revelatory meetings in his life, “There was nothing made known to these men [the Twelve] but what will be made known to all the Saints of the last days, so soon as they are prepared to receive” (TPJS, p. 237). This is the religion of every man. Not “Take my word for my experience,” but “Duplicate it in your own life.” How far do I go with this? All

the way.

Let me then come to a close. I have hiked, with my wife and at night, all the way from the base of what is known as Mt. Sinai to the top. (Incidentally, with a very sore toe. Climbing hurts, and the more you climb, sometimes the more it hurts.) We went up to where the air is thinner and the veil thinner. There isn't time to describe the feeling, but we were able to recollect that Moses, there, had face-to-face communion with God. He came back down and said to the children of Israel, in the name of the God whose name he knew, "Now, you are invited to go back up with me."

And they said, "Thank you. No. That's for prophets. That's for people who are a bit fanatical. We will stay here and you go up, Moses."

In his absence they built an idol. The power of religious impulses goes in many directions. They built an idol—a thing—and were denied the privileges of Moses (D&C 84:23–25). That is what our generation is now doing again. We are staying down below and then claiming superiority for our judgment in doing so." (Source: Truman G. Madsen, On How We Know, BYU Devotional Address, Sept. 20, 1994)

"LoF 6:8 It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him."

The lofty barren branches were removed and taken away and cast into the fire. The Lord remembers them no more. Unlike the rich man in one of Jesus Christ's parables, it was the beggar who was acknowledged by name. It was Lazarus who was comforted and taken to Abraham's bosom (also translated Abraham's side or arms) just like Jesus Christ and Enoch were both in the Father's bosom as previously mentioned above. The nameless rich man, instead, was cast into the fire, not having learned to be kind, charitable, and godly, but having taken strength unto himself, being exalted among his neighbors.

## Conclusion

I have spent the last five years or so studying and applying the Lectures on Faith in my own life and I have concluded based on personal experience that they summarize the message of the Book of Mormon as declared by the Lord and recorded by the prophet Moroni in the book of Ether, which chronicles the brother of Jared's spiritual extremism and fanatical sacrifices:

“Ether 4:13 Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of **unbelief**.

14 Come unto me, O ye house of Israel, and it shall be made manifest unto you how great things the Father hath laid up for you, from the foundation of the world; and it hath not come unto you, because of **unbelief**.

15 Behold, **when ye shall rend that veil of unbelief** which doth cause you to remain in your awful state of wickedness, and hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, then shall the great and marvelous things which have been hid up from the foundation of the world from you—yea, when ye shall call upon the Father in my name, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, then shall ye know that the Father hath remembered the covenant which he made unto your fathers, O house of Israel.”

The Lord addresses everyone. By addressing the Gentiles and also the House of Israel, He exempts nobody. Until one parts the veil as Enoch, Moses, the brother of Jared, and others, one is kept from “remembering” or “knowing” the covenant because of unbelief. This is precisely what The Lectures on Faith address in defining the “moving cause of all action.” But it is this unbelief, which keeps one:

1. In an awful state of wickedness
2. Hardness of heart
3. Blindness of mind

But how can anyone who believes the Book of Mormon not believe what it says to do? It was, after all, written by spiritual extremists. Or in other words:

“LoF 2:55 Let us here observe, that after any portion of the human family are made acquainted with the important fact that there is a God who has created and does uphold all things, the extent of their knowledge, respecting his character and glory, will depend upon their diligence and faithfulness in seeking after him, until like Enoch the brother of Jared, and Moses, they shall obtain faith in God, and power with him to behold him face to face.”

And its accompanying question in the same lecture:

“Question 146: How do men obtain a knowledge of the glory of God, his perfections and attributes?”

By devoting themselves to his service, through prayer and supplication incessantly, strengthening their faith in him, until like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, they obtain a manifestation of God to themselves.”

Devoting ourselves to the Lord's service through prayer and supplication **incessantly** sounds like spiritual extremism. The brother of Jared did precisely this and was exceedingly blessed:

“Ether 1:43 And there will I bless thee and thy seed, and raise up unto me of thy seed, and of the seed of thy brother, and they who shall go with thee, a great nation. And there shall be none greater than the nation which I will raise up unto me of thy seed, upon all the face of the earth. **And thus I will do unto thee because this long time ye have cried unto me.**

And:

“Ether 3:9 And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?

10 And he answered: Nay; Lord, show thyself unto me.

11 And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak?

12 And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie.

13 And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.

14 Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters...

18 And he ministered unto him even as he ministered unto the Nephites; and all this, that this man might know that he was God, because of the many great works which the Lord had showed unto him.

19 And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting."

"LoF 7:20...for the knowledge which tends to life disappears with faith, but returns when faith returns; for when faith comes, it brings its train of attendants with it—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, gifts, wisdom, knowledge, miracles, healings, tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc. All these appear when faith appears on the earth, and disappear when it disappears from the earth. For these are the effects of faith and always have, and always will attend it. For where faith is, there will the knowledge of God be also, with all things which pertain thereto—revelations, visions, and dreams, as well as every other necessary thing in order that the possessors of faith may be perfected and obtain salvation; for God must change, otherwise faith will prevail with him. And he who possesses it will, through it, obtain all necessary knowledge and wisdom until he shall know God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he has sent: whom to know is eternal life: Amen.

