A Study of the Definition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and its Theological Implications in Latter-Day Saint Literature

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A STUDY OF THE DEFINITION OF THE GOSPEL
OF JESUS CHRIST AND ITS THEOLOGICAL
IMPLICATIONS IN LATTER-DAY SAINT LITERATURE

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Graduate Studies in Religious Instruction
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
David Earl Perry
May 1969
"For my soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men."\(^1\)

The road to knowledge passes through many gates and arches entitled "definition." It seems entirely fitting to approach the subject of the gospel of Jesus Christ through one such gate. As one studies the gospel, he can better understand its internal parts after the whole has been measured, classified, and defined. A man cannot discuss something adequately until he identifies what is being discussed. Consequently, the express purpose of this study is to bring into sharp focus the definition of the gospel as it has been defined in Latter-day Saint literature.

The gospel is at times considered by some to be a complex structure, difficult to understand. The theme-quotations above indicates a different view, showing that the Lord's ways are ways of simplicity. A major goal of this thesis is therefore to examine definitions of the gospel to see if its nature is simple or complex. It was described by one man in the following terms:

\[\ldots\] There is no subject ever addressed to the understanding of man, that needs to be so plain and easy of comprehension as the gospel, if we may credit the persons who have promulgated it. They profess to have had a commission to proclaim it to every creature in all the world.\textemdash\textemdash In taking so wide a range, here would be many persons of very weak capacities, who are not able to understand but very little, and that little must be exceedingly plain, or else they would not

\(^1\)Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1956), 2 Nephi 31:3, hereafter cited as B. of M.
be able to understand it.¹

Three major hazards confronted the author in pursuing this work. The first was that the large amount of literature in addition to the holy scriptures made it necessary to analyze primarily those sources which have had a significant influence upon the beliefs of the members of the Church. These have been selected on the basis of authoritative-... and wide circulation, as explained below in chapter one.

The second problem was to know the reason behind an author's definition—why it was either limited or extensive, precisely technical or general. Logically, the author's normal style and the needs of the audience as the author perceived them had some effect upon the definition. As a result, before passing judgment on a definition which did not include all features of a previous one, it was important to consider the setting in which it was given.

The third difficulty was to determine the meaning which an author attached to the words of his definition. Two possibilities existed to deal with this problem: first, if the author stated clearly the meaning he was attaching to his terms, showing how he differed from the normal meaning used by the group addressed, then the difficulty diminished; secondly, if he did not explain his meaning, it had to be determined whether or not this implied an acceptance of the normal meaning recognized by the group. For most of the writers observed in this study, such acceptance was strongly inferred from (1) their membership in good standing in the Church (which implied their acceptance of the official publications and doctrines of the Church), (2) their high offices as

¹Oliver Cowdery, "The Gospel, No. IV," Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate, I (January, 1835), 54, hereafter cited as M&A.
leaders in the Church (which implied reliability, authoritativeness, and consistency in their statements), and (3) their awareness of the normal meanings which the groups addressed would attach to the words in their definitions. Bearing in mind these three difficulties and the proposed solutions, it was not impossible to confront the subject squarely and objectively.

The author recognizes the debt of gratitude which he owes the writers of prior studies, for they have greatly motivated and aided this work. Their pioneering efforts made this labor easier. Sincere thanks are expressed for the helpful guidance, long hours of reading and discussing, and untiring patience of the thesis committee members. In addition, the author wishes to recognize the services of Dr. LaMar C. Berrett and Dr. Richard L. Anderson, who served temporarily on the committee.

Particular gratitude is owed to the writer's parents for instilling within him an early desire to study the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to Francis, his encouraging and patient wife, without whose magnanimous support this project would not have been possible nor completed. Finally, profound gratitude is also expressed to the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and to the Father of us all, for the atonement and the gospel. As Bruce R. McConkie has expressed it, the gospel is far more than a mere object of scholastic study. It contains the power necessary to gain exaltation and joy in the presence of God.¹

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Presidents of the Church
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CHAPTER ONE

A METHOD OF DEFINING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST
AS TAUGHT BY LATTER-DAY SAINTS

Thousands of Latter-day Saint missionaries daily proclaim that the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in this modern age of the world. What is this gospel? Very generally one may reply that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the body of truths, doctrines, and ordinances taught and practiced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Because of the significance of these doctrines, the work of defining the gospel merits more attention than has been given to it in the past by Latter-day Saint scholars. The author has observed varying opinions among some members of the Church\(^1\) on the subject of an accurate definition of the gospel. Some define the gospel as all truth, whereas others claim it is only the first principles and ordinances through which one becomes a member of the Church. Recognizing this problem, the author undertook the task of gathering authoritative statements on the subject in the hope of producing some valid conclusions. The hope is that the results will establish whether one definition is universally acceptable or whether several definitions obtain—either harmoniously or conflictingly.

**Four Basic Questions**

The purpose of this study is to analyze significant Latter-day Saint sources in order to discover and compare the definitions of the

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\(^1\)See definition of terms, p. 5.
gospel contained therein, and to draw conclusions concerning the agreement or disagreement of these statements. The following hypotheses, in the form of questions, will be used to come to grips with the definitions in the sources:

1. What is the gospel of Jesus Christ as defined in Latter-day Saint literature?
2. Is there agreement among ancient scriptures, modern scriptures,¹ and modern prophets² of the Church on the issue of the definition of the gospel?
3. What, if any, have been the important historical developments in the definitions of the gospel, as found in Latter-day Saint literature?
4. What are some possible reasons for any differing definitions?

These questions will be applied to the definitions in the large body of Latter-day Saint literature. The writer is respectfully aware of the fact that many studies of the gospel have been made. Few writers, however, have approached the specific problem at hand, namely, defining the gospel in the context of the vast writings of the Church members. In reviewing the prior studies in this field, the author found that only three authors had produced much literature on the topic. Dr. Richard L. Anderson⁳ did the only extensive study, analyzing the New Testament definition of the gospel, including a brief correlation with the Book of Mormon definition. Dr. Hyrum L. Andrus presented as part of one of his

¹See definition of terms, p. 6.
²Definition of terms, pp. 5-6.
books¹ a short discussion of some scriptural sources of gospel definitions. In a larger work² he developed one chapter on the basic plan of the gospel in the Pearl of Great Price, including some mention of the definition of the gospel in that scripture. In a second chapter he discussed the history of the gospel, relating it somewhat to definitions. A third writer, Professor Glenn L. Pearson,³ devoted one chapter of a book to an analysis of the definition of the gospel in the Book of Mormon, taking it as a model for the Latter-day Saint definition.

Having surveyed the scholarly literature on the subject, the present writer has found that no attempt has been made to examine all significant Latter-day Saint sources to compare their definitions of the gospel. Consequently, this thesis seeks to extend the examination into these sources, that the subject may be covered more thoroughly than has been done before.

**Plan of Approach**

**Sources of data**

The principal sources of information for this study will be the four standard works of the Church (the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price), the more significant and influential periodicals published by the Church and its members, and selected books containing the words of modern prophets and Church leaders. The words of the authorized leaders of the Church are the most binding and

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authoritative for the Church, but commentaries by reputable Latter-day Saint scholars and writers will also be used for comparison and analysis. The objective will be to employ those published sources which have had a large impact upon the beliefs of the Church.

Method of analysis

Successive chapters will present definitions from modern scriptures and the various periods in the history of the Church. The study will contain definitions from those persons who have made significant contributions to the definition of the gospel, exhibiting the statements primarily in the chronological order in which Joseph Smith and his successors produced them.

Inasmuch as the Bible is an essential part of Latter-day Saint literature, it also comes within the scope of this study. A very controversial point in this subject is whether or not the Biblical definition of the gospel agrees with Latter-day Saint teachings. For this reason the Bible will be treated separately as the final source for the study, comparing its definitions with those from the other sources.

The major criterion for selecting definitions in the Book of Mormon and modern writings will be the presence of the words "the gospel is . . . ," or some similar words to that effect. However, definitions containing the same essential doctrines, but missing this formula or pattern, will be referred to also for comparison purposes. The standard of selection will of necessity be different for definitions from the Bible, as such phrases are rare therein. Consequently, functional and partial definitions therein will have to suffice.

The findings with regard to the four hypothesis questions above will be discussed in each chapter and then summarized at the end of the
thesis, with the writer determining if a synthesis of all definitions would be warranted.

**Delimitations**

This study will not discuss extensively the characteristics of the various doctrines within the gospel, nor the validity of these doctrines and their sources. It is not to be a linguistic study of the word "gospel" beyond a brief examination of its etymology. It will not use any sources in languages other than English.

Further, this is not to be an analysis of diaries, journals, or unpublished words of the General Authorities, but only of those sources which, through their wide circulation and authoritativeness, have had an important influence in molding the beliefs of Church members.

**Definition of terms**

Hopefully the reader will benefit from the following explanation of some terms used in the thesis. It is particularly important to observe any special meanings which Latter-day Saints attach to certain words.

The first term is "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." For brevity it will hereafter be referred to as "the Church." Members of this Church will be referred to as "the Latter-day Saints," or "the Mormons." They are commonly called "Mormons" because of their belief in the Book of Mormon.¹

The second term is "prophet." In referring to a prophet as a Church leader, the Church teaches that he is a man appointed by direct revelation from God, through his Son, Jesus Christ.² It proclaims that

¹See pp. 22-24.

²For a more general application of "prophet" see Rev. 19:10.
Joseph Smith and his successors as President of the Church are prophets just as literally as were Moses or Elijah. Those in the central administrative offices of the Church are called General Authorities. Of these men, the following are endowed with a special prophetic calling: the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve Apostles, and the Patriarch to the Church. J. Reuben Clark, Jr., has said:

They are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators, which gives them a special spiritual endowment in connection with their teaching of the people. They have the right, the power, and authority to declare the mind and will of God to his people, subject to the over-all power and authority of the President of the Church. . . . the President of the Church has a further and special spiritual endowment in this respect, for he is the Prophet, Seer, and Revelator for the whole Church."

The Church teaches, consequently, that the utterances of modern prophets are authoritative and significant for the entire Church, even though they are not always canonized as scripture. The General Authorities are commonly referred to as "the Brethren."

The third term is "modern scriptures." These are the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The Church holds these to be inspired writings, equal in authority with the Bible.

The next word is "truth." Truth is defined as "knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; and what-


2Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1956), 68:2-4, hereafter cited as D&C. This gives a more general application of the term "scripture" than is commonly used in the Christian world today. The passage refers particularly to certain missionaries, but the doctrine applies even more undoubtedly, so the Brethren teach, to the President of the Church and the General Authorities.
soever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning.\textsuperscript{1} The Church asserts that truth may be known, and that it is absolute and unchanging in its sphere of action.\textsuperscript{2} It teaches that "truth abideth and hath no end."\textsuperscript{3} Consequently, truth, the word of God revealed through his prophets in ancient and modern times, is eternal, unchanging, and applicable to all men. This explanation is given here to aid in understanding some definitions quoted below, particularly those which assert that the gospel embraces all truth. It is obvious that man does not now possess all truth. He must progress from one level of truth to another until he gains perfection and all truth, according to the teachings of the Church.\textsuperscript{4} It is likewise apparent that, in the spiritual use of the term "truth," not all truths of science, art, and philosophy are equally significant with respect to gaining salvation. Bruce R. McConkie has stated that these types of knowledge "have no direct and immediate bearing on the attainment of salvation." He stated further that:

Of themselves they do not prepare a man for or lead him to a celestial inheritance, but they may school and train him in such a way that he will be more susceptible to the reception of saving truth or more capable to understand it.

But it is the knowledge of God and his laws that leads to high reward in the hereafter.

The final word to be defined is "gospel." Its etymology is of interest here, for the remainder of the thesis will be devoted to an extended analysis of its doctrinal definition in Latter-day Saint literature. The recognized pre-eminent authority on matters of English etymol-

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{D&C} 93:24-25. \textsuperscript{2}\textit{D&C} 93:28, 30. \textsuperscript{3}\textit{D&C} 88:66. \textsuperscript{4}\textit{D&C} 88:78.

\textsuperscript{5}Bruce R. McConkie, \textit{Mormon Doctrine} (2nd ed.; Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1966), 426.
ogy is the Oxford English Dictionary. It notes that "gospel" descended from the Greek evangelion (good tidings) to the Latin transliteration evangelium, which was explained in the more current terms bonus nuntius or bona adnuntiatio. The Old English translators rendered this into the phrase god spel, meaning literally "good tidings" (news, discourse, speech, or tale). As the only difference between the words god (good) and god (Deity) was the longer sound of the "o" in the former, scholars suppose that very early the written form was misinterpreted to mean the tidings or story of Deity. (This is especially evident in the Old Saxon godspell and the Old High German gotspell, which were derived from English as the British proselyting efforts spread Christianity to neighboring peoples.) Such a misinterpretation was natural, for the phrase was used specifically as the name of a sacred book or the message therein. The phrase became a compound, god-spel, and through the regular operation of phonetic change became "gospel." Today the primary meaning of the word is "'the glad tidings (of the kingdom of God)' announced to the world by Jesus Christ, hence the body of religious doctrine taught by Christ and His apostles; the Christian revelation, religion, or dispensation."¹

With these terms defined it is now possible and essential to investigate the doctrinal aspects of the gospel, for as Joseph Smith once remarked, "it was one thing to proclaim good tidings, and another to tell what these tidings were."²

²Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. by B. H. Roberts (2nd ed. rev., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1964-66), II, 364, commonly known as and hereafter cited as DHC. Although not canonized, it is very authoritative in doctrinal matters.
A General Introduction to the Gospel

The fullness of the gospel

A major difficulty in studying the structure of the gospel is the problem of knowing what doctrines are included therein. The question is frequently raised, what is a fullness of the gospel? Although the Bible mentions most of the doctrines of the gospel, its present form lacks clarity on many individual principles and a visible continuity for the gospel plan as a whole, according to Latter-day Saint teaching.

Ten months after the Church had been organized, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that the Church possessed the "fullness" of the gospel, referring to the "principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel." This and other passages allude particularly to the gospel contained in the Book of Mormon. Latter-day Saints believe that it surpasses the Bible and all other literature in presenting the gospel in plainness and fullness, thereby bringing men closer to God. Latter-day Saints believe, however, that further doctrines have been revealed since the Book of Mormon was published, and that these doctrines are integrated extensions of the gospel plan of salvation. Careful analysis is necessary in order to properly understand this seeming contradiction. Two definitions of "fullness" are evident as one studies the scriptures and the writings of Latter-day Saint leaders. The first is an objective evaluation of those doctrines explicitly taught in the scriptures, but particularly in detail in the Book of Mormon. The second definition includes the same

1D&C 42:12; also see 20:8-9; 27:5-6.
concepts as the first, but goes beyond it to those doctrines which lead
man finally to the ultimate goals of the gospel.

In the first definition, the "fullness of the gospel" as found in
the Book of Mormon consists of a series of interrelated principles,\textsuperscript{1}
doctrines, and ordinances which lead to salvation in the presence of God.
Chapter two will analyze these principles in detail, but here it is suf-
ficient to outline the plan briefly. The first part is Christ's earthly
mission and atonement, whereby He atoned for the fall of Adam and also
for the sins of men.\textsuperscript{2} This means that the resurrection overcomes death,
and the eternal judgment rewards men with salvation in accordance with
their adherence to their role in the gospel, or damnation if they failed
to choose righteousness. This role of man's is one of enduring faith in
Jesus Christ, repentance of sins, baptism in water, and the reception of
the gift of the Holy Ghost with its accompanying baptism by fire.\textsuperscript{3}
Beyond that, the Book of Mormon teaches that men must become sanctified
through the influence of the Holy Ghost, communicate with God, and
eventually receive all truth.\textsuperscript{4} The goal of the gospel is salvation in
the presence of God, as provided through the goodness and generosity of
the Father and the Son.\textsuperscript{5} All other teachings of the Book of Mormon
function in one way or another as supports or justifications for this
basic plan of the gospel.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}B. of M., 3 Nephi 11:31-35; 27:13-21; Ether 4:18-19.
\item \textsuperscript{2}B. of M., 2 Nephi 2:26; 9:1-25.
\item \textsuperscript{3}B. of M., 2 Nephi 31:11-17, 21; 3 Nephi 9:20-22; 27:16.
\item \textsuperscript{4}B. of M., Moroni 10:4-5. \hfill \textsuperscript{5}B. of M., Moroni 8:24-26.
\item \textsuperscript{6}DH\textsubscript{C}, III, 301; B. of M., 1 Nephi 6:3-6.
\end{itemize}
The same essential program, or "fullness of the gospel," is evident in the New Testament, as discussed in chapter six below, but the doctrines are neither as clear nor as systematically laid out as they are in the Book of Mormon.

The Doctrine and Covenants likewise contains this same gospel, but it is unique among Latter-day Saint scriptures in that it specifically places many more doctrines and ordinances in the classification of parts of the gospel. For instance, Section Seventy-Six treats the doctrine of exaltation and the degrees of glory, which are not mentioned in the Book of Mormon.¹ On the other hand, it does not treat the fundamental principles as much in detail as does the Nephite record.

The introduction of two quotations from the Book of Mormon further complicates the problem by bringing in the second definition of "fullness." It treats the word "fullness" in terms of relativity and gradations. The first quotation of the two follows Nephi's explication of the gospel, which he also called "the doctrine of Christ." He stated that "this is the doctrine of Christ, and there will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh."²

The first issue, then, is how much more of the gospel did Christ plan to reveal after Nephi's time? Does this passage imply that the latter part of the Book of Mormon contains more of the gospel fullness than does the former part? That the Nephites had the gospel is discernible from a careful study of the book, so this passage does not mean, as some might

¹See D&C 76:14, 40-44, 50-53, and the entire section, for it deals with the various degrees of glory. See also D&C 128:17-19; 131:1-4; 132:1-6.

infer, that the Nephites had only the law of Moses and would later receive the law of the gospel. Nephi, in this quotation, was evidently referring to the fulfillment of the law of Moses, which Christ announced at his appearance to the Nephites and Lamanites. Perhaps some of the additional doctrines which he had in mind were the "higher ordinances" of the gospel, including the vicarious work for the dead which Latter-day Saints perform in their temples.

A further explanation is that Christ revealed many doctrines at his coming to the Nephites, namely, the higher laws of the gospel which had been taken away and replaced by the lesser Mosaic law. These further doctrines were apparently not had by the early Nephites. The important fact to remember, however, is that the Nephites very early had the fullness of the saving powers and ordinances of the gospel, even if more doctrines were added later. When Christ came He had the Nephites undergo baptism again, apparently indicating that He was giving new meaning to the rites of the gospel already practiced by the Nephites, as he incorporated them with the further doctrines revealed at the beginning of that new gospel dispensation. The lesser law of Moses then disappeared before the higher law, the full plan of the everlasting gospel.

The second quotation contains a promise recorded by Nephi, wherein the Lord spoke of the Gentiles in the last days: "I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them, in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb."¹ The question is, what does "much" mean in comparison with "fullness"? Why did the Lord tell Nephi that the Book

¹B. of M., 1 Nephi 13:34.
of Mormon would bring forth "much" of his gospel? Does this refer to a restoration of plainness in those doctrines which are already in the Bible, or does the Book of Mormon restore much more of the gospel doctrines than are in the Bible? The study of gospel definitions must take this problem into account. This whole issue is important here, for later definitions, which include "all truth" in the gospel, run up against it.

The Lord qualified this second statement by saying that the gospel which He would bring forth would be "plain and precious." This phrase is the key to the problem. Although the world possesses the Bible, which contains most of the doctrines of the gospel, these doctrines are of no value if they are not plain to the understanding, and if the power of God is not manifest to man in connection therewith. The Book of Mormon does not claim to contain all truth, but it does assert that what it offers is true and plain to comprehend. It does bring forth some doctrines not in the Bible, but it particularly brings forth its teachings in a "much" plainer manner.

Knowing, therefore, that "much" and "more" of the gospel were to be revealed later, does this total up to equal a "fullness" in the ultimate sense of the word? Elder Orson F. Whitney noted that the term "fullness" should not be taken in such an absolute manner:

All fullness is relative, as pertaining to the revealed word of God. There can be no absolute fullness with man until everything is made known to him. The fullness of the Gospel, as delivered

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1 D&C 45:28-29, also B. of M., 1 Nephi 10:14.

2 For examples see B. of M., 2 Nephi 31:1-9; Jacob chaps. 5-6; Alm. chaps. 13, 32, 34, 40-42; Helaman chap. 14; Ether chaps. 3, 12; Moroni chaps. 8, 10.
to the Nephites and other ancient people, was not so complete as is the fulness enjoyed by the Latter-day Saints. Truth is always the same, but more of its principles have been revealed in modern times than at any previous period. And the end is not yet.

If "fullness" is relative, then indeed "much" and "more" may be understood in that same regard. This relative fullness was apparently what Moroni had in mind when he told Joseph Smith in 1823 "that the fullness of the everlasting gospel was contained in it [the Book of Mormon], as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants [of the Americas]." Of further importance is the fact that in this dispensation the gospel plan has the same fullness "to the Gentiles and the Jews also." (D&C 20: 8-9) In other words, the full gospel system delivered to the Nephites is available to the whole world in the present day. According to the Latter-day Saint view, however, the world only receives that part of the fullness which it is worthy to receive. As the Prophet Joseph Smith said, to receive a fullness of glory, one must receive all ordinances in their fullness. Although the fullness of the gospel is "the everlasting covenant," and although the initial principles and ordinances thereof are often equated with this as being the entire "everlasting covenant," nevertheless, the scriptures and Church authorities also class other truths and ordinances as parts of that covenant.

Joseph Fielding Smith gave an extensive explanation of the problem

1 Orson F. Whitney, Cowley and Whitney on Doctrine, comp. by Forace Green (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., 1963), 276.

2 D&C, I, 12.  

3 Ibid., V, 424.  

4 D&C 66:2; 133:57.

5 D&C 22:1; Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, XII, 230, hereafter cited as J.D.

in the following excerpt from an article:

First of all, let us consider what the Lord means by "a fullness of the Gospel." He did not mean to convey the impression that every truth belonging to exaltation in the kingdom of God had been delivered to the Nephites and was recorded in the Book of Mormon, to be delivered to Gentiles and Jews in this dispensation. Neither would this statement imply that every truth belonging to the celestial kingdom and exaltation therein was to be found within the covers of the Book of Mormon. There are many truths belonging to the exaltation that have not been revealed, nor will they be revealed to man while he is in mortality.

It is evident that there are many things that belong to the exaltations which are reserved for immortal glorified souls. The fullness of the gospel then, as expressed in the Doctrine and Covenants, has reference to the principles of salvation by which we attain unto this glory. Therefore the Lord has revealed in the Book of Mormon all that is needful to direct people who are willing to hearken to its precepts, to a fulness of the blessings of the kingdom of God.

Let it be remembered that there are some truths made manifest in our sacred covenants, that are not intended for the world. Things of this kind do not appear in the Book of Mormon, or the Bible, or any other published book.

If there is no reference in the Book of Mormon in relation to baptism for the dead, we ask the question why should there be? Is not baptism for the dead exactly the same principle that it is for the living? The answer is naturally "Yes."\(^1\)

As suggested by this quotation, even if the fullness of all doctrines of the gospel are not in the Book of Mormon, this does not mean that the Nephites did not have the temple ordinances and other principles and practices of the gospel. They manifestly had enough to bring them back into the presence of God. As Elder Smith stated, these advanced teachings were too sacred to be published to the world in the Book of Mormon.\(^2\)

The principles of salvation alluded to in the foregoing quotation are further explained by Bruce R. McConkie in the following comments

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\(^1\)"Your Question," Era, LXIII (October, 1960), 704.

\(^2\)B. of M., 2 Nephi 27:7, 10, 22; Ether 4:6-7.
about the fullness of gospel doctrines and powers:

The fulness of the gospel consists in those laws, doctrines, ordinances, powers, and authorities needed to enable men to gain the fulness of salvation. Those who have the gospel fulness do not necessarily enjoy the fulness of gospel knowledge or understand all of the doctrines of the plan of salvation. But they do have the fulness of the priesthood and sealing power by which men can be sealed up unto eternal life. The fulness of the gospel grows out of the fulness of the sealing power and not out of the fulness of gospel knowledge.

In a more recent statement, Elder McConkie pointed out the specific difference between the fullness of the word and the fullness of the power:

In a purely intellectual sense any church can claim to have the word of the gospel. They can say: "We believe the Bible; we accept Christ as our personal Savior; we believe in his grace and goodness and rely on his promises." They can even say: "We believe the Book of Mormon, which contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel; we accept Joseph Smith as a prophet of God; we are numbered with the Saints of latter-days."

But the issue is not belief only; it is not acceptance of the word alone. Rather it is a matter of having the power of the priesthood and of enjoying the gift of the Holy Ghost. Of course the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel, meaning it is a record of God's dealings with a people who had the fulness of saving truth. In the same sense the Bible contains the fulness of the gospel, meaning that it also recounts Deity's dealings with a righteous people who worked out their salvation.

The issue is not what men purport to believe; it is whether having believed the truth, they also get the power of God into their lives.

The preceding quotations indicate that the gospel, according to Latter-day Saint theology, is a plan of message and of power. The message is one of increasing size as more truths are revealed. The scriptures are explicit on many truths, but they only hint at or imply countless others. The power comes through the priesthood and the plan of ordinances, gifts of the Spirit, and obedience to all principles con-

\[1\] McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 333.

tained within the word of the gospel.

The "fullness of the everlasting gospel," as explained above, is a relative term. In contrast to all lesser laws and systems, such as the law of Moses, it is the full, complete plan of salvation instituted by the Father. It is capable of raising man to a fullness of glory. In this sense the Book of Mormon and other scriptures contain the "fullness of the gospel," for they present the basic truths which enable man to progressively receive all of God's program of salvation. They do not pretend, however, to contain all of the truths of the eternal gospel plan of salvation, such as the sacred ordinances administered in the temples of the Lord. The Aaronic Priesthood, as explained in chapter three below, administers the preparatory gospel. The Melchizedek Priesthood, on the other hand, has the power to administer the full gospel program.

One of the most important ramifications of this subject of fullness is the purpose of the gospel--the goal which it would achieve for the obedient. The alert student of the gospel must consider this topic, seeking to know what the gospel definitions state the goal to be. Obviously, a different goal would be reached if one employed a gospel plan or formula which was totally different from the one used by another person. How full or how great will be the rewards and blessings for those who obey the fullness of the gospel?

As discussed in the Book of Mormon, the Lord revealed that one purpose of the gospel is that the obedient would be absolved of guilt from sin (3 Nephi 27:16) and would thereby enter the Lord's rest. 1

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1B. of M., 3 Nephi 27:19. A later revelation to Joseph Smith unveiled the meaning of the Lord's rest: "which rest is the fulness of his glory." (D&C 84:24.)
The gospel, then, as defined in the Book of Mormon, brings man back into God's presence, there to receive glory and eternal life. It is the plan or means whereby man actively partakes of the powers of God. The Book of Mormon does not go into detail on the various steps or degrees in salvation or glory, but the Doctrine and Covenants does, as seen below.

Further sources indicate more explicitly the ultimate purpose of the gospel, which is to exalt man to eternal life and godhood. Latter-day Saint scriptures teach this as a vital doctrine. Just as the preparatory gospel and the law of Moses alone are not sufficient to save man, so the doctrines of salvation in the Book of Mormon are not adequate to exalt man in the highest degree of salvation, even exaltation.

The Pearl of Great Price contains a classic and famous verse, wherein the Lord declared, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—-to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." The scriptures of the Church teach that this is to be achieved through the plan of eternal marriage, whereby men and women will receive divine power and glory from the Almighty, with the ability to create and populate worlds. This perpetuates the work, glory, and family expansion of God. For this reason it is termed the patriarchal order of marriage, with God presiding over his family and each worthy man presiding over his personal family and stewardship in eternity. In brief, the purpose of the gospel is "to sanctify the heart of man, and make him fit for the enjoyment of God, in eternity." There man will be endowed with eternal life, the type of

life which the Eternal Father has. The Lord declared that "if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God." The foregoing teachings thus indicate that the fullness of the gospel unquestionably carries with it a full reward. This concept of fullness is inextricably tied in with the present study of the developments in the Latter-day Saint definition of the gospel, because these goals mentioned above, as well as other doctrines, were revealed to the Church after the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the first doctrinal book published by the Church.

To summarize this section there are two basic doctrinal definitions of the word "fullness." The first objectively views the Book of Mormon doctrines, itemizing them as presented therein in a systematic plan leading to salvation in the presence of God. The Book of Mormon contains the "fullness" in the sense of teaching those doctrines necessary for salvation, but not all of those needed for exaltation. The second definition declares that the holy scriptures contain the complete gospel leading to exaltation and godhood—a "fullness" compared to any lesser or insufficient plan. In this sense the gospel is both the power and the word of God. The scriptures express the "fullness" of the gospel message in the sense that they present those truths necessary to bring men back into the presence of God, although eventually all truth is obtainable from the Lord. They do not declare every message or word of God, for his words are infinite. The possession of the fullness of priesthood keys and powers enable man to obtain the fullness of the word of God. These powers become progressively available to those who obey

\[1\]D&C 14:7, see also B. of M., 3 Nephi 15:9.
the initial truths of the gospel and then go on to further doctrines and ordinances. The second definition teaches that the highest part of the gospel is concerned with exalting and perfecting men, in order that they may dwell with God and share his work and glory as gods in their own right.

_A brief overview of the gospel plan of salvation_

As a further general introduction to the gospel plan, before dealing strictly with definitions of the same, the following paragraphs offer the reader a brief perspective of the entire gospel plan of salvation. This will be divided according to Christ's role and man's role in the gospel.

These roles must be properly understood, though, in relation to the principles of truth which constitute the plan. The Father has revealed the plan in the form of certain abstraction. Jesus Christ performed, and still performs, his work in correct relationship to those truths. Man must also act in harmony with the same set of truths in order to receive the Lord's blessings. Some definitions may treat exclusively Christ's role or man's role in relation to these principles, but the correct picture must reveal both sides of each principle.

The Church teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished and will yet accomplish many things which are vital to the plan of salvation ordained of God. He created the earth and placed men upon it, revealing the gospel to prophets in all ages. Coming to earth, He lived a perfect life of obedience to the will of the Father in all things, culminating in his atoning mission. He became man's exemplar and source of power, light, and truth. As the "light and life of the world," He shows men
the way to salvation. The Lord organized his Church and conferred priesthood authority and power upon the Apostles and others. During his ministry He restored the higher gospel doctrines and ordinances which had been taken away during the Mosaic period.

As pertaining to and affecting man's future life, there is nothing more universally vital to understand than the atonement of Christ. For this reason, the aspects of the atonement are particularly stressed by the scriptures as Christ's role in the gospel. In the atonement He descended below all things that He might comprehend all things and therefore succor all mankind, from Adam to the end of the temporal earth. He atoned for Adam's transgression, broke the bands of physical death, and acquired the power to resurrect all men. He will lift all men up to his presence for judgment, redeeming them thereby from the first spiritual death. This death was the banishment from the presence of God. He also paid the debt of divine justice for man's personal sins and will therefore rightfully judge the world by assigning men to salvation or damnation in eternity. Finally, He will reign over the righteous forever, having acquired a fullness of glory and power. All of these are unquestionably parts of Christ's role in the plan established by the Father, according to Latter-day Saint theology.

The full message of the gospel, as it applies to man and his obligations, lays emphasis upon those principle, ordinances, and laws which men must accept to become exalted and glorified. Of first importance is the fact that man was once a spirit entity, a child of God the Father. The Lord having provided an earth for man's mortal probation, man was placed upon it to obtain a physical body, to gain experience, and to be
proved in all things. In order to regain the eternal presence of God, men must acquire faith, repent, be baptized in water, and be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost. If they endure to the end with faith in Jesus Christ, they receive the guarantee of eternal life. Along the road of mortal life men may also receive the blessings of the gifts of the Spirit and the Holy Priesthood with its ordinances, including the patriarchal family order. At death men go into a temporary spirit existence, where the wicked are further proved and even punished, but where the righteous receive peace and the opportunity of accelerated growth. All men are to be resurrected and brought before the judgment bar of Christ. The Book of Mormon teaches that they will be judged according to their thoughts, words, and deeds, becoming either heirs of endless life or of everlasting damnation. The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith, after the Book of Mormon came forth, that there are numerous gradations within these two broad categories. For the righteous the highest goals of the gospel are immortality, eternal life, endless posterity, and a fullness of joy, truth, glory, power, and dominion.

In brief, then, this is a summary of the full gospel plan of salvation as outlined in the teachings of the Church. The reader should keep this overview in mind as various textual sources and aspects of the gospel are discussed in the course of this study.

The Book of Mormon As a Point of Beginning

The search for Latter-day Saint definitions of the gospel will begin with the Book of Mormon, for it was the first publication of a doctrinal nature by the Church. As explained in the following paragraph, the book claims to contain the gospel of Jesus Christ **independently** of
the Bible, although it does correlate to it in many ways. It also claims to present the gospel in a plain, understandable manner.¹

Latter-day Saints declare that the Book of Mormon is a divinely inspired record of the Nephites and Lamanites, who were ancestors of the American Indians, but who were also descendants of the house of Israel. Moroni, the last writer in the book, buried the metal plates on which it was inscribed, sometime around the year A.D. 421. In the year A.D. 1827 Moroni appeared as a resurrected being and delivered the plates to Joseph Smith, a young man living in Palmyra, a small town in western New York state. Joseph Smith, known by his followers as "the Prophet," translated the book by the "gift and power of God"² and published it to the world. In 1830, professing to act under divine direction, he organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. From 1830 until the present the Church has used the Book of Mormon as one of its basic sources of doctrine. Included within the book are numerous declarations of what the writers presented as the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon records that Christ enunciated these doctrines through prophets on the American continents, and that He taught them to the Nephites and Lamanites in a personal visitation after his resurrection.

The next chapter will present and analyze the gospel definitions found in the Book of Mormon. This study will use the Book of Mormon as a point of comparison because it appeared at the beginning of the Church, and because of its claim to being an independent witness for Jesus Christ and his gospel. As the over-all purpose of this thesis is to compare objectively the definitions of the gospel in all major Latter-day Saint

¹B. of M., 1 Nephi 13:34-37. ²B. of M., title page.
sources, the establishing of such a reference point as the Book of Mormon definition of the gospel is vital. Further chapters will then bring in for comparison other definitions given by Joseph Smith, his colleagues, and his successors. The final step will be to turn to the Bible, analyze the gospel as represented there, and compare it with the message of the other sources. The purpose of that comparison will be to see if there are similarities or dissimilarities between the gospel definitions in the modern sources and those in the Bible.
CHAPTER TWO

THE BOOK OF MORMON DEFINITION OF THE
GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

The Book of Mormon, as mentioned, is the logical beginning point in this thesis for several reasons, including the fact that its definitions are notably authoritative for the Church. It contains ample evidence of the gospel message as believed and taught by Joseph Smith and his adherents. It is particularly suitable as a point of comparison in this study due to its independence of the Bible, according to its own claim. The definitions in the book are worthy of attention in view of Joseph Smith's statement that it is "the keystone of our religion."¹ Furthermore, he wrote that it contains "the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews also."² One final and weighty reason for using the Book of Mormon to establish a prime comparison for Latter-day Saint definitions of the gospel is that the book was avowedly written for the express purpose of promulgating the gospel.

Purpose of the Book of Mormon

Although many writers have discussed the literary, historical, and even military aspects of the Book of Mormon, it was written with the intention of teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to future generations. Moroni, the last writer in the compilation, concisely stated the major

¹DHC, IV, 461. ²D&C 20:8-9.
purposes of the book as he envisioned them. He declared on the title page that the record had this as its objective:

To show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations.

The "covenants" spoken of here include the promise that the gospel would be preached to the descendants of Israel, including the Nephites and Lamanites. One may wonder just how the Book of Mormon could accomplish the three objectives which are stated above by Moroni. Essentially, as will be shown hereafter, the method employed by the writers of the book is that of emphasizing the gospel and preaching it to all nations through the Book of Mormon. The Lord himself discussed this mission of the book, saying:

Nevertheless, my work shall go forth, for inasmuch as the knowledge of a Savior has come unto the world, through the testimony of the Jews, even so shall the knowledge of a Savior come unto my people.

And to the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites, through the testimony of their fathers—

And this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites, and the Ishmaelites, who dwindled in unbelief because of the iniquity of their fathers, whom the Lord has suffered to destroy their brethren the Nephites, because of their iniquities and their abominations.

And for this very purpose are these plates preserved, which contain these records—that the promises of the Lord might be fulfilled, which he made to his people.  

Nephi, the first writer in the Book of Mormon, writing around the year 600 B.C., declared that the fullness of the gospel would originally be in the Bible, but that the "most plain and precious parts of the of the Lamb" would be kept back by that abominable church. The pure

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2 D&C 3:16-19.
3 B. of M., 1 Nephi 13:24-29, 34.
gospel, he stated, would again come forth in the Book of Mormon:

For, behold, saith the Lamb: I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren, behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb.

And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation.

The striking fact in Nephi's comment is the claim that the message of the gospel in the New Testament has been corrupted by the men who have transmitted it over the centuries. The Book of Mormon claims to restore the "plain and precious" truths of the gospel, informing the reader on issues which are not fully resolved through consulting the Bible alone. In the light of these considerations, the book will now be analyzed as the first source of definitions in this study.

**Christ Defined His Gospel**

**Introduction to Christ's definition**

In view of the stated purpose of the Book of Mormon, as presented above, the contents of the book should be a significant source of definitions of the gospel, if as much is said about it as the foregoing implies. As evidence that such is the case, the Book of Mormon contains Christ's own definition of his gospel. Scholars are thus spared the difficulty of reconstructing everything from either fragmentary definitions or from over-all contexts. In contrast to this, Anderson found a common gospel in the New Testament by commencing with Paul's writings, then considering the other apostolic writings, and finally showing that Christ's words in

\[1\text{B. of M., 1 Nephi 13:35-36.}\]
the Gospels were the source of those other definitions. In the Book of Mormon one need not begin with anything other than the words of Christ.

The writer of Third Nephi recorded that the resurrected Lord visited the ancient Americans and delivered his gospel to them. An understanding of his definition of the gospel can only come if one grasps the full context of the Lord's gospel teachings to the Nephites. Chapters nine to twenty-six of Third Nephi supply this context, as seen in the following brief outline.

Chapter nine of Third Nephi expresses the Lord's promise of mercy and eternal life to those who allow themselves to be "gathered" to Christ. The Lord announced his position as the glorified creator of the world, the one who came to redeem the world and be its light and life. He proclaimed that the law of Moses had been fulfilled, and that the sacrifice of a "broken heart and contrite spirit" was required. He came to "save the world from sin." The conditions for this salvation are faith in Jesus Christ, repentance from sin, and baptism by water. The baptism with fire and with the Holy Ghost are the promised results of such obedience. The Savior repeated these same requirements on several occasions thereafter.

Chapters twelve through fourteen of Third Nephi record that Christ gave the Nephites the same teachings contained in the Sermon on the Mount—teachings designed for the growth of those who have entered the covenant of baptism. The sacrament of the Lord's supper was introduced (chapter eighteen) that the Nephite saints might remember their covenants

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2He explained the method of baptism in 3 Nephi 11:32-40.

with Christ. Finally, after making a new covenant of baptism (chapter nineteen) the Nephites experienced a rich measure of the purifying or sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. These doctrines and events are the context in which Christ gave his definition of the gospel, as will be explained below.

Shortly after his ministry among the Nephites, Christ again appeared and reviewed with his twelve chosen Nephite disciples some of his major teachings, giving his personal definition of the gospel. Many consider this definition to be the finest on the subject in all Latter-day Saint literature. The Lord appeared in that special theophany in response to the prayer of the disciples, who wished to know the name by which they should call his Church. He explained the means of identifying his Church, namely, that "if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel." (3 Nephi 27:8.) The Lord reiterated at that time the special message, the gospel, which the Church was to promulgate in his name. The nature of the occasion gave added significance to the definition, for it was the resurrected Lord himself speaking, addressing his selected group of twelve disciples on the specific subject of the definition of his gospel.

Due to these important circumstances, the author will view this definition as a classic, and will use it as a measuring rod or standard against which to compare all other Latter-day Saint definitions of the gospel. A comparison of definitions and a study of historical developments must use some point of reference in order to demonstrate any type of change, development, consistency, inconsistency, etc. This is not to imply, however, that it is the ultimate and only definition which is an acceptable standard in the Church, for the Lord here outlined only the
basic essentials of the gospel plan without including all of the details. Hence, the term "classic" in the present study conveys only the notion of something established by general usage or consent as a model or prime example. In relation to this passage the author will judge whether later definitions agree or differ, amplify or simplify. The entire statement appears below so that the reader may analyze it more conveniently, with verse numbers included for easy later reference:

Christ's definition of the gospel

13. Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

14. And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

15. And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

16. And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.

17. And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father.

18. And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfillleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfillleth all his words.

19. And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

20. Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

21. Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do.

22. Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye
shall be lifted up at the last day.¹

The statement that Christ had already given them his gospel, as indicated in verse thirteen above, alludes to two sets of events. The first allusion is to his earlier visit among the Nephites and Lamanites. The report of this is in Third Nephi, but particularly in 3 Nephi 11:31-35, which contains a definition similar to the one above. Therein He described "his doctrine," which, from the context, is a functional synonym for "his gospel." The second allusion in verse thirteen may be a reference to the gospel given previously through all of his Nephite and Lamanite prophets. Their definitions are discussed later in this chapter.

The Lord commenced by saying, in the classic definition above, that "this is the gospel." With this frame of reference clearly established, He then proceeded to define his message of salvation. The inclusion of those four words provides a sure basis for discovering the content and extent of the Savior's own definition of the gospel. One such statement in the New Testament would be invaluable in the scholarly analysis of that book.

Analyzing the definition further, Anderson and others have asserted that it contains two parts—(1) Christ's role in the gospel, and (2) man's role therein. This convenient classification fits the present purpose and will be used here. The two following sub-sections will refer back to and analyze the definition in terms of this classification.

Christ's role in the gospel

The first part of the above quotation, verses thirteen through fifteen, explains the actions of the Lord in providing the atonement,

which is the fundamental basis of the gospel. One may find therein four separate concepts:

(1) That Christ came to do the will of the Father,
(2) to be lifted up upon the cross,
(3) to draw all men unto himself, and
(4) to judge men according to their works.

Each of these four concepts forms an essential part of the plan of the gospel as stated here by the Lord. As a beginning, before discussing each concept, it is necessary to make a meaningful classification of these doctrines. One may observe that the first doctrine is a general description of the plan of the atonement, whereas the second one describes the very act of atoning. On the other hand, the last two concepts describe the two fundamental, universal results of the atonement. In other words, the first two doctrines lead up to and culminate in the last two, the results of the atonement which affect all men, regardless.

Applying some Hebrew literary criticism to the above passage reveals a distinctly parallel structure. After stating the first two principles or concepts, Christ expressed in verse fourteen the two universal consequences of the atonement. In typically Hebrew style He then restated and re-emphasized them in summary form in verse fifteen. Scholars have demonstrated that the Book of Mormon style is notably Hebraic.\(^1\) The Hebrew penchant for parallelism and repetition for emphasis is clearly present in this passage.

A careful analysis of the first concept reveals that his coming to do the will of the Father is a description of Christ's obedience,

\(^1\)Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1957).
which underlies every part of the gospel. Nephi, the first writer in
the Book of Mormon, explained it in this manner:

Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being
holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the
flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto
the Father, that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his com-
mandments.¹

The scriptures show that Christ's obedience to the Father was exem-
plified in the creation of the earth, his earthly ministry of teaching
the gospel, organizing his Church, sending forth missionaries, accomplishing
the atonement, and rising from the tomb in the resurrection. He will
yet obey the Father by resurrecting all men, judging them, and endowing
them with the degree of glory which they merit. The doctrine of doing
the will of the Father is an axiomatic ingredient of the gospel require-
ments for all men. Christ is the light of the world which all men should
follow.² This principle, as required of men, will be discussed below
under the heading of faith in Jesus Christ. It is also definitely an
intrinsic ingredient of Christ's role, and for that reason will be dis-
cussed here.

Truths and powers, not merely events, are the core of the gospel
message. Our birth and death are indeed part of the full gospel plan of
salvation, but as a message of conversion, the gospel dwells upon the
principles of the atonement and the means whereby man accepts this gift.
Therefore, even the events of Christ's birth and life are usually not
part of definitions of the gospel. His great roles as teacher, the per-
fect exemplar, the creator of the world, and the light and life of the

¹John 8:12; B. of M., 2 Nephi 31:11, 3 Nephi 11:11, 3 Nephi 27:21;
D&C 10:70.

²B. of M., 2 Nephi 31.7.
world are also not customarily taught by the Church authorities as first principles of the gospel. Nevertheless, they are definitely parts of his full role in the plan. These are assumed to be the axioms behind the acceptance of the atonement. In this classic definition, for example, Christ condensed all of his role into just a few concepts, particularly dealing with the atonement. To accept the atonement, however, is to accept Christ in all his roles.

The second concept in the above definition, Christ's being lifted up upon the cross, encompasses the event of his suffering to atone for the fall of Adam,\(^1\) as well as for the sins of mankind.\(^2\) Although it is stated very briefly and succinctly in the above definition, this second concept is the heart of the gospel. Through the Lord's suffering, the scriptures assert, He redeemed the souls of men from the physical death incurred by Adam's fall.\(^3\) He atoned also for the sins of men, making operative the principles of repentance, remission of sins, and forgiveness, that men may become clean and be able to endure again the presence of God. This is possible in that Christ gave his life as a ransom, paying the debt for all sins. He fulfilled vicariously the claims which justice had upon all mankind. Men could not have returned to God in their sins, nor were they capable of atoning for their debt to eternal justice.\(^4\) In addition to all this, the atonement opened the way for the reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost, with his accompanying gifts and powers. The culmination of it all is glorification, exaltation, and


\(^3\)D&C 88:14-17.

eternal life for the obedient.

The Lord apparently used the symbol of the cross in this statement in a general sense, covering the suffering which He experienced on the cross itself and also the agony in Gethsemane, where He bore the pain for the sins of all mankind.\(^1\)

The third concept in Christ's foregoing expression deals with his actions in drawing and lifting all men to himself. This is the first of the two universal consequences of the atonement. One may discover the meaning of the parallel terms "draw all men to me" and "even so should men be lifted up by the Father" (verse fourteen) through a study of the full Book of Mormon context in which they are found. Following these phrases, the definition expresses the purpose and result of this "drawing" and "lifting," namely, that men should "stand before me, to be judged. . ." This concept is repeated in verse fifteen, wherein Christ explicitly states that the purpose of his atonement (being "lifted up") was to "draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works." Other Book of Mormon passages use "raise" instead of "lift up" or "draw" to portray the resurrection process.\(^2\) Although the word "resurrection" is not present in the passage, it is the culmination of the process involved in the phrase "draw all men unto me." To perceive this, one must view the atonement in the context of the Fall.

The fall of Adam resulted in the physical death of man's body, and his spiritual death by being banished from God's presence. The atonement brings men back into God's presence as they were before the Fall and their mortal existence. This is a redemption from the first spiritual death. It culminates in the resurrection from the physical death. The

scriptures frequently use the word "resurrection" to cover all of these results of the atonement.¹ The type of bodies men receive depends upon their degree of glory, contingent upon their personal worthiness, but all men will be resurrected and brought back into the presence of the Lord for judgment.²

By virtue of the atonement and through faith, man may even come back into the presence of Deity while yet in mortality.³ The final redemption from spiritual death comes after this life, however.

Jacob, an early Nephite prophet, expressed this same concept of the dual results of the atonement, but in his statement he did use the word "resurrection":

. And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam.

And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day."⁴

Numerous other Book of Mormon prophets likewise spoke of these dual, universal, unconditional consequences of the Lord's atoning sacrifice.⁵ They repeatedly paired together these two results of the atonement, emphasizing Christ's sacrifice as part of the initial message of conversion. These are also principles in which men must find faith. In this respect they fit under man's role, although the actions are in

⁵B. of M., 2 Nephi 2:10; Jacob 6:9; Mosiah 3:10; Alma 5:15; 11:41, 44; 12:12; 22:14; Mormon 7:6; 9:13-14; Moroni 10:34.
Christ's role.

Although redemption from physical and spiritual death is the major meaning of the terms "draw all men unto me" and "be lifted up by the Father," a second meaning sometimes attaches itself to these words. Christ uses his power and influence to draw or convert all men to the gospel and to his kingdom of joy and glory. He does this in his role as "the light and the life of the world."¹ He eventually will attract even the telestial world to the cause of righteousness (after they suffer for their sins), and, until they fall, the sons of perdition. That this is not the first or main idea being communicated in this particular definition, however, may be seen as one compares the differences between verses fourteen and fifteen above. In the former the Lord said the Father sent him for the intended purpose that He "might" draw all men to himself. Apparently this does not mean that He would "like" to draw all men unto himself but knows that not all will come, for having completed the atonement He was able to say in verse fifteen that He definitely is able to and now "will" draw all men unto himself. This removes the potential or future conditional aspect present in the word "might." Hence, the words "might draw all men unto me" do not refer here, in any more than a secondary meaning, to the concept of converting men to Christ.

The Lord's action, then, in this third concept is to lift all men up in the resurrection and thereby bring them back into God's presence. By virtue of the atonement, the Redeemer acquired the power and right to do this. Men must have their bodies in order to be judged, for as Alma, a Nephite prophet said:

Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you?

Do you look forward with an eye of faith, and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption, to stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body?\(^1\)

In summary of this third concept, by redeeming the debt which was outstanding in the divine courts of eternal justice, Jesus Christ atoned for the transgression of Adam. The consequences of Adam's fall were physical death for all men, and the spiritual death of being cast out of the presence of the Lord. The atonement of Christ redeems all men from this first spiritual death by "drawing" them back into the presence of God. The atonement then provides for the resurrection of all men, for Christ broke the bands of physical death and paid for the debt incurred by Adam's transgression.\(^2\) With men in a resurrected state, Christ is thus able to bring them before the bar of eternal judgment.

The fourth concept in the definition under examination is the statement that "they may be judged according to their works" (verses fourteen and fifteen). This has reference to Christ's role as "the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead."\(^3\) By virtue of paying for the sins of all men, Jesus Christ will be justified in bringing them to an accounting for their actions. He will assemble all men in the immediate presence of God, as they were before the fall of Adam veiled them from his glory. The context of this concept is primarily that of the final judgment, but the various preliminary judgments which men must face are also suggested here.\(^4\) In the atonement Jesus acquired the right and power to judge men at every stage in the plan of life and salvation, con-

\(^3\)B. of M., Moroni 10:34.
summating this in the final judgment. The Lord will determine whether men have obeyed the commandments and are worthy of being freed from the punishment of their personal sins by virtue of the atonement. Having forgiven the repentant, the Lord will then offer them salvation.¹

It is at this point that the principle of forgiveness becomes finally operative. The Lord forgives men's sins as frequently as they truly and sincerely repent of them,² but due to human frailties they may fall again into the same or other sins, receiving the former judgments upon their heads.³ Consequently, the finalized and eternal forgiveness will be awarded at the same time that one receives his reward, his degree of glory. Thus the principle of forgiveness, as a part of the gospel, is inextricably involved in the larger concept of eternal, final judgment. It becomes operative through faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift or sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost. As Joseph Smith said, remission of sins (forgiveness) is a part of the principle of repentance.⁴ As men repent and turn to Christ, by virtue of the atonement He has the power and right to remit their sins. The Lord will not extend forgiveness to the unrepentant, for they must pay for their own sins in consequence of their rejecting the saving powers of the atonement. Some of

¹Exaltation is the highest step in the general category of salvation. In Book of Mormon usage, "salvation" corresponds actually to this more specific term in the sense that the Lord revealed it to Joseph Smith.

²B. of M., Mosiah 26:31, Moroni 6:8; D&C 64:7-11.

³James 2:10-11; D&C 82:7.

these will eventually inherit a measure of glory after their suffering, when they finally accept Christ, before their resurrection.\textsuperscript{1} Although these must suffer, the true emphasis in the gospel is upon the goodness and benevolence of the Lord. He offers forgiveness as a free gift of grace, if men will only repent. The judgment is the great gate opening up to salvation for the righteous. His eternal judgment, though operative under the law of justice, is not based on a wrathful God's vengeful nature. He is a loving God, the Latter-day Saints believe, heavily influenced by mercy if men will have faith in the atonement and gospel of Christ.\textsuperscript{2} Although He is merciful, the Lord must dispense an even-handed justice to the righteous and the wicked.

One should be careful to note that the principle of eternal judgment carries with it much more than the negative connotation which men normally associate with judges, courts, and judgment day. The scriptures reveal that the righteous will rejoice in their reward at that day, for they will appreciate the mercy and forgiveness of the Lord as He holds them guiltless.\textsuperscript{3} Through this eternal judgment men will have the privilege of receiving a just compensation for their righteous ors, even to the extent of eternal kingdoms of glory. For them it will be a "glorious day."\textsuperscript{4} Admittedly, the scriptures frequently stress the woes of the wicked as they stand before the great King, but the reverse is equally true for the righteous. The word of the Lord also states the positive nature of judgment and reward. Indeed, the words "eternal reward" may with propriety be used in connection with eternal judgment.

The Lord will award salvation and exaltation to the righteous,

but also decree damnation for the wicked. Men will be admitted to the presence of God in heaven or consigned to a lesser degree of glory, even to the extent of not enjoying any of the presence of God's glory. A concise description of this role which Christ fills comes in the single principle of eternal judgment. It broadly embraces the ultimate or final forgiving of individual sins, as well as the final decreeing of eternal exaltation, salvation, or damnation. It is called "eternal" judgment because it is the Lord's judgment, not man's, and it pertains to the eternity after this life.¹ The consistency of using this term will be seen in later definitions which class the principle of eternal judgment as one of the first principles of the gospel which men must accept. In this definition, however, it is treated as part of the gospel role which Christ fills.

It may appear presumptuous to assert that eternal judgment is a principle covering not only Christ's role as Judge, but also his role as the Savior who rescues men from sin and rewards them with degrees of glory. The fact remains that many scriptural passages create this broad category, a result of the atonement, a "first principle" which men must have faith in. One may logically perceive the reasoning behind such a classification. Christ paid the debt for men's sins, but this has no effect on the ultimate destiny of an individual until, as Judge, He pronounces the guilt removed. The Lord also provided the means of forgiveness, but He can not forgive until man grasps this means. This principle also includes the concept of personal responsibility for one's actions. As explained in the preceding chapter, principles of the gospel come from the Father as a stream of truth carrying everything to eternal

¹D&C 19:3-12.
goals. Christ and men act out their respective roles while always afloat on the stream, and they are always responsible for their actions and position in relation to this gospel.

Thus one sees that the eternal judgment has wide connotations. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the Lord classes it as a first principle.

Ultimately, as of this classic definition, the two consummating accomplishments of the atonement, those which all men receive, are the broad categories of resurrection and eternal judgment. These are unquestionably fundamental elements of the gospel as taught in this definition. Because of their close applicability to all men, these two principles also appear in other definitions as abstract concepts which men are to believe in and then eventually experience in their gospel roles. This definition, however, presents the two in the context of Christ's actions. The reader is left to infer the relationship to man's role.

Verse nineteen of the classic definition mentions the concept of being unclean. More important than that, it declares pointedly the principles of the gospel which enable mankind to become clean. Unclean-ness is outside the gospel, but enduring faith and repentance cleanse man from sin, preparing him for the sanctifying influence of the Spirit.\(^1\)

At this point a different classification of Christ's role should be included for comparison, one which Anderson and others have derived from the New Testament. They see three separate subdivisions:

(1) Christ resurrects all men unconditionally,
(2) He frees all men from personal sins conditionally, and
(3) He judges all men.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) B. of M., 3 Nephi 27:19-20.  
\(^2\) Anderson, "Euangelion," 76.
This system has its merits, for it focuses on three specific acts of Christ; but is it safe to say that this is the most clear-cut and accurate classification of Christ's role in the gospel? The only particular mention of forgiveness of sins referred to in the definition above comes in the context of the final judgment day, wherein the righteous will be held "guiltless" (verse sixteen). Indeed, Christ has power to forgive a person's sins at any time, but the final forgiveness is referred to in this context. Holding guiltless or forgiving the sins of the repentant is thus an intrinsic part of Christ's role as Eternal Judge in meting out eternal judgment.

To obtain a correct view of Christ's role, one must ask the question, "What will any given man experience as a result of Christ's atonement?" In the first place, according to Latter-day Saint theology it is certain that every person will unconditionally be redeemed from the first spiritual death and be resurrected. Joseph Smith recorded the Lord's words, wherein He said: "Before the earth shall pass away, Michael, mine archangel, shall sound his trump, and then shall all the dead awake, for their graves shall be opened, and they shall come forth--yea, even all." It is also true that resurrection is a principle of Christ's gospel as found in the classic definition, now under consideration.

Secondly, every man will either be saved by obedience to the gospel or damned for not obeying, but not both. In view of the fact that men

\[\text{1 Cor. 15:22; B. of M., 3 Nephi 27:14.} \quad \text{2D&C 29:26.} \]

\[\text{3B. of M., Mosiah 16:11; Helaman 12:26; 3 Nephi 26:5. This is in the sense that a man will not experience unhappiness and punishment after entering a degree of glory. It is true, of course, that in relation to being exalted all lower kingdoms are stopped or damned. Thus, the lesser the glory, the greater the damnation. One may therefore see that this in no way suggests the "heaven or hell" theories of modern Christendom.}\]
judge themselves in some respects by choosing their course of action—some choosing salvation and others damnation, it is not correct to say that Christ is the one who capriciously and arbitrarily saves some and damns others.1

As evidence that this judgment does include the concepts of the finalized forgiveness of sins, and the assignment to salvation or damnation, note the following evidential references. The first item is a statement by the Savior, expounded to the Nephites during his visit:

And he did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory—yea, even all things which should come upon the face of the earth, even until the elements should melt with fervent heat, and the earth should be wrapt together as a scroll, and the heavens and the earth should pass away;

And even unto the great and last day, when all people and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues shall stand before God, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

If they be good, to the resurrection of everlasting life; and if they be evil, to the resurrection of damnation; being on the parallel, the one on the one hand and the other on the other hand, according to the mercy and the justice, and the holiness which is in Christ, who was before the world began.2

The foregoing passage harmonizes with the standard definition (verse sixteen), which indicates that the righteous will be forgiven of their sins and be held guiltless at the judgment day.

In discussing the doctrine of eternal judgment, Joseph Smith taught that the sins of murderers would be forgiven after their time of suffering, in which they pay the debt of justice, but not until the coming of the Lord.3 This is apropos to the present discussion, for he definitely connected the principle of eternal judgment with forgiveness of sins.

1"Damnation is no part of the Gospel. It is simply the sad alternative, the inevitable consequence of rejecting the offer of salvation." -- Orson F. Whitney, Doctrine, 276.

2 B. of M., 3 Nephi 26:3-5. 3DHC, IV, 358-59.
Forgiveness is a principle swallowed up in the larger concept of eternal judgment, as well as in the principle of repentance.

In addition to forgiveness, the assignment to salvation or damnation is a further part of the eternal judgment. The Prophet Joseph Smith stated that judgment is the source of salvation, for judgment is a trait of Deity which saves men from their enemies.\(^1\) He defined salvation as the triumph over all one's enemies.\(^2\) Again, he said that "salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself or one like him."\(^3\) As salvation is the goal for which saints are striving, it is very truly a necessity for them to understand eternal judgment as a first principle, for it is a part of the path to salvation.

As Christ does not forgive, save, glorify, and exalt all men, these two things, forgiveness and salvation, cannot be said to be parts of the gospel which are universally partaken of by men. They are unconditional only in the sense that they are available to all who can repent. It appears, on the other hand, that the most precise definition of Christ's part in the gospel should limit itself to a description of those things which He, through his inimitable qualifications, contributed unconditionally to all men. These are, as described above, the general categories of resurrection and eternal judgment. These two principles branch out into many areas, as discussed in this chapter. Christ, however, used these broad categories in this definition of the gospel.

In thus classifying these principles as two major parts of Christ's

\(^1\) *Lectures on Faith*, comp. by N. B. Lundwall (Salt Lake City: N. B. Lundwall, n.d.), 4:17. Joseph Smith apparently authored most of this.

\(^2\) *DHC*, V, 387.

\(^3\) *Lectures on Faith*, 7:9; see also 7:16.
role in the gospel, one should not lose sight of the fact that (1) doing
the will of the Father, and (2) being lifted up upon the cross to actu-
ally accomplish the atonement were the fundamental elements producing
the resurrection and eternal judgment. The will of the Father was that
the Savior accomplish the atonement and produce these results.

In treating the definition above, the main concern has been to
determine what Christ considered his gospel to be, in the most precise
and ultimate sense. For this reason the author has analyzed and classi-
fied the classic definition in the foregoing manner. Others might
choose to make different categories for different purposes, but this
classification is the most consistent and accurate for the present study
of the basic definition of the gospel.

As further evidence in support of the above interpretation, the
Book of Mormon prophets were unanimous in their views that resurrection
and eternal judgment were two universal results produced by Christ's
atonement. The following passages are just a few of the many available
examples illustrating this point:

Jacob.--

Know ye not that if ye will do these things, that the power of
the redemption and the resurrection, which is in Christ, will bring
you to stand with shame and awful guilt before the bar of God?¹

Alma the younger.--

But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent,
and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth
to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the
dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are
restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works,
according to the law and justice.²

Mormon.--

And he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead, whereby man must be raised to stand before his judgment-seat.

From the preceding evidence the conclusion necessarily emerges that both resurrection and eternal judgment are unconditional results of Christ's atoning sacrifice and therefore are central parts of the gospel. The other concepts (doing the will of the Father, forgiveness of sins, etc.) lead up to and consummate in these two central pillars of the plan of salvation. Anderson's classification of three principles differs primarily only in semantics from the division into the two main categories. The latter division, however, is essential, for it is in harmony with the statements of the General Authorities, as will appear below.

In summary of Christ's role it may be stated that as Redeemer He atoned for the fall of Adam to make it possible for every man to be resurrected. He laid down his body and received power from the Father to resurrect himself, and later all men. Secondy, as Savior He himself paid the price for the sins of all. With a physical body fathered by God the Father, and having lived a sinless life by being obedient to all divine laws, He received power from the Father to suffer for the sins of all men. In consequence of this He has the legal right to judge men by his own standards and to bless or punish them with an eternal reward.

Man's role in the gospel

The atonement was the "enabling act" which gave life to the gospel

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1B. of M., Mormon 7:6.

2John 10:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:20-22; D&C 88:16; Pearl of Great Price (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1956), Moses 6:53-57, hereafter cited as P. of G. P.
plan. The gospel has been likened to a coin, with Christ's actions, his mission and atonement, being one side. The other side, as discussed below, prescribes man's actions in accepting the atonement and the rest of the gospel.

Verses sixteen to twenty-one of Christ's definition in the above statement contains standards by which men will be judged—in other words, man's role in the gospel plan of salvation. Verse sixteen lists repentance and baptism as two principles of the gospel. Baptism is to be by immersion and must be performed by the proper priesthood authority, as the Lord explained during his first visit to the Nephites. Christ then stated in his definition that these were to be done in "my name." This is elucidated in verses nineteen and twenty, where the term "faith" in Christ is used as an expression for doing things in Christ's name. The Apostle James taught that faith involves action taken on the basis of belief in something. Logically, faith in Christ must precede any action (such as repentance and baptism) truly and efficaciously done in his name. Men must have faith in Christ as the creator, the perfect exemplar, and the infinite atoning sacrifice. Faith in Jesus Christ, then, stands as the first principle of the gospel, followed by repentance and baptism in water.

Verses sixteen through nineteen discuss "enduring to the end," which some students classify as a separate primary principle of the gospel. Obviously, "enduring" does not refer merely to remaining in exist-

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1 B. of M., 3 Nephi 11:21-27.

2 See P. of G. P., Moses 5:8 for an analogous usage.

3 James 2:17-18.
ence, for everyone endures to some end. The question, then, concerns the type of condition in which one continues or endures. Verse nineteen refers to continuing in the principle of faith in Jesus Christ. This type of enduring means overcoming the challenge of all things through faith which endures and grows. It is, therefore, an axiom undergirding faith, repentance, and all further principles which bear an eternal reward. Anderson makes this same distinction.

An important ramification of the gospel doctrine of enduring to the end is the principle of sealing, as found in the Book of Mormon. That book outlines two methods of receiving the guarantee of eternal life. The first is to be sealed unto eternal life by actual ordinance, under the hand of one having the authority to do so. The Lord himself made this covenant with Alma the elder. The second method of receiving the guarantee is to remain true to the faith, enduring to the end. Although a person may not have been sealed by ordinance in this life, he will be able to progress to that point while in the spirit world if he died true to the faith.

Men should strive to remain true, holding the hope of this guarantee in their hearts, or, as Mormon told his son Moroni:

My son, be faithful in Christ; . . . and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.

The goal of the gospel, as stated in the Book of Mormon, is eternal life

\[1^{\text{D&C 76:53.}} \quad 2^{\text{Anderson, "Evangelion," 235.}} \]

\[3^{\text{B. of M., Mosiah 26:20.}} \quad 4^{\text{B. of M., Mosiah 5:15; Alma 14:8-11; 24:26; 28:12.}} \]

\[5^{\text{B. of M., Moroni 9:25.}} \]
and salvation. For this great gift men should endure to the end with

gladness, despite any difficulties.

The Book of Mormon only mentions the doctrine of sealing, not going

into detail thereon, but enough is said to assure that the Nephites knew

of the doctrine. Later chapters in this thesis will discuss definitions

which expound the principle more fully.

The fourth principle of man's role in the gospel is mentioned in

verse twenty. It is to be "sanctified by the reception of the Holy

Ghost." The Book of Mormon states that the method of receiving the Holy

Ghost is by the laying on of hands of those empowered with divine author-

ity. It is important to understand that man's role is clearly defined

in this passage—he must receive the Holy Ghost and allow him to work in

his life. This means that men must be worthy and prepared for spiritual

guidance. Only in this way will men be truly baptized by fire and the

Holy Ghost.

Some have sought to include sanctification per se as a fundamental

principle of the gospel. This would, however, separate the effect from

the basic causative principles. Sanctification is a blessing derived

from faith in Christ, obedience to law, and the presence of the Holy

Ghost. It is the result of the Holy Spirit's influence upon an individ-

ual, making him holy and purifying him from the effects of sin. The pres-

ence of the Holy Ghost and the results of his presence are inseparable.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item[4] D&C 88:34.
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The purpose of the gospel, as verse nineteen of the classic definition states, is to purify men. The office of the Holy Ghost is to sanctify each person by revealing to him truth, power, and the gifts of the Spirit in accordance with his worthiness and need.\(^1\) Obedience to the Lord's commandments enables one to receive all truths and blessings from the Holy Ghost, even until a fullness of glory is obtained.\(^2\) These products of the influence of the Holy Spirit are not generally entitled first or fundamental principles of the gospel, but as results of the first principles. They are the walls built upon the footing, but this must not obscure the fact that the parts of the gospel which enable men to obtain all truth and power are themselves the fundamental framework.

The foregoing are the component parts of this scriptural, classic definition in the Book of Mormon—in short, the gospel message which brings the fruits, gifts, truths, and powers of the Spirit to man. As shown above, the gospel is *per se* a message,\(^3\) a formula of power, and a program of action. That is, the gospel is good news from God, communicated to mankind in the form of a message, with the power of godliness manifest therein as one acts in accord with it. Although man has received the gospel, it is evident that the Lord has not revealed all truths within his divine grasp. Therefore, it must be deduced from this classic definition that the initial part of the gospel is a foundation of saving principles and ordinances upon which the Lord Jesus Christ may gradually and eventually reveal all gospel truths and powers. The gospel is a plan which incorporates and reveals all truth. The Holy Ghost reveals these truths to men in proportion to their obedience to the primary gospel

\(^1\) John 14:26; 1 Cor. 12:8-11; D&C 20:60. \(^2\) D&C 93:19-20, 28. \(^3\) See above, p. 8.
principles.

The principles in this definition are the gospel standards against which man is measured. Continuing further in the definition quoted above, the Lord repeated these four principles in verse twenty, significantly calling them the "commandment." This term will be repeatedly referred to throughout the thesis.

The definition began with Christ's role in the gospel, expressed in this statement primarily in terms of the atonement, and the resurrection and eternal judgment which the atonement provides. It then concluded with man's role. As will be seen in later definitions, the principles of resurrection and eternal judgment are frequently mentioned as first principles which men must accept after faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Such a sequence puts them in the order in which men chronologically experience them. The proper understanding of these two principles is necessary before one can comprehend the advanced portions of the gospel. For this reason they are denominated "first principles."

In order to understand the subsequent chapters of this study, it is vital to realize that the scriptures teach that Christ provided the atonement for man, and in addition provided the gifts of faith, repentance, the privilege of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. In other words, Christ provided all parts of the gospel, under the Father's beneficence. Man's role, on the other hand, is equally broad--he must accept all parts of the gospel. Therefore, the fact that Christ's actions in resurrecting and judging are listed first in the classic definition does not conflict with the fact that in other definitions both resurrection and eternal judgment are presented as principles in abstract form,
after the first four principles. The atonement is part of Christ's role in the gospel, but the principles therein appear also on man's side of the picture as men accept and experience the results of these principles. Definitions throughout Latter-day Saint literature stress at times the Lord's part or man's part, sometimes connecting the various principles more strongly with one than the other. It is evident, nevertheless, that the Father provided the plan, Jesus Christ fills his role, and man has the role of accepting all parts of the plan and living thereby.

The final subject of the definition is the goal for which the gospel plan prepares men. The conclusion of verse twenty-one reaffirms the status of the Savior as the example men should follow. His works are the pattern. He is "the life and light of the world," the standard of emulation. The concluding verse to the definition states the goal very simply--to be "lifted up." This refers to salvation, exaltation, eternal life, etc.¹ Other scriptures give more details about this goal, as will be discussed later in this thesis.

A parallel definition by the Lord

Further corroboration of Christ's basic message to the Nephites is in 3 Nephi 11:31-35. During his first hours upon American soil, the Son of God declared his "doctrine," or gospel, to the twelve chosen Nephite disciples, with the multitude looking on.² The Lord instructed the twelve

¹The context for this verse is positive, not negative, so it probably does not contain the implication of a warning: "Beware and be good, remembering that you will be lifted up [resurrected] and face judgment."

²As mentioned earlier, his "doctrine" is another term for his "gospel." Jacob 7:6 speaks of "the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ." The term "doctrine" in this context apparently has the same meaning of relative fullness as does "gospel," which was discussed above in chapter one.
disciples as follows:

Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.
And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.
And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.
And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

This statement is included here as a parallel to the standard or classic definition, showing that this "gospel" was the message of Christ to the Nephites. Herein the Lord specifically emphasized the first four principles, repeating them for marked emphasis. Having declared the gospel to the disciples, He then turned to the multitude and again repeated the first four principles, man's responsibility to accept the gospel:

... Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore, blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.
And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire, and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.¹

Some writers have desired to limit the gospel, as such, to only those teachings mentioned in 3 Nephi 11:31-40. They base this stand on the statement by Christ in these verses, wherein He said:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and

whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open, to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.

Inasmuch as this passage does not discuss love, the resurrection, eternal judgment, and numerous other doctrines which Christ himself taught, it is not correct to assume that the doctrines in this passage are the only ones which He fully accredits. The context of the passage is one dealing with prior contentions which existed over the initial steps whereby one entered the Church. His purpose was to put an end to the disputations by clarifying his doctrine concerning these first principles. To declare "more or less than this" means that the misuse, misinterpretation, or omission of any of these particular teachings would be a great offense against the Lord. In reality, every principle which Christ taught is part of his "doctrine," for the word "doctrine" itself means "teaching," or that which is taught.

Definitions from Book of Mormon Prophets

Having now established a general standard or classic for defining the gospel in Latter-day Saint literature, attention may be turned to the definitions given by prophets in the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon claims that Christ revealed his gospel to prophets from the beginning of the Nephite civilization. Do these definitions agree with Christ's definition? Major definitive contributions in all parts of the book must stand scrutiny and comparison with the classic definition in regards to

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this question. It will be interesting to discover if the first definition, chronologically (2 Nephi 9:21-24), is in harmony with the last one (Moroni 8:24-26), and with those that lie in between.

Some of these definitions are more complete than others. The relatively complete ones will be presented first, followed by those which appear problematic by containing only part of the elements of the classic definition.

**Relatively complete definitions**

Particularly characteristic of definitions by the prophets of the Book of Mormon is the fact that they emphasized four principles—faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is logical, for they were teaching people the role of man in the gospel. In numerous other contexts they also stressed the role of Christ. For ease of reference hereafter these will be referred to as the "first four principles," or "first three principles" if the Holy Ghost is not mentioned. Definitions given by five prophets will be analyzed in this section. These were the only ones which defined the gospel in rather extensive terms, judged on the basis of the extensiveness of the classic definition.

(1) **Jacob**—

This first definition, given below, is unusual in that Jacob produced a classic description of the infinite atonement of Christ, enabling one to see the full scope of the gospel, also—and this near the beginning of the Book of Mormon:

> And he [Christ] cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam.
And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day.

And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

And if they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it.

Jacob spoke here of the first three principles as well as resurrection and judgment, but he did not use the word "gospel." That he was defining the gospel is evident from the context and from a comparison with the classic definition. As the first complete definition in the Book of Mormon (measured after the completeness of the definition by Christ) it is impressive in its marked similarity to the classic definition.

(2) Nephi.--

Near the close of his life and ministry, Nephi gave a description of man's part in the first four principles of the gospel. Although somewhat lengthy, it contains sufficient parallels to the classic definition to warrant presenting its entirety here:

And the Father said: Repent ye, repent ye, and be baptized in the name of my Beloved Son.

And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.

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But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me.

And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.

Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.

And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end.

Amen.

One can observe that Nephi repeated the first four principles several times, closing with the statement that these were "the doctrine of Christ" (verse twenty-one), which was noted earlier as a synonym for the gospel.

(3) Alma the elder.--

According to Book of Mormon chronology, this prophet wrote about 150 B.C. He defined the gospel thus:

And it came to pass after many days there were a goodly number gathered together at the place of Mormon, to hear the words of Alma. Yea, all were gathered together that believed on his word, to hear him. And he did teach them, and did preach unto them repentance, and redemption, and faith on the Lord.

And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;
Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn: yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—

Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?¹

Having mentioned here the first four principles, Alma then spoke of "redemption," which may have meant either the resurrection, the salvation awarded through eternal judgment, or both, judging on the basis of general Book of Mormon usage of the word "redemption." He did not use the word "gospel," but his message contains all of the elements of the classic definition.

(4) Mormon.—

In three distinct places in the book, Mormon gave full definitions including the first four principles.² As compiler and editor of the Book of Mormon, according to the account given in the book itself, he evidently knew that the major purpose of the record was to promulgate the gospel. Not only did he include many definitions from others but he also gave some of his own. In a fourth passage he mentioned the first four principles and also the principle of judgment.³ Two of these four passages are given below:

Therefore repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, and lay hold upon the gospel of Christ, which shall be set before you, not only in this record but also in the record which shall come unto the Gentiles from the Jews, which record shall come from the Gentiles

¹B. of M., Mosiah 18:7-10.
²B. of M., 3 Nephi 30:2; 4 Nephi 1:1; Moroni 8:24-26.
³B. of M., Mormon 7:8-10.
unto you.

... And if it be so that ye believe in Christ, and are baptized, first with water, then with fire and with the Holy Ghost, following the example of our Savior, according to that which he hath commanded us, it shall be well with you in the day of judgment. Amen."

Behold, my son, this thing [baptism of infants] ought not to be; for repentance is unto them that are under condemnation and under the curse of a broken law.

And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;

And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.  

The first passage clearly states that baptism is a two-part, interrelated affair--baptism by water and also by the fire of the Holy Ghost. The second statement further emphasizes that these principles operate in a related sequence.

(5) Moroni.--

As the abridger and editor of the Book of Ether, Moroni interjected his own comments occasionally in that book. Among these was a definition given by the Lord:

Therefore, repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and believe in my gospel, and be baptized in my name; for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned; and signs shall follow them that believe in my name.

And blessed is he that is found faithful unto my name at the last day, for he shall be lifted up to dwell in the kingdom prepared for him, from the foundation of the world. And behold it is I that hath spoken it. Amen.

This definition contains the first three principles, with the fourth principle being implied in the "signs" which "shall follow them

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1B. of M., Mormon 7:8-10.  2B. of M., Moroni 8:24-26.

3B. of M., Ether 4:18-19.
that believe," the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Also mentioned are the concepts of being "lifted up" and dwelling "in the kingdom prepared for him" who is faithful unto the end. These are references to resurrection and the salvation awarded under eternal judgment.

Chronologically, the last definition of the gospel given in the Book of Mormon was written by Moroni, wherein he clearly stated the first four principles:

And now I speak concerning baptism. Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and they were not baptized save they brought forth fruit meet that they were worthy of it. Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins. And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having determination to serve him to the end. And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ.

This passage was written close to the end of the Book of Mormon. Therein it can be seen that the last writer in the book, as the first, defined the gospel of Jesus Christ and bore solemn witness near the end of his ministry that it was the only means of salvation. In the last chapter of the book, Moroni declared that "by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things."² This concept reinforces his earlier statement concerning the gifts of the Spirit as parts of the gospel plan.

It is apparent from the preceding array of documentation and evidential material that throughout the Book of Mormon the prophets taught the same definition of the gospel. Nonetheless, special attention must now rightfully turn to some incomplete or partial definitions and the ques-
tions which they raise. The conclusions reached here will aid the
analysis of later definitions. The following are those who contributed
partial definitions of the gospel: Nephi, Benjamin, Alma the elder,
Alma the younger, Aaron, Aminadab, Samuel, and Nephi the third.

Preach nothing but repentance and faith

The first problem concerns Alma the elder, who seems to have
enjoined an unusual request upon the priests in the Church, commanding
them "that they should preach nothing save it were repentance and faith
on the Lord, who had redeemed his people." (Mosiah 18:20.) This pro-
blem is characteristic of many other passages in the Book of Mormon which
stress faith and repentance.¹ These statements seldom mention baptism
and do not once mention the gift of the Holy Ghost. (This does not take
into account the large number of additional passages which treat indi-
vidually the various principles of the gospel.

Three possible answers to the problem present themselves to mind.
First, the entire context of this chapter in Mosiah is one of teaching
the first four principles. Verse ten especially stresses baptism and
the reception of the Holy Ghost as consequences of faith and repentance.
Bear in mind also these passages--Alma 6:2, 3 Nephi 7:24, and 3 Nephi
26:17, which state that all who repented joined the Church through bap-
tism and received the Holy Ghost. It appears that whenever faith and
repentance were taught alone, the understood and implied results were to
be baptism and the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The second possible solution suggests that the first three princi-

¹B. of M., 2 Nephi 30:2; Mosiah 3:9-11; Alma 22:13-14; Helaman 5:
pies are actions which primarily involve mankind, whereas the fourth is an act of Deity, in connection with the authoritative imposition of hands. Inasmuch as the prophets were teaching men their duty toward religious matters, they naturally would stress the activities men were to participate in, perhaps not always noting the coming of the Holy Ghost, sent of God.

The third and most logical possibility is that the prophets stressed those things which the people were most in need of hearing in order to gain their salvation step by step. They taught principles in the context of the life situations confronting the congregations. This applies particularly in the several passages which teach faith and repentance, then mention one or more of the other principles according to the needs perceived by the authors. From the full context of their teachings, it is apparent that many more principles are implied or assumed in these definitions. A prime example of this type is found in Alma 22:13-14, which gives but a synopsis of the original sermon wherein many principles were apparnetly mentioned in full detail:

And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name.

And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance, and so forth; and that he breaketh the bands of death, that the grave shall have no victory, and that the sting of death should be swallowed up in the hopes of glory; and Aaron did expound all these things unto the king.

Was repentance sufficient to receive the Holy Ghost?

The second problem in partial definitions deals with Alma the younger. According to Mosiah 27:24 one might be led to think that Alma's
repentance was all which was needed to cleanse his sins and prepare him
for the Holy Ghost. He said, "I have repented of my sins, and have been
redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit." The context of
this statement must be considered in order to understand the case. Alma's
father was the High Priest over the entire Church and therefore probably
would have had his young son baptized, although he later rebelled as he
grew older. It required a heavenly manifestation to finally bring him
back to the fold of the Church, according to the record. In consequence
of the prayers of Alma's father, the angel of the Lord appeared to the
younger Alma and called him to repentance.¹

Following his repentance, Alma became a zealous missionary, preach-
ing both repentance and baptism. His first reported sermon declared:
"Come and be baptized unto repentance." (Alma 5:62.) The following
chapter also states that "whosoever did not belong to the church who
repented of their sins were baptized unto repentance, and were received
into the church." (Alma 6:2.) Finally, in Alma 36:18-19 he related that
his faith in Christ brought his repentance and deliverance. It is there-
fore possible to assume that Alma himself had been baptized, or was bap-
tized after his conversion, although the record is silent on the matter.
If he had been baptized, repentance alone was sufficient to restore him
to full fellowship in the Church.

It is apparent from the above evidence that Alma and all of the
prophets of the Book of Mormon were consistent in their definition of the
gospel. They agreed with each other and also with the classic definition
expounded by the Lord to the Nephites. Some of the definitions were
fragmentary and incomplete in comparison with the classic definition.

¹B. of M., Mosiah 27:10-20.
The essential fact is that they were consistent, as established from the analysis of their context. The absence of legally concise and full definitions does not invalidate the consistency of the evidence when analyzed in toto.

**Did the Nephites Separate Gospel and Ethics?**

In defining the gospel, one question is frequently asked by scholars in relation to the structure of the gospel, its fullness and purpose. For whom was the gospel intended, members or nonmembers? New Testament scholars have discussed at length the difference between *kerygma* or *euangelion* (gospel), which was the "preaching" of the Christian message to nonmembers; and the *didache* (teachings), which was the "teaching" done to strengthen members of the Church. In the Book of Mormon there is only the one word, "gospel," with no Greek background texts. Considering the purpose of the Book of Mormon, as stated above, it seems apparent that the central gospel message was included primarily to win proselytes in our day. On the other hand, some of the finest definitions already considered, including the standard or classic definition, were addressed originally to believers and members in order to refine their knowledge of the gospel, to strengthen their faith in its basic principles, and thus enable them to share that message with the world. As the Nephites did not record different words for their "teaching" and "preaching," is it possible that they did not distinguish between the two? At least, Joseph Smith's translation does not reveal a distinction. The Nephites evidently felt it important to stress the basic message over and over again even among the members of the Church. Perhaps not as philosophical as the Greeks, their practical nature led them to teach the concepts of
ethical conduct without giving them a one-word label. The only differentiation visible is the stress on the further light and knowledge which come through the gifts of the Spirit, which Spirit teaches all truth following the reception of the basic message of the gospel. Moroni stated: "And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things." In this manner they denoted an essential distinction between the primary principles and ordinances which a convert embraces, and the added truth gained by members of the Church through the administration of the Holy Ghost. An accurate definition of the gospel should therefore state that it is intended for all men, but that the advanced principles are especially for the benefit of Church members.

The Nephites stressed particularly, as shown above, the importance of the powers of the Spirit as an integral function in the gospel plan of salvation. Their message had roots in eternal relationships with God, not ethical humanism. It was indeed a gospel of power. Nonetheless, the prophets constantly affirmed that the gospel was concerned with aiding all temporal relationships as well. This theme is developed more extensively in later chapters of the present study.

Preliminary Summary and Synthesis

The results of the study to this point will be analyzed in light of the four thesis questions:

1. What is the gospel of Jesus Christ as defined in the Book of Mormon? This research has revealed that the message of the gospel plan in the Book of Mormon has Christ's role as its center. He obeyed the will of the Father by performing his mission and atonement. He thus

\[1\] B. of M., Moroni 10:5, also verse 4, and 1 Nephi 32:2-5.
acquired a fullness of glory and became the light and life of the world, showing men the way to salvation. Through the atonement for Adam's transgression He obtained the power to overcome the first spiritual death, bringing men back into the presence of God by the power of the resurrection. By descending below all things in suffering for the sins of all men, He comprehended all things and was able to succor men with salvation. He thus acquired the power to judge all men and reward them with degrees of salvation or damnation, according to their deeds in the flesh. Consequently, the Lord is able to glorify and exalt the obedient, giving them eternal life and a part in the Father's kingdom.

The message to all men is that their role in the gospel is to have faith in Christ, repent of sins, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The advanced part of the message is for members of the Church particularly. This part opens the door for the saints to receive all of the gifts, ordinances, and powers of God.

The Book of Mormon doesn't explain all of the intermediate steps in the gospel plan, as do subsequent revelations. Although it is less complex, it nevertheless does cover the full gamut from faith to salvation and eternal life. Its essential message expounds what later definitions term the "first principles."

The Lord's definition of the gospel (3 Nephi 27:13-21) is the epitome of definitions in the Book of Mormon. It condenses all of these into a brief statement. First, Christ's mission and atonement provide unconditionally the resurrection and the eternal judgment (with its reward of either salvation or damnation). Second, man's role, the def-

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1His actions in being the light and life of the world, and in glorifying the obedient, are not mentioned in detail in this definition.
inition states, is to accept the principles and ordinances of faith in Christ, repentance, baptism and the sanctifying gift of the Holy Ghost.

Although man embraces and performs these principles and ordinances, one must remember that Christ provides them as free gifts. In other words, Christ provided the atonement, but also the means of accepting it. (The classic definition does not mention any later or advanced principles and ordinances which men must accept.)

The Book of Mormon teaches the foregoing message as the gospel which the Nephite and Lamanite prophets received from the Lord. The gospel doctrines and definitions are clearly visible in the book, from the time of Nephi to Christ, and from Christ's ministry on to Moroni.

2. Is there agreement between the Book of Mormon and the ancient scriptures, modern scriptures, and modern prophets of the Church on the issue of the definition of the gospel? All definitions in the Book of Mormon appear to be in harmony with Christ's definition and with each other, as analyzed above. Some statements were more complete than others, but in the context of the entire book they were all in substantial agreement with each other. Their agreement with the other scriptures and prophets will be the subject of the chapters throughout the balance of the present study.

3. What, if any, were the important historical developments in the definition of the gospel in the Book of Mormon? There seemed to be no notable development of the definition of the gospel from one part of the Book of Mormon to another. Full definitions were given by Jacob and Nephi (600 B.C.), by Alma around 100 years before Christ, by Christ at his appearance upon the American continent, and finally by Mormon and
Moroni, the last two writers in the book (A.D. 400). Mormon edited the book and was visibly deliberate in his choice of definitions of the gospel, including samples from each of the significant periods. The earliest writers had a knowledge of all basic parts of the message, as well as of the truths and gifts of the Spirit which are built upon the framework of the basic principles. Later writers added nothing original, although Christ gave his authoritative definition as a standard of measurement for all others rather late in the book.

4. What are some possible answers for any differing definitions? Some definitions came forth in proselyting situations and not from prepared texts, it seems, whereas others were carefully written out or thought out by the authors in advance. The apparent minor differences in emphasis upon certain points, and the neglect of other points, may come from the differences in the groups addressed and the needs perceived by the authors. In the total context the statements were consistent. Scholars have explained the frequency or infrequency of certain doctrines in the New Testament in just such a manner. Frequency is not always a valid index to the importance laid upon any given doctrine by any one author, especially if the occasion is unusual or the doctrine is particularly sacred.¹ In the Book of Mormon the total context does give some support to the validity of a frequency test, for Mormon carefully edited it with the intent of preaching the full, balanced gospel to future generations. Throughout the book the writers stressed continually the basic principles contained in the standard or classic definition. An example of this is the doctrine and practice of baptism, which the book teaches

thoroughly. This makes it a strong complement to the New Testament, which leaves open many questions concerning the manner and purpose of baptism.

In conclusion, the design of the Book of Mormon is neither historical nor scientific, neither military nor literary—it is doctrinal. Being doctrinal, the first question here has been to know what the prophets intended to teach, and what was the purpose behind their writings. As already remarked, according to their own statements the intent of the Book of Mormon is to teach the gospel in these latter days in order to bring men to Christ. How well their purpose has succeeded in terms of making converts today is another subject, and would be an interesting field of study itself. This chapter has demonstrated, nevertheless, that the Nephite prophets were consistent with their intention of teaching the gospel. Furthermore, they not only taught the gospel—they defined it in clear, concise terms, leaving particularly a classic definition by the Savior.
CHAPTER THREE

DEFINITIONS FROM JOSEPH SMITH AND HIS COLLEAGUES

The Book of Mormon served as a vehicle for introducing some new teachings on the gospel into nineteenth century society. Following this introduction, Joseph Smith brought forth additional concepts as part of the restored gospel. These concepts were not radically different from the Book of Mormon statements, but were amplifications of doctrinal areas not fully enlarged upon in the Nephite record. The sections below will consider three particular aspects of these definitions--first principles, advanced principles, and descriptive definitions of the gospel.

First Principles of the Systematic Gospel

The first necessary step in this chapter is to determine the essential parts and principles of the gospel, the initial message of conversion presented during this period. This section presents definitions from Joseph Smith, writing as the Lord's prophet, regarding the first principles of the gospel. Also included are statements from Joseph Smith's colleagues concerning this same subject. The concluding portion of the section treats partial or incomplete statements of these principles.

It is evident that at times the Prophet expressed the first principles, as well as many other principles, as abstractions not related solely to either Christ's or man's roles in the gospel. At other times he connected them closely with either one or both of these roles. The
Book of Mormon, particularly the classic definition by Christ, treats the principles of resurrection and eternal judgment in terms of Christ's role, for example. Joseph Smith, on the other hand, at times spoke of them as first principles to be believed in by man. This is not a contradiction. As explained earlier, the Father propounded the gospel plan of salvation, with Christ and man acting out their roles in relation to that one set of principles. Stating the principles as abstractions merely omits reference to their dual relationship to Christ and man, each in his own function in relation to the principles.

The Church leaders during this period discussed the gospel in unique ways. The Prophet emphasized repeatedly the first principles of the gospel, particularly the mission and atonement of Christ, as the core of the plan. He did not always dwell on the atonement, however, for he noted that the principles appended to it were also necessary to raise men to eternal life. He also spoke on the aspects of Christ's full role. The latter part of this chapter will treat the advanced portions of his role. In most instances when the Prophet spoke of the "gospel plan," in a definition context, he specified the first principles, leaving the advanced ones for separate treatment. In expounding Christ's role he followed the same pattern, dwelling particularly on the atonement and leaving later parts of his eternal ministry for individual discussions. This method of discoursing on the gospel produced many definitions which declare only the first principles. These include some which emphasize Christ's part in the plan, but a majority which deal only with abstract truths which man must learn. According to Latter-day Saint teachings, Christ's role occupies the center position in the gospel, although some definitions do not emphasize it. The Church leaders generally treated the
Lord's part in the gospel in non-definition contexts, however.

Joseph Smith and the Doctrine and Covenants

The Doctrine and Covenants is a compilation of Joseph Smith's canonized revelations and writings, with a few pieces from other writers. It is the major source to consider under the heading of first principles. Although some of the sections were not included in the published volume until some years after the Prophet's death, this study will treat them in the chronological order in which they were first written.

Aside from the definitions of the gospel in the Book of Mormon, the earliest statement concerning the content of the gospel plan, as recorded by the hand of the Prophet, was one which John the Baptist gave to him in 1829. Section Thirteen of the Doctrine and Covenants contains this definition. Latter-day Saints believe that the resurrected John the Baptist visited Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and bestowed upon them the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood, saying:

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.

Although this passage does not mention faith, the Church teaches that faith logically precedes repentance and baptism. This gospel which John restored does not possess the power to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, but it is to school men and lead them to Christ's full plan of salvation. This gospel was administered under the Aaronic Priesthood from the time of Moses, training the Israelites in connection with the

\[1\text{D&C 13.}\]
law of Moses, as Paul said.\(^1\) In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord named and defined it very clearly as:

... the preparatory gospel;
Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb.\(^2\)

Thus, in ancient times the Lord gave the law of carnal commandments or the law of Moses "with all its rites and variety of ceremonies," in lieu of the fullness of the gospel. It will not be restored in these last days for that reason, not being a part of the higher gospel.\(^3\) It was a lesser law, a lower program not equal to the fullness of the everlasting gospel. The Lord gave it to stimulate faith and prepare men for the restoration of the exalting principles of the gospel, administered under the direction of the Melchizedek Priesthood.\(^4\) The preparatory gospel, however, is an integral part of the fullness of the everlasting gospel, embracing the first three principles thereof.

Just a few days prior to April 6, 1830, the day on which the Church was organized, the Lord revealed through Joseph certain aspects of Church organization and doctrine. Included therein was a statement of the broad sweep of the gospel plan. Although the word "gospel" was not used directly therein, the concepts are those found in the definitions in the Book of Mormon. It is interesting to note that early in the Doctrine and Covenants, even as He did early in the Book of Mormon, the Lord gave a relatively complete definition of the gospel through one of his prophets. The leading parts of this message are contained in the follow-

\(^1\)Gal. 3:24.  \(^2\)D&C 84:26-27.  \(^3\)DHC, IV, 212.  
ing verses, wherein the Lord said of the gospel:

    By these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is
    infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same
    unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things
    which are in them;
    And that he created man, male and female, after his own image
    and likeness, created he them;
    And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve
    him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only
    being whom they should worship.
    But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual
    and devilish, and became fallen man.
    Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it
    is written in those scriptures which have been given of him.
    He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them.
    He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day;
    And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of
    the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of
    the Father;
    That as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy
    name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved--
    Not only those who believed after he came in the meridian of
    time, in the flesh, but all those from the beginning, even as many
    as were before he came, who believed in the words of the holy pro-
    phets, who spake as they were inspired by the gift of the Holy Ghost,
    who truly testified of him in all things, should have eternal life.
    As well as those who should come after, who should believe in
    the gifts and callings of God by the Holy Ghost, which beareth
    record of the Father and of the Son;
    Which Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and
    eternal, without end. Amen.
    And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of
    Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith
    on his name to the end, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.
    And we know that justification through the grace of our Lord
    and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true;
    And we know also, that sanctification through the grace of our
    Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love
    and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength.  

The Lord began the foregoing by stating the things which the gos-
pel plan reveals—that there is a God; that He is the creator of heaven,
earth, and mankind's total environment; and that men should love him and
serve him, inasmuch as He is their creator also. He then declared that
the Fall necessitated the atonement, wherein Christ suffered for the

world, rose from the dead, and now reigns in glory. Finally, the Lord expounded the first principles which men must accept to be saved. These are faith, repentance, and baptism. Verse twenty-seven also points to the importance of receiving the "gifts and callings of God by the Holy Ghost," which is a direct allusion to the fourth principle and ordinance of the gospel.

The concluding verses are of particular interest, as they lay stress upon the fact that justification and sanctification come through the Lord Jesus Christ. As noted above in the present study, the various gifts of the Spirit are for the purpose of preparing man to come back into the presence of God. The Holy Ghost is the active agent in justification and sanctification, even purifying a man to the point that he becomes just and true in the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, a man must demonstrate personal righteousness and good works to become justified. In spite of this fact, one should never lose sight of the truth that it is indeed by virtue of the Lord himself, through his atonement, that these processes are possible for the individual through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost is in reality, then, the one who acts as agent for the Lord by implementing Christ's principles of sanctification in the lives of men.

The next definition appeared in a revelation which Joseph Smith received in October of 1830. Herein one finds the same four basic principles of man's role in the gospel which were stated in the Book of Mormon. The Lord declared:

Yea, repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission

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of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the
baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.

Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and
remember that they shall have faith in me or they can in nowise be
saved."

In a revelation shortly thereafter the Lord again stressed only
the first four principles and the signs which follow, as being his
gospel:

And verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth my gospel
receiveth me; and he that receiveth not my gospel receiveth not me.
And this is my gospel—repentance and baptism by water, and
then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Com-
forter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things
of the kingdom.

Smith and Sjodahl in their commentary on these verses explained
why they thought the Lord defined the gospel in this way on that partic-
ular occasion:

Mr. Covill was a Baptist. . . . They believe in baptism by
immersion after a confession of belief in our Lord and repentance
of past sins. To them baptism is but an outward sign of inward
grace, not essential to salvation but necessary to those who will
"fulfil all righteousness." The Lord now states to Mr. Covill what
His gospel is. It is repentance, and baptism of water and the Holy
Ghost, and obedience to the teachings of the Comforter regarding
"the peaceable things of the kingdom." (See Sec. 36:2).

A further significant section in the Doctrine and Covenants pre-
sents the gospel as the message of Christ's atonement, and the principles
and ordinances which men must follow to be saved:

And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out
of the heavens bore record unto us---
That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for
the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the
world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;
That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put
into his power and made by him;
Who glorifies the Father, and saves all the works of his hands,

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1D&C 33:11-12.  2D&C 39:5-6; see also 84:64-75.
3Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, Doctrine and Covenants Com-
except those sons of perdition who deny the Son after the Father has revealed him.

And again we bear record—for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.\(^1\)

More will be said below about being sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which is classed as an advanced principle of the gospel.

Later in the revelation the Lord detailed more fully the results accruing to man's acceptance of Christ's role and plan. This section is unique in explaining the various degrees of salvation and glory which men may achieve, even to the point of becoming gods. Again, later parts of this chapter will discuss these advanced principles. Suffice it to say here that the Lord expounded the principles of the degrees of resurrection, as well as the degrees of salvation or damnation which the eternal judgment will provide.\(^2\)

Joseph Smith and the Pearl of Great Price

The same basic teachings on the first principles of the gospel are as evident in the Book of Moses as they are in the Doctrine and Covenants. The Book of Moses, in the Pearl of Great Price, is unique in that it proclaims the essential gospel message as it was given to Adam and the early

\(^1\)D&C 76:40-44, 50-53. \(^2\)D&C 76:64, 73, 78, 85, 111.
patriarchs of the race. They learned the principles of the atonement, faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the redemption (or resurrection) of the body, and salvation or damnation following the eternal judgment—all as provided by the atonement of Christ. These principles were taught in the earliest ages of the world, and the Book of Moses gives the clearest description available in Latter-day Saint literature, of the initial revelation of this gospel message to Adam, Enoch, and Noah.

It is logical, the Church members believe, that the first revelations to Adam would contain the most vital essentials of the plan of salvation, as detailed by the following passage:

And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence.

And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord.

And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

And then the angel spake saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.

And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou has fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.¹

The principle of animal sacrifice, here revealed, is a permanent part of the gospel and will be practiced again in these last days in some manner, according to the Prophet Joseph Smith.² A later part of

¹P. of G. P., Moses 5:4-9. ²DHC, IV, 210-12.
this chapter will treat this more extensively.

The sacrifice of the Only Begotten (verse seven) refers to the atonement of Christ. It was appropriate, the Church teaches, for the Lord to reveal this at the first to our father Adam, that he might thereby gain faith in Christ and teach it to his posterity. Verse nine speaks of the principle of faith, saying, "thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son." The second principle of the gospel, repentance, is present in the same verse. Verse ten records that the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam in that day. This is the third principle and second ordinance of the gospel, but the fourth one, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, is not visible in the passage. It remained for Enoch to report the event of Adam's baptism, which very probably occurred at the time the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam. Enoch's statement will be discussed later. (Moses 6.)

Latter-day Saints believe that Adam received the full, basic message of the gospel, beginning with the first principles. Through this gospel plan he gradually received more truth and knowledge. The Lord's Spirit continued to call upon men to obey the message of the gospel. Later in the same chapter the message is repeated, but the consequences of obedience and disobedience are spelled out:

And the Lord God called upon men by the Holy Ghost everywhere and commanded them that they should repent;

And as many as believed in the Son, and repented of their sins, should be saved; and as many as believed not and repented not, should be damned; and the words went forth out of the mouth of God in a firm decree; wherefore they must be fulfilled.¹

These verses emphasize only the principles of faith and repentance. For some reason this particular passage does not speak of the ordinances

of baptism of water and baptism of the Spirit. They are implied, however, in the full context of the Book of Moses. The Lord proclaimed the consequences of obedience and disobedience in simple and concise terms: salvation or damnation. This does not refer to the "heaven and hell" concept of the sectarian world, however, for each man will be judged according to his own works and receive a commensurate degree of glory in eternity.¹

The last two verses in chapter five of the Book of Moses contain the first use of the term "gospel" in that book, applying it as a name to the message already taught by Adam. These verses also clearly mention the existence of the "gift of the Holy Ghost," the fourth principle of the gospel: "And thus the Gospel began to be preached, from the beginning being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost."²

Turning to the first recorded sermon by Enoch, one finds the most complete definition of the gospel in the Pearl of Great Price. The comprehensiveness and clarity of this statement are possible reasons why the Lord preserved it for nearly six thousand years. Because of its importance, being one of the finest statements in the standard works on the subject of the atonement, the gospel, and the nature of men, it appears in full below, with verse numbers included for later reference:

50. God hath made known unto our fathers that all men must repent.
51. And he called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God, I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh.
52. And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ,

the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.

53. And our father Adam spake unto the Lord, and said: Why is it that men must repent and be baptized in water? And the Lord said unto Adam: Behold I have forgiven thee thy transgression in the Garden of Eden.

54. Hence came the saying abroad among the people, That the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world.

55. And the Lord spake unto Adam, saying: Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good.

56. And it is given unto them to know good from evil; wherefore they are agents unto themselves, and I have given unto you another law and commandment.

57. Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.

58. Therefore I give unto you a commandment, to teach these things freely unto your children, saying:

59. That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory;

60. For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified;

61. Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment.

62. And now, behold, I say unto you: This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time.

Verse fifty-two of the above statement concisely presents the basic commandment to man—the principles of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. These comprise the formula for man's union,
spiritually, with God.

The promise of receiving all truth through the Holy Ghost is latently evident in the foregoing definition. This is the key to understanding the fact that the gospel is the divine channel through which man may acquire all truth. The systematic order of receiving divine truth is through the gifts and powers of the Holy Ghost. There is a sharp distinction here between the steps of the gospel before one receives the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the great truths promised after receiving it.

A unique part of this definition is the fact that the Lord explained in great detail to Adam the reason behind the atonement and the principles which man must obey. He described the fallen, carnal, and evil nature of unregenerate man. The crux of the matter comes in verse fifty-seven, where the Lord declared that the atonement and subsequent commandments are for one reason—to cleanse man and enable him to return to the presence of God, endowed with immortal glory. As the verse indicates, in his fallen state it is impossible for man to return to God, for "no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence." By obedience to the first three commandments of faith, repentance, and baptism, man may then receive the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. He prepares man for the pinnacle of the gospel, the enjoyment of "eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory." (verse fifty-nine.) The latter part of this chapter will treat these advanced principles more thoroughly.

The concluding verse (sixty-eight) briefly illuminates one of the cardinal principles or consequences of the gospel, stating that through this plan of salvation all may become the sons of Christ. Although this
passage does not use the word "gospel," it employs the term "plan of salvation" as a functional synonym for the gospel in all of its facets.\(^1\) As a general term in Latter-day Saint usage it embraces the pre-mortal existence, earth life, the first principles, and all other doctrines pertaining to this life and the eternities hereafter. In the author's opinion, this title is more descriptive and understandable than its synonym "gospel."

This statement of the structure and goals of the gospel is outstanding in terms of beauty, conciseness, and comprehensiveness.

A further, though brief, mention of the first principles of the gospel is in Moses, chapter seven, wherein the Lord commanded Enoch:

> Go to this people, and say unto them—Repent, lest I come out and smite them with a curse, and they die.
>
> And he gave unto me a commandment that I should baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son, which is full of grace and truth, and of the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of the Father and the Son.\(^2\)

Here the doctrines of repentance and baptism appear in isolation. The principle of faith in Jesus Christ is also implied where it says that converts are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.\(^3\) The statement that the Holy Ghost bears record of the Father and the Son is a subtle reference to the fourth principle of the gospel. The Lord commanded Enoch in this case to declare particularly the "commandment" part of the gospel, whereas in his former discussion of the plan as given to Adam he dwelt heavily upon the nature of the atonement. An explanation for this shift in emphasis may lie in the fact that the record claims the people of Enoch's day were profoundly

wicked\(^1\) and needed the stern warning of the Lord: "Repent, lest I come out and smite them with a curse, and they die." (Moses 7:10.)

The final reference to the gospel in the Book of Moses comes from the history of Noah's ministry. It gives a clear-cut, structured definition, using the word "gospel" to describe the sermon which Noah was to preach when called by the Lord:

And it came to pass that Noah prophesied, and taught the things of God, even as it was in the beginning.

\[\begin{array}{l}
\text{And the Lord ordained Noah after his own order, and commanded him that he should go forth and declare his Gospel unto the children of men, even as it was given unto Enoch.} \\
\text{And it came to pass that Noah called upon the children of men that they should repent, but they hearkened not unto his words;} \\
\text{And it came to pass that Noah continued his preaching unto the people, saying: Hearken, and give heed unto my words;} \\
\text{Believe and repent of your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, even as our fathers, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, that ye may have all things made manifest; and if ye do not this, the floods will come in upon you; nevertheless they hearkened not.}
\end{array}\]

This was the identical gospel which Enoch preached, according to verse nineteen of the same chapter. Noah's message was centered in repentance, as was Enoch's, but in this case Noah unmistakably enunciated the principles of belief or faith in Christ, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Ghost. Again in this passage, as in Moses 6:52, there is a distinction between the initial principles of the gospel and all things which are made manifest through the unique gift of the Holy Ghost. His blessings and spiritual gifts come as a result of the activation of the first principles in the lives of men. An interesting addition to the gospel of Noah's time was the proclamation that "if ye do not this [obey

\[\begin{array}{l}
\text{\footnotesize P. of G. P., Moses 6:27-30, 37; 7:-28-37.} \\
\text{\footnotesize 2 P. of G. P., Moses 8:16, 19-20, 23-24.}
\end{array}\]
the gospel], the floods will come in upon you." (Moses 8:24.) Temporal salvation was a part of the gospel message in that day, even as it has been in the present dispensation. By comparison, such principles as the Word of Wisdom are for the "temporal salvation of all saints in the last days."¹ In the current times the Lord has warned of imminent destructions facing the whole world, when the wrath of the Almighty will be revealed at his coming.² Adherence to the gospel's teachings will preserve the saints in the midst of these calamities, the Lord has promised.

The first four principles are spoken of in the fourth Article of Faith, another part of the Pearl of Great Price. These famous articles were written by Joseph Smith in March of 1842, subsequently being included in the canon of Latter-day Saint scripture. The fourth article describes the four principles as "the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel."⁴ It is easy to lose sight of the fact that the preceding second and third Articles of Faith mention Christ's role in the gospel, part of which is the atonement. These two articles state:

We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.
We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.⁵

"Saved" in this context parallels the Book of Mormon usage, where salvation is a general term but also contains the specific implication of exaltation.

Careful reading reveals that two principles of Christ's atonement, namely, resurrection (redemption from the physical and spiritual deaths

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¹D&C 89:2. ²D&C 1:8-16. ³D&C 38:30.
⁵P. of G. P., Articles of Faith 2 and 3.
caused by Adam's fall)\(^1\) and *salvation* are implicitly contained in these first two articles, and as shown earlier salvation is awarded through the eternal judgment. B. H. Roberts' explanation of the second article supports this interpretation:

And while the law transgressed by Adam has been vindicated, the posterity of Adam, who became subject to death through his disobedience, are redeemed from the grave without anything being required of them. So far salvation is free, universal, and unconditional, extending to every man, woman and child who has ever breathed the breath of life. And hence the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote as one of the articles of our faith, "We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression."

This is what is meant, then, by General Salvation; free redemption for all mankind through the resurrection from death, which was the great penalty affixed to the law that Adam transgressed. This is what the Atonement of Christ accomplished for man; but this is not all Messiah did for man, as we shall see when we come to speak of individual salvation.

James E. Talmage, the foremost commentator on the Articles of Faith, had the following to say about the full implications of the third article:

But besides this universal application of the atonement, whereby all men are redeemed from the effects of Adam's transgression both with respect to the death of the body and inherited sin, there is application of the same great sacrifice as a means of propitiation for individual sins through the faith and good works of the sinner. This twofold effect of the atonement is implied in the article of our faith now under consideration. [number three.] The first effect is to secure to all mankind alike, exemption from the penalty of the fall, thus providing a plan of General Salvation. The second effect is to open a way for Individual Salvation whereby mankind may secure remission of personal sins.\(^2\)

Although Joseph Smith did not use the term "first principles of the gospel" in the second and third articles, it is demonstrable from the evidence below that he defined these two results of the atonement as

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\(^1\)B. of M., Helaman 14:15-18.


"first principles." The juxtaposition of the concepts in the second, third, and fourth articles discloses their relationship as first principles, especially when viewed in context with the other statements of the Prophet presented in the following sub-section. It is logical that he would purposely put these three articles next to each other, for his other statements placed the same concepts together as "first principles."

**Joseph Smith commentaries**

The two preceding sub-sections have examined Joseph Smith's canonized writings in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. This sub-section presents his uncanonized commentaries, delivered in sermons, periodicals, and his personal journal. Although these statements are not part of the standard works, one should bear in mind the comment by J. Reuben Clark, Jr., to the effect that the President of the Church has the special spiritual endowment to declare the mind and will of God, even though his writings are not always officially canonized.¹

In January, 1833, Joseph Smith gave a title to the first three principles, calling them "the requirements of the new covenant, or first principles of the Gospel of Christ."² Later statements by Joseph Smith and his colleagues reinforced the inclusion of faith as one of the first principles. It is possible that he derived this title from Hebrews 5:12-6:6, which he quoted several times. That passage speaks of "the first principles," followed by a listing of six items, the same ones discussed earlier—faith, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, resurrection, and eternal judgment. In general usage in the Church the title "first principles of the gospel" currently applies primarily to the first

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¹See above, p. 6. ²DHC, I, 314-15.
four principles only, but not to resurrection and eternal judgment.

In September, 1835, Joseph Smith remarked the "remission of sins" was a principle of the gospel, but was blended in with "repentance" in the Bible. This, then, is a further example of the fact that "first principles" are not ultimately and always indivisible but may indeed include sub-principles within themselves.1 The reader will recall also that "eternal judgment" as a gospel principle includes within itself the finalized forgiveness of sins and the alternative results of either salvation or damnation.

Defining the "fundamental principles of our religion," in 1838 Joseph Smith stated that they were "the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it." He then just mentioned some of these appendages: faith, the gift of the Holy Ghost, spiritual gifts, the restoration of Israel, and the final triumph of truth.2 This definition is excellent in showing the central position which Christ's role occupies in the gospel.

During 1839 the Prophet became more explicit in defining the first principles, as well as detailing more extensively certain advanced principles as parts of the gospel. In a letter dated March 22, 1839, six basic concepts appear:

1 And again we believe in the doctrine of faith, and of repentance, and of baptism for the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the


2 DHC, III, 30.
dead, and of eternal judgment.

I consider these to be some of the leading items of the gospel, as taught by Christ and his apostles, and as received by those whom they taught.

The next step from calling these "leading items" was to label them as "first principles." This the Prophet did when, on June 27, 1839, he discussed the first four principles and then remarked: "THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD AND THE ETERNAL JUDGMENT are necessary to preach among the first principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

This statement is a key to understanding the full picture of gospel definitions. It sets the number of first principles at six, not just four. The word "among" also suggests the thought that the categories of "first principles" and "advanced principles" are not rigid, but are on a continuum, each gradually merging into the other. It is essential that men learn about resurrection and eternal judgment early, inasmuch as they are universal results of the atonement. Perhaps for this reason the Lord listed them as first principles.

These six doctrines appear in the context of several advanced principles, namely, two of the gifts of the Spirit (tongues and revelation), and the doctrine of election, or making one's calling and election sure. Later parts of this chapter will discuss these in detail. It is noteworthy, though, that in some of his discourses the Prophet gave a fairly sweeping outline of the entire gospel plan. This sermon is one of the most concise, yet comprehensive, ever given by him on this subject. A similar discourse in 1841 presented the first six principles, and then

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1 Joseph Smith, "Copy of a letter from J. Smith jr to Mr. Galland," Times and Seasons, I(February, 1840), 54-55.

2 DHC, III, 379; VI, 57-58, 364. See also "address," Times and Seasons, II (June, 1841), 430.
the doctrine of election.\footnote{DHC, IV, 359-60.}

In 1843 the Prophet revised a passage in Hebrews to clarify the purpose of the first six principles of the gospel:

Look at Heb. vi. 1 for contradictions--"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." If a man leaves the principles of the doctrine of Christ, how can he be \textit{saved in the principles}? \textit{This is a contradiction.} I don't believe it. I will render it as it should be--"Therefore \textbf{not} leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."\footnote{DHC, VI, 57-58.}

The underlined word in the passage is an addition by the Prophet. The change is entirely logical when studied in the full context of the scriptures. It points out the fact that the first principles are only the gateway or first steps to further truths, leading eventually to perfection, glorification, and a fullness of truth.

The Prophet's colleagues

Nearly all of the statements on the structure of the gospel during this period came from the Prophet himself, but an analysis of the teachings of Joseph Smith's colleagues reveals that they taught the same basic first principles of the gospel. Oliver Cowdery so stated in March, 1835:

Seven things comprise the whole of the items of command and promise which they [the Apostles] were to deliver to the world: First, faith--Second, repentance--Third, baptism--Fourth, remission--Fifth, the gift of the Holy Spirit--Sixth, power--Seventh, salvation and eternal life.

Let the reader compare Matthew 28:19, 20, with Mark 16:15, 16, 17, 18,--Luke 24:45, 46, 47, 48, with the second chapter of the acts of the apostles and he will be enabled to see and understand the apostolic commission without either priest or commentator.\footnote{Oliver Cowdery, "The Gospel, No. III," \textit{M&A}, I (December, 1834), 38; see also "Letter V--to W. W. Phelps, Esq., \textit{M&A}, I (March, 1835), 95.}
Parley P. Pratt and W. W. Phelps made similar statements. The entire Quorum of the Twelve in 1837 emphasized six principles in the following instructions to all missionaries and saints:

Preach the first principles of the doctrine of Christ—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance towards God, baptism in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

This is one of the clearest and most concise structurings of the first principles of the gospel to be found in any source. This and some of the preceding definitions by Joseph Smith are remarkably similar to the classic definition in the Book of Mormon. The essential difference is that here the principles of resurrection and eternal judgment are presented after faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, instead of before. This arrangement tends to emphasize the chronological order in which man experiences the gospel principles. In contrast, the classic definition begins with an emphasis upon Christ's role in doing the will of the Father by accomplishing the atonement, thereby providing the resurrection and eternal judgment. Furthermore, in the classic definition resurrection and eternal judgment do not appear in relation to man's role, but only as results of Christ's actions, leaving the reader to infer that they are principles which also apply to man in his phase of the gospel plan. In this later definition, the apostles present the concepts as abstract principles in which men are to have faith.

1Parley P. Pratt, A Voice of Warning (9th ed.; Salt Lake City: The Deseret News Steam Printing Establishment, 1874), 63.


3DHC, III, 396.
Realizing the value of the basic framework of the gospel, Joseph Smith and his colleagues stressed that the elders should teach these first principles. If they would do so, they were promised that their minds would be opened to all truth and knowledge. Hyrum Smith remarked, "Preach the first principles of the Gospel--preach them over again: you will find that day after day new ideas and additional light conering them will be revealed to you."¹ Heber C. Kimball also stated, "So it is with the first principles of the Gospel, they branch out in all directions, unfolding new light continually. They are eternal principles."² It becomes apparent that the first principles lead men to all truth. To declare the full gospel would be to expound all truth, but mankind is obviously not prepared at this time for such a complete revelation.

Partial definitions

Special attention needs to be given to the problem of partial explanations of the gospel in this period, just as it was in the chapter on the Book of Mormon. Twelve different statements from ten different men in this era defined the gospel as being the first four principles. (None of these, however, absolutely declared that the gospel included nothing other than those four principles. As a matter of fact, some of these men on other occasions included other principles in the gospel structure.) These men were Joseph Smith, Edward Partridge, Oliver Cowdery, Parley P. Pratt, Elias Higbee, Erastus Snow, A. Cheney, Stephen Burnett, Warren Parish, and Thomas Ward. Half were General Authorities; the other half wrote articles in early Church periodicals on the subject. Judging from the dates on which these statements were made, it appears

¹Ibid., VI, 323. ²Ibid., VI, 324.
logical that these men knew that Joseph Smith had stated that resurrection and eternal judgment were also first principles in the gospel. Furthermore, they undoubtedly realized that the atonement and the entire life of Christ are part of the gospel, according to all scriptures. To leave out the atonement from any definition would be to negate the gospel in that definition.

These partial definitions illustrate well the fact that circumstances and personal needs of the audience, as well as the intentions of the author, influence definitions. Legalistic completeness is rarely a mark of human speech, and these statements of the gospel structure stress those principles which the author evidently felt were needed at the time. The above evidence leads one to the same conclusion presented in the chapter on the Book of Mormon, namely, that the Nephite prophets emphasized the first four principles on many occasions because they are man's role, man's responsibility and realm of action. Consequently, mankind needed these teachings frequently, in addition to a knowledge of the role which Christ played and yet plays.

This problem is even more apparent in those passages which contain even fewer than four principles and yet profess to state "the gospel." At times the Lord himself emphasized repentance and baptism as the "preparatory gospel." (D&C 13.) This is also what Enoch taught on one occasion, although it is obvious from Enoch's other writings that he had the full teachings which Adam had. Oliver Cowdery and others repeatedly said that the gospel was the same from the time of Adam until this dis-

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1P. of G. P., Moses 7:10-11.
Indeed, the records indicate that the ancients definitely had the first six principles, although they may have spoken on occasion of only two or three in order to give the proper emphasis which would challenge the people to righteousness.

Summary

To summarize this discussion on first principles, from the foregoing quotations it is manifest that the first principles of the gospel, as taught by Joseph Smith and his colleagues, were six in number. The Church leaders presented these six in abstract form, whereas generally the Book of Mormon related some of these to Christ's role and some to man's role. The principles in this chapter are in harmony with the ones discussed in the preceding chapter, nonetheless. These six principles appeared in various combinations to suit the occasion, as the authors perceived the spiritual requirements of the people. The consensus of the sources was that the basic principles were the first, but not the last and only parts of the gospel.

Advanced Principles of the Systematic Gospel

The plan of the system

In the early period of the Church in this dispensation, the Prophet Joseph Smith brought forth many doctrines and ordinances in addition to those teachings which relate to the first principles of the gospel. For convenience the present writer has named these "advanced principles."

This is not to imply that they are necessarily more difficult or essential than the first principles. The Prophet proclaimed these parts of the gospel at different times to build up the Church upon the foundation already laid intact, the first principles. He did this particularly when the Lord introduced or revealed a given doctrine. It is important to realize that the principles were frequently not defined as parts of the gospel, per se, until some time after the Lord revealed them as individual doctrines of the Church. Upon careful study, however, one is able to observe an orderly context and sequence in the gospel plan as progressively revealed in the Doctrine and Covenants and other writings of the Prophet. Since the gospel is a divine plan or system, it is necessary to define it in terms of its structure and sequence. The following sub-sections will do this, building, of course, upon the foundation of the first principles, as discussed above. They are the central, core truths from which all other principles evolve and grow. At the heart of everything, without question, is the atonement of Christ, which provides all of the other steps in the ladder to perfection. Indeed, as structured and revealed in the Doctrine and Covenants, the gospel plan is the means of acquiring gradually all truth and of becoming perfected in Jesus Christ.

Gifts of the Spirit

The Lord and his prophets have repeatedly taught that certain gifts of the Spirit must come as a result of the gift of the Holy Ghost, or else one is not living the gospel. During the Joseph Smith era the Latter-day Saint leaders declared these to be requisite parts and products of the gospel, administered to men by the Holy Ghost. They are parts
of the plan as a whole, but products of belief in the message of the
gospel. As such, then, they are a step beyond or above the first prin-
ciples. The ancient apostles taught that signs would follow the believ-
ers in the form of spiritual gifts (Mark 16:17-18), and the same doctrine
found expression in the Doctrine and Covenants:

Go ye into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature,
acting in the authority which I have given you, baptizing in the
name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
And he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he
that believeth not shall be damned.
And he that believeth shall be blest with signs following,
even as it is written.

These spiritual gifts appear in a detailed list in Section Forty-
Six of the Doctrine and Covenants. The detail there is greater than in
any other list of the gifts in the standard works. Inasmuch as these
gifts are all parts and products of the gospel, the table on the follow-
ing page presents a compilation of them as found in all four standard
works. The Holy Ghost grants unto every man according to his needs, so
there must be a variety of gifts. Bruce R. McConkie has indicated that
"in the fullest sense, the [spiritual gifts] are infinite in number and
endless in their manifestations." 2

The Holy Ghost has the mission of declaring the truths of the gospel
of God to the righteous. The Doctrine and Covenants declares that "God
shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable
gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was
until now." (121:26.) Spiritual gifts are the Lord's means of endowing
man with the spiritual truths and powers of the gospel. The principles
in the Sermon on the Mount are examples of the truths which come to men
after baptism, if they seek light and knowledge through the gifts of the

1D&C 68:8-10; see also 84:64-75. 2McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 315.
### TABLE I

**GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gift</th>
<th>1 Cor. 12:1-10</th>
<th>B. of M.</th>
<th>D&amp;C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wisdom</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Moroni 10:9</td>
<td>46:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>&quot; 10:10</td>
<td>46:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faith</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>&quot; 10:11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>healing</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>&quot; 10:11</td>
<td>46:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miracles</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>&quot; 10:12</td>
<td>46:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prophecy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Alma 9:21; Moroni 10:13</td>
<td>46:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discerning of spirits</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>46:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaking in tongues</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Alma 9:21; Moroni 10:15</td>
<td>46:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpretation of tongues</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Moroni 10:16</td>
<td>46:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alma 9:21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Holy Ghost</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>translation</td>
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<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>5:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beholding of angels and ministering spirits</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moroni 10:14; Alma 9:21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal knowledge of Christ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46:13</td>
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<tr>
<td>belief in testimony of the Lord's servants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46:16</td>
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<tr>
<td>diversities of operations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eternal life (greatest gift of God)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14:7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Holy Spirit.

A frequently quoted definition of the gospel is the comment by
the Apostle Paul that it is the "power of God unto salvation to everyone
that believeth." (Romans 1:16.) Paul's usage of the word "power" is
many times misunderstood. Some scholars deduce from this verse that the
gospel is merely power and nothing else. This concept is in reality
combined with the principle of spiritual gifts. Sidney Rigdon gave an
explanation of the meaning of this passage when he noted that the gospel
is:

. . . God's scheme of saving men, and this scheme is made known in
the New Testament, which scheme of things (or gospel) consists in
putting men in possession of the power of God; . . . they adminis-
tered to the believers by the laying on of the hands, and the power
of God attended, and thus men in days of old received the power of
God unto salvation, and it was because of this, that the gospel
is called the power of God unto salvation.¹

This divine power, then, is the manifestation of the power of
Deity in the lives of men who are living the principles of the gospel
plan. The power of the Lord is expressed to man through the various
distinct gifts of the Spirit. As one man said, emphasizing the impor-
tance of actual communication with God in consequence of the gospel mes-
sage, "we will bear in mind that nothing short of what is the power of
God unto salvation, unto all them that believe is the gospel."² This
power must indeed become active in men's lives in order that they may
attain salvation, for the message alone will not save anyone. As a plan
of power, the gospel centers around the atonement. It is a system of
salvation which enables obedient men to participate in vital ordinances,

¹Sidney Rigdon, "Correspondence to Mr. O. Barr," M&A, II (March,
1836), 273.

communicate with the Lord, receive his truths, gifts and power, and
eventually return into his presence, there to receive glory and eternal
life. It embraces all truth, though all is not yet revealed to man.

In order that the relationship of the gospel and power may be
clearly understood, leaving no room for misunderstanding, note the fol-
lowing statement by Bruce R. McConkie, a present-day General Authority:

Thus, the gospel had by the Saints of old included, first, the
word, that is, the doctrines, principles, and laws, the statutes and
judgments of the Lord, which if a man obey, he shall surely live
everlastingly; and it included, second, the power, the saving grace,
the gifts of the Spirit, the outpourings of the Holy Ghost, and that
abundant testimony in which true Saints so delight.

Paul also said that these things--the word and the power, which
taken together comprise the true gospel--that these things were."the
gospel of God, . . . Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."\(^1\)

Joseph Smith particularly dwelled upon the fact that one had not
truly lived the gospel until he became worthy of the presence, power, and
gifts of the Holy Ghost. One conversation brought forth the following
comment from him:

But, said Mr. Sollars, "May I not repent and be baptized, and
not pay any attention to dreams, visions, and other gifts of the
Spirit?" I replied: "Suppose I am traveling and am hungry, and
meet a man and tell him I am hungry, and he tells me to go yonder,
there is a house of entertainment, go and knock, and you must con-
form to all the rules of the house, or you cannot satisfy your hun-
ger; knock, call for food, sit down and eat;--and I go and knock,
call for food, sit down to the table, but do not eat, shall I satisfy
my hunger? No. I must eat. The gifts are the food; and the
graces of the Spirit are the gifts of the Spirit."\(^2\)

A final part of this topic is the subject of the fruits of the
Spirit. Through the influence of the Holy Ghost the gospel becomes alive
within a person. The Lord said that the Holy Ghost "teacheth the peace-
able things of the kingdom." (D&C 39:6.) These fruits of the Spirit

\(^1\)Bruce R. McConkie, "Our Gospel Came Not Unto You in Word Only
. . .," *Era, LXXI* (December, 1968), 103.

\(^2\)DHC, V, 218-19.
are the same rich blessings of which Paul wrote, even "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."¹ Such are the blessings promised by the gospel.

Priesthood and priesthood ordinances

A related aspect of these gifts, discussed by Joseph Smith during this beginning period of the Church, is the concept that offices in the priesthood, such as apostle, patriarch, elder, etc., come through the Holy Ghost and are gifts of the Spirit, thus being a manifestation of the gospel.²

The Latter-day Saints believe that every worthy male over the age of twelve should receive the priesthood, the delegated power and authority of God to act in his name. Consequently, this is a further step in the gospel plan, as defined during the Joseph Smith period. Specifically pertaining to males, the priesthood offices and callings are requisite in order to obtain eternal life. This is part of man's role in the gospel.

The priesthood of God administers all parts of the gospel plan. Of interest to the present study, however, is the fact that the prophets have specifically included some of the major priesthood functions in the definitions of the gospel discussed in this sub-section.

In addition to performing ordinances for the living, the priesthood holders may officiate in vicarious ordinances in behalf of their dead ancestors. Vicarious work for the dead is a significant part of

¹Gal. 5:22-23.
²D&C 20:27, 60; John Taylor, "Rev. and Dear Sir" (letter), M&A, III (June, 1837), 513-15; Lectures on Faith 7:20.
the gospel in this dispensation, as expressed in some definitions. This
work for the dead is one example of the major gospel principle of service.
King Benjamin, an early Nephite prophet, told his people that "when ye
are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of
your God."¹ In the following revelation, the Lord defined vicarious
ordinance work as part of the gospel, it being manifest in the principle
and ordinance of baptism for the dead:

And again, in connection with this quotation I will give you a
quotation from one of the prophets, who had his eye fixed on the
restoration of the priesthood, the glories to be revealed in the last
days, and in an especial manner this most glorious of all subjects
belonging to the everlasting gospel, namely, the baptism for the
dead, for Malachi says, last chapter, verses 5th and 6th: "Behold I
will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and
dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers
to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest
I come and smite the earth with a curse."²

It is important to note that the General Authorities have also
explained that baptism for the dead is not a separate principle, but
merely the application of the ordinance of baptism to people in a differ-
ent sphere.³

The scriptures teach that each principle of the gospel is necessary
in its place. By comparing other statements of Joseph Smith, one is led
to the conclusion that his intention was to show, in the foregoing pas-
sage, that the principle of baptism for the dead was most glorious because
it affected such great numbers of people⁴ and because it would eventually
unite the human family of Adam in the patriarchal order of the priest-

⁴Joseph Fielding Smith, "Salvation for the Dead," Era, XX (Feb-
uary, 1917), 361.
hood.\textsuperscript{1} John A. Widtsoe, in explaining this, has said:

Moreover, the doctrine of salvation for the dead unifies all other principles of the gospel. When we consider that this gospel principle implied that the Lord, in his mercy and love for his children, has made it possible for every soul who loves and will obey truth to receive salvation, we begin to glimpse the unspeakable love and the fulness of the blessings that the Lord has for his children.\textsuperscript{2}

A further priesthood ordinance of the gospel is the law of sacrifice. The scriptures speak of two types — the sacrifice of animals, and the sacrifice which occurs within a man's spirit. Both, of course, require a spiritual dedication to the work of the Lord.

The practice of animal or blood sacrifice will be restored in the future, as prophesied by Malachi.\textsuperscript{3} John the Baptist, in restoring the Aaronic Priesthood, reaffirmed these very words of that ancient prophet.\textsuperscript{4} The Lord also referred to the same concept in a revelation given during the third year of the restored Church's existence:

Therefore, as I said concerning the sons of Moses—for the sons of Moses and also the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord, which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation, upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed.\textsuperscript{5}

The Prophet Joseph Smith proclaimed that all ordinances and truths which had ever been given in any dispensation under the Melchizedek Priesthood were pertinent parts of the gospel and would be restored. Commenting on the prophecy by Malachi, Joseph Smith said that the restoration of all of the gospel would eventually even include:

\ldots the offering of sacrifice, which also shall be continued at the last time, for all the ordinances and duties that ever have been

\textsuperscript{1}\textit{D&C} 128:18.

\textsuperscript{2}John A. Widtsoe, \textit{Conference Report}, 97a (April, 1927), 30, hereafter cited as \textit{C.R.}; April= "a" (Annual), October= "s" (Semi-annual).

required by the Priesthood, under the directions and commandments of the Almighty in any of the dispensations, shall all be had in the last dispensation. . . .

The offering of sacrifice has ever been connected and forms a part of the duties of the Priesthood. It began with the Priesthood, and will be continued until after the coming of Christ, from generation to generation. . . .

These sacrifices, as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings. This ever did and ever will exist when the powers of the Melchizedic Priesthood are sufficiently manifest; else how can the restitution of all things spoken of by the holy Prophets be brought to pass? It is not to be understood that the law of Moses will be established again with all its rites and variety of ceremonies; this has never been spoken of by the Prophets; but those things which existed prior to Moses' day, namely, sacrifice, will be continued.

It may be asked by some, what necessity for sacrifice, since the Great Sacrifice was offered? In answer to which, if repentance, baptism, and faith existed prior to the days of Christ, what necessity for them since that time?

At the present time the Lord is not requiring the practice of animal sacrifice by the Church. That the Lord will yet require this gospel ordinance in the future is clear. Apparently the keys to do so come through Elijah's office and ministry. The foregoing expression from Joseph Smith explained that the practice would be restored when the great temple in Zion is built. Concerning the Nauvoo temple, the Lord later declared to the Prophet that one of its functions would be for "your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi." Whether the memorial was to be an actual blood sacrifice in restrospective commemoration of the atonement, or the spiritual-type sacrifice discussed below, the author does not know. Again, it may refer to both. Furthermore, the Lord did not state whether it would be a gospel requirement for every individual Latter-day Saint, or whether the Church leaders would perform the ordinance in behalf of all. As noted above, however, the Prophet

1 DHC, IV, 210-12. 2 DHC, IV, 211. 3 D&C 124:39.
definitely designated it as a part of the gospel plan.

The spiritual nature of the law of sacrifice comes out even in the scriptures before the Doctrine and Covenants, such as the Book of Mormon. The resurrected Christ told the Nephites that He would no more accept any blood sacrifices. Instead He told them that "ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit." The Lord repeated the same instruction to the saints in this dispensation. (D&C 59:8.)

At times the Lord has emphasized that this type of sacrifice also requires physical offering, such as tithing, especially for building temples. (D&C 64:23.) To the saints building the Kirtland temple He said:

All among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants, by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.

Another aspect of the spiritual offerings which the Lord requests is richly implied in the scriptures already cited, the ones which refer to the offerings by the sons of Levi. This apparently does not mean only the literal, lineal descendants of Levi, but to those who become such also by adoption through the gospel covenants—even the Church members today. Part of the sacrifice which the Lord requires of them is to gather genealogies of their ancestors and perform vicarious ordinance work for them in the holy temples.

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1B. of M., 3 Nephi 9:19-20.  2D&C 97:8.  3D&C 84:31-32.  4D&C 128:24. This verse apparently does not apply solely to genealogy and temple work, as some suppose. Remember that, referring to the same words from Malachi 3:1-4, the Prophet discussed animal sacrifice. It is probable that Joseph Smith referred in the first two sentences of D&C 128:24 to the yet future animal sacrifices to be offered by "they," the lineal sons of Levi, and then in the last sentence referred to the type of sacrifice expected of "us," the Church today. See also Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, III, comp. by Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 93-94.
Another priesthood function of the gospel, yet future in part, is the law of consecration and stewardship. This is a type of sacrifice also, a consecration of one's property and possessions to the service of the Lord. When the Lord first introduced this principle, He commanded the Church:

And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.

And it shall come to pass, that after they are laid before the bishop of my church, and after that he has received these testimonies concerning the consecration of the properties of my church, that they cannot be taken from the church, agreeable to my commandments, every man shall be made accountable unto me, a steward over his own property, or that which he has received by consecration, as much as is sufficient for himself and family. 1

Total consecration was too difficult for those of little faith and charity in the early days of the Church. Consequently, the Lord rescinded parts of the commandment temporarily. Members of the Church, especially those who have made temple covenants, are still expected to dedicate every effort and all of their means to upbuild the Church. The Church teaches that the Lord will require in the future that the saints live the full law in order to develop into a Zion-type people. 2 It is the Lord's celestial law applied to economic situations here on earth. The Latter-day Saints believe that it forms a distinct part of the gospel of heaven, and someday soon of earth. As it is now, in accord with specific commandments, the saints pay tithing, fast offerings, support the welfare plan, and all other projects which the Church undertakes for the physical as well as spiritual prosperity of the Church membership.

1D&C 42:30, 32.

2D&C 58:35-36; see also 42:34-36; 105:1-5, 9-10.
As already mentioned, consecration constitutes an important part of the temple covenants, particularly of the endowment. The preparation for entering the House of the Lord involves obeying all commandments of the Lord, for it is a sacred privilege to receive the higher ordinances of the gospel. The priesthood endowment of the temple is a further ordinance in the gospel plan.¹ The Lord has referred to it in the Doctrine and Covenants in only the briefest of terms, probably due to the sacredness of the ceremony:

\[
\text{Yea, verily I say unto you, I gave unto you a commandment that you should build a house, in the which house I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high; For this is the promise of the Father unto you; therefore I command you to tarry, even as mine apostles at Jerusalem.}
\]

This ordinance is preparatory to eternal marriage, the next major step in the gospel.

**Eternal marriage and the patriarchal order**

This phase of the systematic gospel, as revealed during the Joseph Smith period, is a priesthood ordinance generally performed in a temple of the Lord. This is the eternal, celestial marriage covenant, or the patriarchal order of marriage. In 1836 Joseph Smith described in the following brief terms a heavenly vision in which he received the keys to seal marriages for eternity and to seal or link families to the family of Abraham:

\[
\text{After this, Elias appeared, and committed the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham, saying that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed. After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision}
\]

¹Joseph F. Smith, C.R., 86a (April, 1916), 5-6.

²D&C 95:8-9; see also 38:32; 105:11-12; 110:9-10.
burst upon us; for Elijah the prophet, who was taken to heaven without tasting death, stood before us, and said:

Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse—

Therefore, the keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands; and by this ye may know that the great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors.

This dispensation or gospel of Abraham as stated here is concerned with blessing all generations of men by means of Abraham's posterity. Such blessings pertain to the fullness of the everlasting gospel, which the Lord delivered to Abraham's descendants and has them promulgate to the world. This also embraces the ordinance of eternal marriage, including plural marriage. The keys of Elijah are the means of making such marriages and all other priesthood ordinances eternally binding. In other words, they are the keys of sealing. The Lord shed further light on these principles when He stated through Joseph Smith:

And as pertaining to the new and everlasting covenant, it was instituted for the fulness of my glory; and he that receiveth a fulness thereof must and shall abide the law, or he shall be damned, saith the Lord God.


And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise, by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood; and it shall be said unto them—Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths—then shall it be written in the Lamb's Book of Life, that he shall commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, and if ye abide in my covenant, and commit no murder whereby to shed innocent blood, it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of full force when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in

all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself.

Go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham; enter ye into my law and ye shall be saved.¹

The Lord continued from that point in the revelation to explain his "law," which was the law of plural marriage.

These verses proclaim the restoration of the doctrines of eternal marriage, plural marriage, eternal increase of posterity, and the eventual perfectibility of man. These are advanced principles of the gospel introduced to the modern world during the Joseph Smith era. The Prophet declared them to be principles which not only exalt man, but also add to the glorification of God. Men glorify God by developing their own eternal kingdoms under the direction of Jesus Christ, Abraham (the "Father of the Faithful"), and the other patriarchs back to Adam. It is through the covenant of baptism and the other first principles that men enter the path to salvation, but it is through eternal marriage and the patriarchal line of Abraham that men must claim, through Christ, the celestial blessings of eternal life and exaltation, the final goals of the gospel.

The Lord's promises to Abraham were numerous and great,² but He also covenanted to give these blessings "unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice."³ This means that if men obey all parts of the gospel, they may thereby receive the exaltation promised in the eternal marriage covenant, one of the advanced principles of the gospel. The essence of the gospel of Abraham was that

through his physical seed, and also through the righteous who would be
adopted into his line, the Lord would administer the promises of the gos-
pel to the world.¹ Significantly, only those who voluntarily, not merely
by birth become in their hearts the children of Abraham and thus of
Christ, may receive the full blessings of the Lord. An inheritance on
the celestialized earth is likewise a promised result of this covenant.
In the holy temples one discovers more about the full nature of the pat-
riarchal gospel through the eternal marriage covenants, which guarantee
to the righteous the promise of a fullness of celestial glory and an
eternal increase of posterity in the worlds to come.²

Sealing unto eternal life

Joseph Smith taught that the culmination of the gospel plan as it
pertained to mortality was the doctrine of election, or the principle
and ordinance of being sealed up unto eternal life. This includes the
privilege and promise of receiving the Second Comforter, even the pre-
sence of Jesus Christ, as well as other glorified beings whom He will
reveal. This advanced state comes only after one has progressively
embraced all other antecedent truths and ordinances. Peter taught that
it comes after a man has gained the gospel principles of faith, virtue,
knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity,
etc.³ The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that this was not a first
principle, but rather a later principle to be taught "in its proper
place."⁴

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¹P. of G. P., Abr. 2:10.
²DHC, V, 555; D&C 110:12; Oliver Cowdery, "The Gospel, No. V,"
M&A, I (February, 1835), 72-73; McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 13.
Evidently the first part of this process is to receive the promise, witness, or comfort from the Holy Ghost that one is sealed to eternal life. The Lord has said:

Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John. This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom.\(^1\)

Joseph Fielding Smith has explained that this Holy Spirit of Promise is the Holy Ghost, not Jesus Christ, who is the Second Comforter.\(^2\)

Such a promise of celestial glory results from adherence to foundation principles of the gospel. True saints receive the promise of eternal life, for these are they "who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true."\(^3\) It is faith, then, or dedication and endurance to the end with faith in Christ, which is necessary to overcome all things and receive the guarantee of glory. The gospel weapon of faith meets and overcomes the challenges and opposition in life.\(^4\) The promise of eternal life comes when the individual has sufficiently demonstrated that he will serve the Lord at all costs and withstand every test in life. At that point the Lord will say, "Son, thou shalt be exalted."\(^5\) As expressed in the preceding chapter, those who die true to the faith have passed the test of life and thus receive the promise of eternal life. The ordinance of sealing unto eternal life is also part of the vicarious work done in the temples in behalf of the dead.

\(^{1}\text{D&C 88:3-4; see also D&C 124:124.}\)
\(^{2}\text{Smith, }\textit{Doctrines of Salvation, I (1954), 55.}\)
\(^{3}\text{D&C 76:53.}\)
\(^{4}\text{B. of M., 2 Nephi 2:11-13.}\)
\(^{5}\text{DHC,III, 380.}\)
In the Doctrine and Covenants the sealing is also called "the more sure word of prophecy," which means "a man's knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood." Still another term for this principle is "making your calling and election sure."

The practice of sealing individuals existed in the Church as early as 1831. Two revelations during that year indicated that certain elders of the Church were also, in addition to the Prophet, to receive the power to seal saints unto eternal life. From the history of the Church it is apparent that the Prophet sealed some saints in this early period on an individual basis. After 1836, with Elijah's keys restored, Joseph Smith held the keys to seal a husband and wife unto eternal life.

The second part of this principle is the doctrine of the Second Comforter. After a man receives the promise of eternal life, he has the right, if he continues faithful, to personal communication and visits with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Second Comforter. He will manifest the Father to such an individual, and thus prepare him for receiving his crown of eternal life.

In the following extract, Joseph Smith expounded upon the significance of these two doctrines, sealing unto eternal life, and the Second Comforter:

The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation. . . . The principle of salvation is given us through the knowledge of Jesus

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1D&C 131:5. 2DHC, III, 379-81. 3D&C 1:8; 68:12.
4DHC, I, 323-24; see also Andrus, Doctrinal Commentary, 442-43.
5D&C 110:13-16; DHC, IV, 211; Andrus, Doctrinal Commentary, 441-47.
6DHC, III, 379-81.
Christ.

... Now for the secret and grand key. Though they might hear the voice of God and know that Jesus was the Son of God, this would be no evidence that their election and calling was made sure, that they had part with Christ, and were joint heirs with Him. They then would want that more sure word of prophecy, that they were sealed in the heavens and had the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God. Then, having this promise sealed unto them, it was an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Though the thunders might roll and lightnings flash, and earthquakes bellow, and war gather thick around, yet this hope and knowledge would support the soul in every hour of trial, trouble and tribulation. Then knowledge through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the grand key that unlocks the glories and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Compare this principle once with Christendom at the present day, . . . They will be damned, for they reject the most glorious principle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In summary, the preceding statements reveal that a person may progress along the path of justice and truth to the point where he can receive the promise of eternal life, even having the privilege, according to the will of God, of personal instruction from the Lord and the hosts of heaven. This is the ultimate step in terms of the gospel plan before one passes into the next world. All truths are progressively available to such sanctified individuals. Joseph Smith admonished the saints to seek for this goal:

Then I would exhort you to go on and continue to call upon God until you make your calling and election sure for yourselves, by obtaining this more sure word of prophecy, and wait patiently for the promise until you obtain it.2

Regardless of this sealing, however, even the sanctified may fall from grace, for it states in the Doctrine and Covenants:

But there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God;
Therefore let the church take heed and pray always, lest they fall into temptation;
Yea, and even let those who are sanctified take heed also.3

1DHC, V, 387-89; see also III, 379-81. 2Ibid., 389. 3D&C 20:32-34.
The Prophet taught that the seals of the priesthood had this one reservation, that they could not seal anyone up against willful apostasy from the Church and the truth.\textsuperscript{1} For this reason it is essential to endure to the end with faith in Christ in order to be exalted in the highest degree of glory.

All truth and perfection

Linked with the idea which some propose, that the gospel is only the first four principles, is the supposition that the gospel is limited to religious truths, or to a small number of principles dealing exclusively with theology. It is therefore noteworthy that during this early period in the Church the doctrine came forth that the gospel embraces all truth. Until one acquires a fullness of truth, one is not perfect. Perfection, however, is the goal of the gospel plan. This plan is a method of growing from grace to grace, truth to truth, until one obtains a fullness of truth, power, and glory. As subsequent chapters will show, later periods saw the full expansion of this idea, but the Church leaders originally expressed it during the Joseph Smith era, as the evidence in this sub-section will demonstrate.

As a framework for this concept, there is the fact that the scriptures and Latter-day Saint prophets have revealed an orderly sequence of progression in the principles and ordinances of the gospel. The revelation of all truth comes not in a nebulous form, but in accordance with the systematic gospel plan, which is designed to perfect man and elevate him to godhood. A few truths alone are not sufficient to achieve this, for a perfected being knows all truth. Inasmuch as such is the goal of

\textsuperscript{1}DHC, VI, 253.
the gospel, this plan must contain and employ all truth in order to enable man to succeed in reaching that goal.

Joseph Smith saw many eternal truths in his vision of heaven and the eternal worlds, recording a partial account of it in Section Seventy-Six of the Doctrine and Covenants. Therein he wrote that "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."¹ His proclamation of the fullness of the gospel was, in other words, a testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and a partial description of the full glory of the eternal worlds. On the other hand, a declaration of the full gospel would have entailed all truth. The enormity of this vision of the full gospel plan caused the Lord to restrain the Prophet from writing more than a small portion of it.² Consequently, he was not able to expound all of the gospel truths which he saw in the manifestation. All that he did write, however, he declared to be part of the gospel.

On another occasion, having been asked what the fundamentals of Mormonism were, Joseph Smith replied that in essence they were the message concerning Christ's atonement, and:

All other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it. But in connection with these we believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost, the power of faith, the enjoyment of the spiritual gifts according to the will of God, the restoration of the house of Israel, and the final triumph of truth."³

The Prophet believed, then, that there are many truths, principles, gifts, and powers in the gospel beyond the first six principles. In July of 1843 he proclaimed that "one of the fundamental principles of 'Mormon-

¹D&C 76:14; see also 76:50. ²D&C 76:113-16. ³DHC, III, 30.
ism' is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may."\footnote{Ibid., V, 499.} Shortly thereafter he noted that "we should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true 'Mormons.'"\footnote{Ibid., V, 517.} Again, quoting 2 Peter 1:5-8, he included the following as principles of the gospel, in addition to the "first principles": virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.\footnote{Ibid., I, 314-15.}

Finally, the Articles of Faith defined the gospel as a system which will ultimately reveal and encompass all truth.\footnote{John A. Widtsoe, "The Articles of Faith," Era, XLI (October, 1938), 589.} This brief statement of the beliefs of the Church is concise, yet comprehensive. Nevertheless, it can not be expected to delineate every gospel principle. In a statement of this type one would most expect to find a short description of the basic core, the essence of the gospel as restored in the last days. Indeed, such is the substance of these thirteen statements of belief. These articles describe the "gospel," in the broader construction of the term. Although they begin with the first principles, they also mention advanced principles such as the necessity of priesthood, the fundamental Church organization, the gifts of the Spirit, the inspired nature of scripture, the principle of continuous revelation, the Lord's eternal promises to the house of Israel, free agency and the right to worship, the validity of law, and the limitless virtues of a Christ-like character. Articles nine and thirteen specifically show that the gospel ultimately embraces all truth:

We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now
reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

In the context of Joseph Smith's other teachings, these articles are clearly a part of what he defined as the gospel. It is plain to see from his writings on the subject that Joseph Smith believed that each principle of the gospel was closely interrelated to every other one.\(^2\)

As Brigham Young later said in this same connection, the gospel embraces all truth in heaven and earth.\(^3\) Each principle is necessary to the plan.

The perfectibility of man is a principle which came as the doctrinal climax of Joseph Smith's life and teachings. The pinnacle was reached through a step-by-step series of revelations which taught the systematic method of reaching perfection. An early passage in the Doctrine and Covenants declares the high valuation which God sets upon perfection or the gift of eternal life: "And, if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God."\(^4\) Other scriptures explain that "eternal" is synonymous with God, for it is one of his names, as well as being an indication of endless duration. Eternal life, then, is the type of life which God possesses and enjoys.\(^5\) It is life filled with a fullness of glory,\(^6\) even the glory of the celestial world.\(^7\)

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\(^1\)P. of G. P., Articles of Faith 9 and 13.  
\(^2\)DHC, II, 265; V, 499; VI, 316.  
\(^3\)J.D., VII, 239.  
\(^4\)D&C 14:7.  
\(^5\)D&C 20:17.  
\(^6\)D&C 76:53-70.  
\(^7\)D&C 88:4.
The Pearl of Great Price contains several references to this ultimate goal of the gospel, eternal life, some of which appeared earlier in this chapter.¹ Mother Eve rejoiced in the realization that this goal was possible: "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient."²

The Lord promised this same blessing to Abraham and all the righteous:

I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal.

More understanding of this principle came through Joseph Smith when the Lord revealed to him that enduring to the end was necessary for eternal life, and that men should "continue in patience until ye are perfected."³

A major doctrinal development came in the previously cited vision of the glories, wherein Joseph Smith glimpsed the destiny of those who remain true to the end with faith in Christ:

They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.⁴

The foregoing quotation is a basic key to subsequent Latter-day

¹ P. of G. P., Moses 1:39; 6:59, 68.
² P. of G. P., Moses 5:11, also see 5:15. ³ P. of G. P., Abr. 2:11.
Saint teachings on this subject of the perfectibility of man. Later, the Lord explained that He will raise perfected men to equality with God himself. This evidently refers to the elevation of the righteous to the status of being gods in their own right, although they will still be within the dominion of Christ the Lord.

A further statement in the Doctrine and Covenants shows that a physical, resurrected body is necessary for man to experience a fullness of joy. Perfected men must be resurrected before they can enter into their glory. The Prophet described this joy and glory, stating that the plan of salvation has as its goals "the bringing of men back into the presence of the King of heaven, crowning them in the celestial glory, and making them heirs with the Son to that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away."3

The final revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants on this subject declares that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have already reached a state of perfection and have received their thrones of glory.4 Perhaps the Lord intended this message to strengthen modern men's hope in their own eventual perfectibility.

Perfection as described above comes only through the eternal marriage covenants. Doctrine and Covenants 132:6, 19-20, quoted earlier, shows that the destiny of man is to become as God, with eternal increase of posterity through the order of celestial marriage. The following verses express more explicitly the state of those not eternally married:

In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

And if he does not, he cannot obtain it. He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.¹

The doctrine of plural marriage is also a part of Section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Latter-day Saints believe that the Lord temporarily rescinded this practice, as He did the law of consecration and stewardship. Nevertheless it is a part of the gospel, as discussed earlier, and has formed part of the restoration of the gospel. It will definitely function in the next world, at least for those who have already been sealed in plural families. Little is mentioned, however, about the future of this practice on earth.²

Near the close of his life, Joseph Smith proclaimed one final concept in relation to perfectibility. He taught that God the Father had once been a mortal man and had progressed to his present exalted state of godhood.³ The logical corollary to that is that man can become like God through the same gospel plan of salvation and exaltation.

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord explains the manner in which He attained his glory. Man must follow this same pattern, as given in the following outline:

The first step is to keep all of the commandments of God.⁴ In doing this, man may progress "from grace to grace,"⁵ for all truth and light are not acquired in an instant.

Having progressed to a certain point, man may receive the promise of eternal glory.⁶ He then must endure to the end, lest he fall from grace. In the resurrection the Lord will grant a glorified, celestial-

type body to those who merit that kingdom. 1 With the aid of the Lord, man may then acquire all truth and intelligence, becoming fully glorified therein. 2 Indeed, the Lord has said that his glory is "intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth." 3 Being filled with glory, man will then become an equal with God, being a god himself, 4 although he will always remain under the Lord's dominion.

Descriptive Definitions of the Gospel

One final matter pertaining to this period is the variety of descriptive terms used as synonyms for the gospel. Three of these are attributes or names for Deity. The Lord named the gospel "mine everlasting covenant," 5 because God is everlasting, as are his words and promises. The gospel is the "rock," for the Lord said, "build upon my rock, which is my gospel." 6 Again, the Lord termed it the "gospel of peace," 7 describing the divine attribute and blessing which the gospel brings to men.

The remaining four descriptive terms are expressions related to the atonement. The gospel is the "glad tidings" 8 and "the news of the redemption." 9 Likewise it is the "gospel of salvation." 10 Finally, it is "glad tidings for the dead; a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy." 11 These descriptive definitions are essentially just reinforcements of some of the basic doctrines in the gospel. In that sense they are only of secondary significance in this study of basic definitions. The Book of Mormon does not contain

any definitions of this type. Later chapters will not treat descriptive definitions in a separate category, but will present them mixed among all other definitions.

Preliminary Summary and Synthesis

The following paragraphs summarize the results of the study of this period in the light of the four hypotheses which were given at the beginning:

1. What is the gospel of Jesus Christ as defined in the Latter-day Saint literature of this period? The literature surveyed and discussed in this chapter described the gospel in two principal ways. The first was that the initial part of the gospel consisted of six principles and ordinances: faith, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, resurrection, and eternal judgment. This message was particularly to proselyte nonmembers of the Church, but also to strengthen the members. At times the definitions expressed these as abstract principles, but at other times in close relationship to either Christ's role or man's role in the gospel, or to both. Secondly, upon this framework or foundation the Lord revealed an orderly, organized superstructure of truths and ordinances as rapidly as men were capable of receiving them. This means that the gospel is the plan of saving principles and ordinances by which man may acquire all truth, power, glory, perfection, and eternal life. The advanced principles included the following categories, in a planned and structured sequence: (a) the gifts of the Spirit, (b) the priesthood and its ordinances, (c) eternal, patriarchal order of marriage, (d) being sealed up unto eternal life, with the promise of the Second Comforter, as the climax of the gospel plan during mortality, and (e) attaining all truth, perfection, godhood, and eternal life with God.
the ultimate goal which the gospel provides for man. The Church leaders taught these advanced principles particularly to members, not nonmembers, of the Church.

In addition the author found that the term "fullness of the gospel" has a relative meaning, and that the fullness of all truth has not yet been revealed to mankind, obviously, but that it will be through the gospel plan as men become worthy. Finally, the Lord used several descriptive phrases to portray certain aspects of the gospel, but did not give them as complete definitions in and of themselves.

The Doctrine and Covenants is the book which most carefully portrays and expresses the full system of the gospel as taught during the Joseph Smith era. The Church teaches that the Lord gave the individual revelations thereof one at a time, but He gradually unfolded the full plan by the end of the book. It expounds many of these principles in greater clarity than does any other one of the standard works. Additional commentaries by Joseph Smith served to clarify and amplify the plan into a fully recognizable system.

2. Is there agreement among ancient scriptures, modern scriptures, and modern prophets of the Church during this period, on the issue of the definition of the gospel? Agreement does exist in the literature of this period. Partial definitions and special emphases are explainable, as seen above. (See also question four below.) It requires no special pleading to indicate that all Church leaders appeared to be in harmony with the scriptural definitions, as well as with the prophets today.

3. What, if any, have been the important historical developments in the definition of the gospel, as found in the Latter-day Saint litera-
ture of this period? In addition to the Book of Mormon, discussed in chapter two above, there seemed to be a distinct development of definitions in this era. The following were notable concepts: (1) Joseph Smith attached the name "first principles" originally to the first four and later to the first six principles of the gospel; (2) at times the definitions presented the first principles and ordinances as abstractions, but at other times in close relationship to either Christ's role or man's role in the gospel, or to both; (3) the Lord stated through Joseph Smith that, beyond the first principles, certain advanced principles and ordinances of the gospel were necessary to attain exaltation; and (4) the Prophet declared that the gospel was a system containing and revealing all truth, and that it leads man to eternal life, or glory, and to a continuation of posterity forever.

4. What are some possible reasons for any differing definitions? The contrast in definitions appears to be explainable by the fact that the needs of the audience or reader were uppermost in the minds of the authors. Apparently they did not quote a classic definition on every occasion and let it go at that. They stressed either a complete definition or various parts of the gospel according to the spiritual problems and understanding of the people. This harmonizes with the conclusion concerning the Book of Mormon, as discussed in the preceding chapter. Further, the gradual historical development of the definitions caused some concepts to be especially highlighted as they were introduced, consequently making them seem of paramount importance at the time. Frequently, though, a principle did not appear in a definition setting until some time after having been first introduced. It is therefore vital to consider all definitions in the total context of the period in which they
were given. The important fact emerges, thereby, that the statements were consistent and harmonious with each other in the full context of the literature of this period.
CHAPTER FOUR

DEFINITIONS FROM 1844 TO THE TURN OF THE CENTURY:
BRIGHAM YOUNG TO LORENZO SNOW

This chapter and the one following are devoted to a presentation of definitions which are supplementary to the ones given during the formative period of the restored Church. The first generation of General Authorities, those who personally knew Joseph Smith, composes this first period (Chapter Four), whereas the second generation constitutes the last period, to the present (Chapter Five).

With the standard definitions well established, what did the Brethren speak about? Did their statements produce new doctrine following the death of Joseph Smith? Did their teachings and opinions differ from those of the Prophet? Were they unified among themselves? In order that the reader may answer these questions himself, numerous definitions appear below without lengthy commentaries such as those in the prior chapters. From the large collection of definitions which the author has gathered, he will select only those which present either new, different, amplified, or dissenting views, as compared to the definitions already given. Since many of the authors referred constantly to the first four principles and to scriptural definitions of the gospel, these will only rarely be quoted, being already well-established concepts.

The information will first be arranged according to the author of each definition, rather than on a topical basis, as heretofore. In this manner one may see clearly the full gamut of each author's various
definitions. However, each definition will be identified in relation to the topics or categories established in the preceding chapter. A brief code will be prefixed to each definition in order that the reader may swiftly discern the substance of it. (e.g. "All Truth," or "First Principles.") A number will be assigned to each code, as follows:

1. First Principles--[Four, Six, or Eight]

2. Gifts of the Spirit: [Power, Light, Virtues, etc.]

3. Priesthood and Priesthood Ordinances

4. Eternal Marriage

5. Sealing unto Eternal Life

6. All Truth: [Perfection, Godhood, Glorification, Various Doctrines]

7. Description: [Plan of Salvation, Plan of Exaltation, Happiness, Fullness]

This chapter and the one following will present definitions in an order which accords with the authority of the person quoted. The first and most important are the ones from the presidents of the Church. Following these are the ones from the other prophets, seers, and revelators of the Church--including counselors in the First Presidency, apostles, and the Patriarch to the Church. After these are statements from the remaining General Authorities, with some final comments from prominent Latter-day Saint scholars, writers, and commentators. A brief analysis and synthesis will conclude each of the two chapters.

The quotations begin, then, with Brigham Young, the first president of the Church following Joseph Smith. The reader has the opportunity of assaying the statements and evidence in the light of the definitions established during the founding era of the Church, as discussed in the preceding chapters.
First Principles—Four (1),
Gifts of the Spirit (2)

... Where is there a Christian sect now on the earth, except the Latter-day Saints, who preach the Gospel that Jesus taught—faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, the gift of tongues, the gift of healing and the discerning of spirits? Who, in all the Christian world believes such a doctrine?  

Gifts of the Spirit: Power (2)

... the Gospel of salvation, ... is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe and obey it. The words "obey it," I have added to the text as it is given to us by King James's translators. ... a person who disobeys the Gospel, and operates against it, may not only believe it, but know it to be true. Therefore I read the Scripture thus--"This Gospel that we preach is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe and obey it."  

All Truth (6)

But I am proud to say of my religion, I have studied it faithfully for twenty-two years, day and night, at home and abroad, upon the rivers, and upon the lakes, when travelling by sea and by land; have studied it in the pulpit; from morning till night; whatsoever might be my pursuit, I have studied it with as close an application as any college student ever did any subject he wished to commit to memory; and I can say I have only just got in to the A B C of it; it leads the vision of my mind into eternity.  

All Truth (6)

... my understanding with regard to preaching the Gospel of salvation is this: there is but one discourse to be preached to all the children of Adam; and that discourse should be believed by them, and lived up to. To commence, continue, and finish this Gospel sermon, will require all the time that is allotted to man, to the earth, and all things upon it, in their mortal state; that is my idea with regard to preaching. No man is able to set before a congregation all the items of the Gospel, in this life, and continue these items 

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1 Brigham Young, J.D., XII, 283.  
2 Ibid., II, 1.  
3 Brigham Young, "address," The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star, XIV (December 18, 1852), 674, hereafter cited as M.S.
to their termination, for this mortal life is too short. It is inseparably connected, one part with the other, in all the doctrines that have been revealed to man, which are now called the various doctrines of Christianity, 

But let a Gospel sermon be preached, wherein all the principles of salvation are embodied, and we will acknowledge, at the end of the mortality of this earth, and all things created upon it--

. . . I say, we shall acknowledge that there is the Gospel sermon, and that it could not be preached to finite beings, in one short life.\(^1\)

**All Truth (6)**

. . . "Mormonism," or, in other words, the Gospel of salvation, embraces the whole. It incorporates every true principle there is in heaven and on earth. If a person learns a truth, he learns so much of the Gospel of salvation.\(^2\)

**All Truth (6)**

The laws of the Gospel are neither more nor less than a few of the principles of eternity revealed to the people, by which they can return to heaven from whence they came.\(^3\)

**All Truth (6)**

. . . There is no system that is perfect except the gospel of the Son of God. Every art and science is incorporated in the gospel of salvation delivered to the children of men. . . . I have said, and I still feel it, that outside the gospel of the Son of God--the plan of salvation--there is nothing but death, hell and the grave; everything else is within our religion. But when we talk about comprehending our religion, why, we might as well undertake to comprehend eternity.\(^4\)

**All Truth (6)**

. . . The Gospel that I have embraced comprehends all truth. "How much of it is true?" All of it. "How much does it embrace?" All the truth that there is in the heavens, on the earth, under the earth; and if there is any truth in hell, this doctrine claims it. It is all the truth of heaven, the truth of God, the life of those that live forever, the law by which worlds were, are, and will be brought into existence, and pass from one degree or one state of

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\(^1\) Brigham Young, *J.D.*, III, 80.
\(^3\) *Ibid.*, VIII, 208.
being to another, pertaining to the exaltation of intelligence from
the lowest to the highest state. This is the doctrine that the
Latter-day Saints believe, whether they realize it or not.\(^1\)

**All Truth: Various Do t ines (6)**

... The Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches him that has stolen to steal
no more; it teaches the **s**wearer to swear no more; him that has borne
false witness to do it no more; him that has dishonored his being to
do it no more; and, in fact, there is no height, depth, length or
breadth in moral conduct believed in and practiced by the Christian
world but what we are one with them; and we go so far beyond them
in the things of God that they are lost, and yet they think we are
lost.\(^2\)

**Description: Plan of Salvation (7)**

The Gospel of the Son of God that has been revealed is a plan
or system of laws and ordinances, by strict obedience to which the
people who inhabit this earth are assured that they may return again
into the presence of the Father and the Son.\(^3\)

President John Taylor

**First Principles--Four (1)**

Joseph Smith's mission was to restore this same Gospel in its
fulness. He brought back the same Gospel that Jesus taught, the
same faith and repentance, the same baptism for the remission of sins,
and the same laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and
the same Holy Ghost with all its powers and blessings. This is the
doctrine and these the principles we profess to believe in.\(^4\)

**Gifts of the Spirit (2)**

Now, what did Jesus teach? He said, "Go ye into all the world
and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is
baptised [sic] shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be
damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name
shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they
shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall
not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall
recover." (Mark xvi. 16-10)

This is what Jesus taught: this is the Gospel that he and his

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disciples taught.

**Gifts of the Spirit (2)**

But the Gospel itself is a principle of revelation, and without revelation we can have no Gospel; ... The Gospel is a living, abiding, eternal principle. ... the medium through which God conveys intelligence to the human mind; the principle by which Gods are governed and all nations controlled.

**Gifts of the Spirit: Light (2)**

The Gospel is spoken of as being light; and when it was introduced by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ it was then said, that light had come into the world.

**Eternal Marriage (4)**

It is the Gospel that teaches a woman that she has a claim upon a man, and a man that he has a claim upon a woman in the resurrection; it is the Gospel that teaches them that, when they rise from the tombs in the resurrection, they will again clasp hands, be reunited, and again participate in that glory for which God designed them before the world was.

**All Truth (6)**

In the Gospel of Jesus Christ is embodied all truth, so far as the salvation of the human family is concerned; and hence it is spoken of in the Scriptures as being the everlasting Gospel.

**All Truth (6)**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is perhaps one of the most comprehensive subjects that mankind can reflect upon. It not only embraces things as they now exist, associated with the human family, but it takes us back to days that are past and gone, to the organization of this world and of other worlds, and by the principle of revelation it develops, unfolds, and makes manifest unto the human family the great purposes of God as they shall transpire throughout every succeeding age.

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1Ibid., V, 241.  
2Ibid., XX, 300-301.  
3Ibid., XXVI, 87.  
4Ibid., XVI, 376.  
5Ibid., VII, 360.  
All Truth (6)

We, as Latter-day Saints, believe, first, in the Gospel, and that is a great deal to say, for the Gospel embraces principles that divide deeper, spread wider, and extend further than anything else that we can conceive. The Gospel teaches us in regard to the being and attributes of God; it also teaches us our relationship to that God and the various responsibilities we are under to him as his offspring; it teaches us the various duties and responsibilities that we are under to our families and friends, to the community, to the living and the dead; it unfolds to us principles pertaining to futurity; in fact, according to the saying of one of the old disciples, it "brings life and immortality to light," brings us into relationship with God, and prepares us for an exaltation in the eternal world.¹

All Truth: Portion of Spirit of God (6)

... no matter how wicked [men] may be, ... They cannot help but respect the good and the honorable, although they may not be governed by principles of honor and virtue themselves. This same spirit which is given to every man outside of the Gospel has been manifest in the different ages of the world. When I say outside of it, the Latter-day Saints will understand me. When I speak of the Gospel I speak of the Gospel revealed by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and which has existed at times through the different ages, and which, wherever it did exist brought men into close communication with the Lord; hence the Gospel is called the everlasting Gospel... But outside of that there have been many good influences abroad in the world. ... Some of those have been what are called heathen, others what are termed Christian, and others have been scientific and philanthropic -- lovers and benefactors of the human race. The many reformers that existed in former ages. ...

But there is a very great difference between this spirit and feeling that leads men to do right, which is emphatically denominated a portion of the Spirit of God, which is given to every man to profit withal, and what is termed in the Scriptures the gift of the Holy Ghost.²

All Truth (6), Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

And what does the Gospel show us? It shows who our Father is;

¹John Taylor, J.D., XVI, 369-370.

²Ibid., XXIII, 370-371. He is saying that the Spirit of God influences for good those who are outside the gospel covenant. The gospel as a system embraces this good influence, however.
it shows us our relationship to Him, and to our earthly father; it shows us our duty towards our children, our duty towards our wives, and wives their duty towards their husbands; it enters into all the ramifications of human existence.

Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

It may here be necessary to inquire what the Gospel is. Commentators tell us it means good tidings of great joy. This language had particular reference to the announcement of the birth of the Saviour to the shepherds of Galilee, by the angel of God. . . . This was simply the announcement of the birth of Christ. As to its referring to the Gospel, it might certainly admit of an argument. The birth of our Saviour and the message he came to deliver are two different things.

I do not think the message Jesus came to communicate was at all joyful to the Pharisees and hypocrites of his day, for he told them they could not escape the damnation of hell; . . .

Again: We are told the Gospel is the New Testament. I do not find any such declaration even in the New Testament itself. There are certain records in the New Testament giving an account of the birth, life, suffering, and death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It contains also an account of the doctrines he taught, the discourses he delivered, and the moral sentiments he inculcated. It gives an account of the organization of his Church, and of the teachings of his Apostles, and the manner of their administration, etc. But this is not the Gospel.

The Gospel is a certain living, abiding, eternal principle. That which is written in the New Testament is like a chart of a country, if you please; but the Gospel is the country itself. A man having the map of the United States in his possession would be considered foolish if he supposed he possessed the United States; and because a man may have the Old and New Testament in his possession, it does not argue that he has the Gospel. But is it not written in some of our good Bibles, "The Gospel according to St. John." . . .

Well, but the Gospel is contained in the Old and New Testament. It is not, nor in the Book of Mormon, nor in the revelations we have received. These are simply records, histories, commandments, etc. The Gospel is a living, abiding, eternal, and unchangeable principle that has existed co-equal [co-eval] with God, and always will exist, while time and eternity endure, wherever it is developed and made manifest.

It is a principle that places man into a legitimate relationship with God, who is our Father.

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1Ibid., XI, 163.
2Ibid., II, 361-62, 369.
President Wilford Woodruff

First Principles--Four (1)

... This Gospel is the same as that taught by the ancient Apostles, namely, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance of sin, then the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. These were the doctrines taught by the ancient Apostles, and the signs that followed believers anciently follow them in our day.¹

All Truth (6)

... The building up of the Zion of God in these latter days includes, I may say of a truth, every branch of business, both temporal and spiritual, in which we are engaged. We can not touch upon any subject which is lawful in the sight of God and man, that is not embraced in our religion. The Gospel of Jesus Christ which we have embraced, and which we preach, includes all truth, and every lawful calling and occupation of man.²

All Truth (6)

... No part of the gospel is superfluous. It is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, and all the inhabitants of this world and all others have got to be saved by it, if saved at all. It is necessary, therefore, that we receive and obey all of its principles. When the first principles of the gospel were revealed to us we rejoiced in them. After them we had other principles revealed, the principle of baptism for the dead, for instance.

... Brethren and sisters, let us be faithful, and look at the promises of God as they are contained in the gospel of Christ, and never treat lightly any principle, no matter what it is, whether it be faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, the resurrection of the dead, eternal judgments, the marriage covenant, baptism for the dead, or any other ordinance that the Lord has revealed; they all belong to the kingdom, are necessary to salvation, and the responsibility of carrying them out rests upon this people.³

President Lorenzo Snow

Priesthood and Priesthood Ordinances (3)

... When we search the revelations of God in regard to them, we see that wherever the Gospel of the Son of God has been revealed in its fulness, the principles of the United Order, or Order of Enoch were made manifest, and required to be observed.⁴

¹ Wilford Woodruff, J.D., XIII, 325 ² Ibid., XV, 77. ³ Ibid., XII, 13-14. ⁴ Lorenzo Snow, J.D., XIX, 342.
First Principles--Four (1)

Not only this, but the Book of Mormon contains the Gospel of the Son of God. I mean the first principles of the Gospel--the principles of faith in God and in his son Jesus Christ; repentance--turning away from sin, from all unrighteousness; baptism by immersion in water for the remission of sins; the gift and power of the Holy Ghost to be shed forth upon those who should receive this record--that is, receive its truths and obey them.

First Principles: Translation (1)

And among other things they Enoch and his people learned the great doctrine and principle of translation, for that is a doctrine the same as the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which is among the first principles of the plan of salvation; and we may also say that the doctrine of translation, which is intimately connected with that of the resurrection, is also one of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.

Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

The Gospel is everlasting, being the plan by which all fallen worlds have been redeemed from all eternity, and the plan by which all future worlds will be redeemed: All celestial kingdoms are glorified by the same eternal laws, and the inhabitants thereof are made perfect in one by the same eternal plan.

Charles W. Penrose

Description (7)

This everlasting Gospel which we have received is the tree of life that shall flourish forever.

George Q. Cannon

Eternal Marriage: Plural Marriage (4)

"What?" says one, "will plural marriage, that we have been

1Orson Pratt, J. D., XX, 68. 
2Ibid., XVII, 147. 
3Orson Pratt, "Epistle of Orson Pratt," M.S., XV (July 30, 1853), 499. 
4Charles W. Penrose, J.D., XXII, 70.
taught to look upon as so degrading, elevate people?" Yes, even
that principle, much abused as it is, when it is understood by the
people, will be viewed in a very different light from what it is
now. And so with every other principle of the Gospel.¹

All Truth (6)

... The Gospel of Jesus Christ embraces within its scope every
truth known to man; every truth pertaining to astronomy, geology
and every other science belongs to and is incorporated in that
Gospel.²

All Truth (6)

The theme of the Gospel is one that can be dwelt on for a
great length of time and yet not be exhaust; for according to the
views of the Latter-day Saints the Gospel embraces all truth, and
there is no truth of any nature or name, whether it be scientific,
or moral, or religious, that is not comprehended within the scope
of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.³

Joseph F. Smith

All Truth (6)

The fact is the Gospel of Christ embraces all truth.⁴

Eternal Marriage: Plural Marriage (4)

There is a great deal said about our plural marriage. ... It is
a principle that pertains to eternal life, in other words, to endless
lives, or eternal increase. It is a law of the Gospel pertaining to
the celestial kingdom, applicable to all gospel dispensations, when
commanded and not otherwise.⁵

All Truth: Several Doctrines (6)

In various dispensations there are various differences in re-
gard to certain requirements of the Gospel. For instance, in the day
of Noah, when he preached the Gospel to the antediluvian world, he
was given a special commandment, to build an ark, that in case the
people would reject him and the message sent unto them, that himself
and all who believed on him might be saved from the destruction that

¹George Q. Cannon, J.D., XV, 297. ²Ibid., J.D., XIV, 57.
³Ibid., XX, 287. ⁴Joseph F. Smith, J.D., XII, 349.
⁵Ibid., XX, 26.
awaited them. In this dispensation there is a principle or com-
mandment peculiar to it. What is that? It is the gathering the
people unto one place. The gathering of this people is as necessary
To be observed by believers, as faith, repentance, baptism, or any
other ordinance. It is an essential part of the Gospel of this dis-
ensation, as much so, as the necessity of building an ark by Noah,
for his deliverance, was a part of the Gospel of his dispensation.

... We believe also in the principle of direct revelation from God
to man. This is a part of the Gospel, but it is not peculiar to this
dispensation. It is common in all ages and dispensations of the Gos-
pel. ... Marriage, is also a principle or ordinance of the Gospel,
most vital to the happiness of mankind, however unimportant it may
seem, or lightly regarded by many. ... To secure the fulness of the
blessings, we must receive the fulness of the Gospel. ... Obedience
is a requirement of heaven, and is therefore a principle of the Gos-
pel.

Here is an ordinance which we are now administering, the Sacra-
ment of the Lord's Supper; it is a principle of the Gospel, one as
necessary to be observed by all believers, as any other ordinance of
the Gospel."

All Truth: Doctrine of Temporal Salvation (7)

... The Latter-day Saints believe not only in the gospel of spiritual
salvation, but also in the gospel of temporal salvation. ... Therefore, we preach the gospel of industry, the gospel of economy,
the gospel of sobriety.

George A. Smith

All Truth: Several Doctrines (6)

... We find that we are one, generally, in faith. We believe on
the Lord Jesus Christ; we believe in the first principles of the
Gospel--the doctrines of repentance, and baptism for the remission
of sins, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost and
the resurrection of the dead; we readily recieve, by the power of the
Holy Spirit, manifested to us through the Prophets, the doctrine of
baptism for the dead, the holy anointing and the law of celestial
marriage.

1Ibid., XIX, 192-93.
2Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine (8th ed.; Salt Lake City: Deseret
Book Company, 1949), 208-209.
3George A. Smith, J.D., XVII, 60-61.
All Truth (6)

The Gospel is connected with every thing I can think about. It is expanded to such an extent that I cannot see beyond it; I cannot rise above it, nor descend beneath it. There are no depths it does not reach; no heights it does not surmount; no extent which is not filled by it. So let me talk to you what I will, that is true, and calculated to do good to mankind, it must of necessity form a part of the Gospel.1

Orson Spencer

Gifts of the Spirit: Power (2)

THIS GOSPEL which is the power to God unto salvation to them that believe, is also the power of God and wrath of God to the destruction of them that believe not.2

Francis M. Lyman

All Truth (6)

The Gospel taught by the Latter-day Saints embraces the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.3

George Teasdale

Eternal Marriage: Plural Marriage (4)

I believe in the fullness of the everlasting Gospel. I believe in plural marriage as a part of the Gospel, just as much as I believe in baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. The same Being who taught me baptism for the remission of sins, taught me plural marriage, and its necessity and glory. Can I afford to give up a single principle? I can not. If I had to give up one principle I would have to give up my religion.4

Other General Authorities

B. H. Roberts

Gifts of the Spirit (2)

In speaking upon the subject that has been announced—"The

1Amasa M. Lyman, J.D., III, 141.
2Orson Spencer, "The Gospel Witness!," M.S., X (June 15, 1848), 177.
3Francis M. Lyman, The Contributor, VII (September, 1886), 478.
4George Teasdale, J.D., XXV, 21.
Comprehensiveness of the Gospel." By that term we mean the Gospel as embracing all religious truth. It could be claimed, and that with perfect propriety, that the Gospel—which is the science of theology, nothing more and certainly nothing less than that—embraces more than what may be strictly regarded as religious truth; that it embraces all truth, whether in heaven or in earth; and that limiting the subject to what is usually recognized as religious truth, narrows down the sphere which properly belongs to this great science, to limits exceedingly narrow and inconvenient. Yet having paused long enough to recognize the fact that a broader interpretation could be given to the term, and that in its broadest sense it might be considered as embracing all religious truth, we shall find sufficient ground to offer the reflections which we have to present on this occasion.

When we say the Gospel embraces all religious truth, we mean that it comprehends all principles relating to man's salvation. It includes all facts in relation to God, relative to His nature, His attributes, His character, and man's relationship to Deity—all this is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All principles, the knowledge of which and acceptance of which is essential to man's salvation, are found within the Gospel. All ordinances necessary to forgiveness of sin, or to the obtaining of power to overcome weaknesses, and develop fully the moral and spiritual excellence contemplated in the Gospel of Jesus Christ—all this is to be found in the Gospel. All gifts and graces, including the spiritual gifts of the Gospel, the gift of knowledge, of wisdom, of faith, of discernment of spirits of revelation, of speaking in tongues, of interpreting tongues, all these and if there be any other good thing—all things that are virtuous, all things that are of good report, all things that are praiseworthy, or that are honest, or true, or lovely, all—all is included in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

From the Gospel comes the Church of Christ. The Church is the means by which the Gospel is promulgated in the earth, by which it is made known to the children of men.

Latter-day Saint Commentators

N. L. Nelson

Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

What, then, is the name of this graded scheme of divine education? In revelation it is called the plan of salvation. But salvation is synonymous with true education. The English translators, finding no exact equivalent of the idea, coined a new word from two Anglo-Saxon words (God-spel, God's story), and the name of the divine plan of education is therefore the Gospel."

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Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

As will be seen, the Gospel, while it draws all its material from Theology, is not coextensive with Theology—at least not in this life. Ages of progress will have passed ere this plan will have need of principles which now excite foolish, theological speculation. The Gospel is a graded plan and program in theology—a system of progressively related divine principles for the education of divine children. Theology is a universal encyclopedia: the Gospel is a series of text-books adapted to the gradual unfolding of the mind. Eternities will have passed ere these text-books absorb the encyclopedia.

Analysis and Synthesis

The definitions of the gospel given above are strictly supplementary to the formative period in the restoration of the gospel, so extended analysis of them would be superfluous. The definitions were found to agree basically with the categories established in the preceding chapter. Perhaps the most notable development herein came in the expression, beginning with Brigham Young, of the doctrine that the gospel embraces and is all truth, being particularly the plan of acquiring all truth. Joseph Smith's period initiated this concept, but his successors expounded and clarified it. President Young emphasized this doctrine frequently. The reader should note carefully, nevertheless, that all such definitions placed this concept in the perspective of a distinction between saving truths (the primary gospel plan) and those truths which add to and complete man's knowledge of everything (art, science, philosophy, etc.) Brigham Young made frequent reference to the first principles of the gospel, noting particularly that the obedient were the ones who experienced the power of God unto salvation. President John Taylor's oft-repeated theme was that the gospel "brought life and immortality to light." He likewise taught that the gospel embodies all truth, based

\(^1\)Ibid.
upon the plan of saving principles and ordinances. He declared repeatedly that it was not merely a written account of the Savior's life and traits but was an eternal principle of revelation and truth. The first principles, as well, were a strong part of his message.

President Wilford Woodruff stuck primarily with the first principles in his numerous definitions of the gospel. His wide success and experience as a missionary doubtlessly influenced his choice of definitions, and vice versa. His simple message was extremely effective in terms of converts, reminding one of the simple definitions in the Book of Mormon, professedly a simple book, wherein many definitions also came from great missionaries. Another prominent missionary, Orson Pratt, dwelt largely upon the first principles and the gifts of the Spirit in his definitions. This may come as a surprise to many people who consider Elder Pratt as the foremost expounder of the "mysteries" and deeper doctrines of the Church. Nonetheless, his definitions were both numerous and simple, couched in terms of the first principles.

Elder George Q. Cannon mentioned that plural marriage was a part of the gospel, as did Joseph F. Smith and George Teasdale. During this period Elder Smith emphasized the gathering and the temporal salvation aspects of the gospel. Much more will be said about him in the next period. B. H. Roberts, another prolific definer of the gospel, repeatedly said that the gospel contains all truth, growing out from the core of religious principles which save and exalt mankind. Finally, N. L. Nelson, not a General Authority, noted that the gospel is a well-organized plan, unfolding all truth to the righteous as rapidly as they can receive it.

Without going into great detail, it appears that the answers to the thesis questions are essentially the same as they were in the chapter
on Joseph Smith's period. There the gospel was defined as a systematic structure of saving principles, with the gradual revelation of all truth evolving therefrom. In this period the one exception to the basic categories and structure of the preceding chapter was the absence of any definitions containing the doctrine of being sealed unto eternal life. Although the doctrine was taught by the brethren during this period, it was not placed in the context of a gospel definition in the sources used for this thesis.

The statements observed in the literature of this period were in harmony with each other and with the scriptures, as nearly as the author could determine.

The historical developments were slight, primarily resting upon the gradual expansion of the fact that the gospel contains all true principles and ordinances. These principles and ordinances were enumerated in greater detail as the period progressed.

As explained earlier, many differences in definitions doubtlessly resulted from the habit which human beings have of expressing themselves to fit the needs of the occasion. Inasmuch as few of the sources likely gave their definitions with an eye to the ultimate, most complete statement, it should not be expected that the phrasing would be polished to the exactitude befitting a legal document. The Latter-day Saints believe, however, that the teachings of the Brethren are consistent and true, when compared in the over-all picture.

Finally, the slight differences in definitions, and the gradual development of certain concepts, may be directly attributed to the fact that the prophets, seers, and revelators of the Church had the right, under inspiration, to include such statements in their definitions as
they felt should supplement the scriptural definitions. According to Latter-day Saint views, the comments by inspired modern prophets assume the same binding force as scripture, particularly when the General Authorities as a group either vote on an issue or in their several statements express a unified opinion. Brigham Young's teaching, concurring with Joseph Smith's earlier introductory statements that the gospel plan reaches out and embraces all truth, is therefore classed as an authorized supplement to the Savior's own definition in the Book of Mormon. Furthermore, it would be incorrect to say the General Authorities have misused the term "gospel" by defining it as all truth, whereas the Scriptures ostensibly do not. In reality, as the two preceding chapters have demonstrated, the scriptures consistently teach that the "gospel" is all truth, in the ultimate usage of the word. This is seen particularly in those passages which teach that the Holy Ghost reveals all truths of the gospel to men as they obey the initial parts of the plan of salvation. Likewise, the scriptures emphasize that the first principles are the gate or door, not the end of the road. Indeed, the scriptures contain the commandment to seek all truth by means of the gift of the Holy Ghost, one of the first principles.\(^1\) As shown above, the full gamut of General Authorities defined the gospel as all truth, so it was not a mere misunderstanding by one or two of them. The critical fact to remember, as mentioned above, is that these definitions emerge from the context of the systematic, structured gospel plan. The Brethren unanimously stressed the initial principles of the gospel, then showed that the revelation of all truth comes about in an

\(^1\)Book of Mormon, Moroni 10:4-5.
ordered, progressive manner. They especially emphasized the need for the saving principles of truth, without which the knowledge of the arts, sciences, philosophies, etc., would be useless. They addressed the first principles especially to nonmembers, and the advanced principles to members of the Church.
CHAPTER FIVE

DEFINITIONS FROM 1900 TO THE PRESENT:

JOSEPH F. SMITH TO DAVID O. MCKAY

Fewer definitions of the gospel appeared during this period than during former ones in proportion to the amount of Latter-day Saint literature, although the total quantity of literature increased. As a further limiting factor in this chapter, the author has not included even the fourth part of his collection of definitions given during this period, for most of them were repetitions of the same ideas expressed in earlier chapters. Only those definitions have been here included which support new, unusual, amplified, or differing views. It would be redundant and needless to include all definitions, particularly those numerous ones which state the gospel to be the first four principles.

This chapter is structured in the same way as the preceding one, presenting the most authoritative definitions first, from the presidents of the Church on down. Again, the definitions will be identified in relation to the categories already established in the two preceding chapters.

Presidents of the Church

President Joseph F. Smith

First Principles: Eternal Judgment (1)

Thank God for that noble, that just, that godlike principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that every one of us will have to
give an account for the deeds we do in the flesh, and that every man will be rewarded according to his works, whether they be good or evil.¹

**Gifts of the Spirit: Love, Peace (2)**

The doctrine of love and peace as taught in the gospel of our Lord.²

**All Truth (6)**

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ embraces all the laws and ordinances necessary for the salvation of man... In the theological sense, the gospel means more than just the tidings of good news, with accompanying joy to the souls of men, for it embraces every principle of eternal truth. There is no fundamental principle, or truth, anywhere in the universe, that is not embraced in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is not confined to the simple first principles, such as faith in God, repentance from sin, baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, although these are absolutely essential to salvation and exaltation in the kingdom of God.

The laws known to man as the "laws of nature," through which the earth and all things on it are governed, as well as the laws which prevail throughout the entire universe, through which heavenly bodies are controlled and to which they are obedient in all things, are all circumscribed and included in the gospel... The Lord has revealed that man was formed in his image and that we are his offspring. This is a glorious gospel truth.³

**All Truth: All doctrines necessary (6)**

Again, while prayer is essential and is one of the fundamental principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is nonsense for a person to pray only, and not work.

... .................................................................

So that, while the first principles of the gospel, faith in God, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, the healing of the sick, the resurrection, and, for that matter, all the revealed principles of the gospel of Christ are necessary and essential in the plan of salvation, it is neither good policy nor sound doctrine to take any one of these, single it out from the whole plan of


²Joseph F. Smith, "Editors' Table," Era, XVII, (September, 1914), 1076.

³Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine, 85-86.
gospel truth, make it a special hobby, and depend upon it for our salvation and progress either in this world or the world to come. They are all necessary.

**Description** (7)

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the Divinely ordained panacea for the ills that afflict humanity, and preeminently so for the dread affliction of sexual sin.

President George Albert Smith

**All Truth** (6)

Is it not wonderful to belong to a Church that absorbs everything that is praiseworthy? Every good thing is a part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

President David O. McKay

**All Truth** (6)

The gospel is not a social program though its living on this earth involves one, if greed and avarice, covetousness and selfishness be trodden underfoot, and if ambition, envy, and love of earthly power and dominion be cast out. The Gospel is eternal truth, existent from eternity to eternity; it is all truth.

**All Truth: Free Agency** (6)

I refer to the fundamental principle of the gospel, free agency. References in the scriptures show that this principle is (1) essential to man's salvation; and (2) may become a measuring rod by which the actions of men, of organizations, of nations may be judged.

**Description: Happiness** (7)

That is just one glimpse of what Paul had in mind when he said

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3. George Albert Smith, *C.R.*, 112s (October, 1941), 97.
the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. He could say it is the power of God unto happiness, which the Prophet Joseph said is the purpose of our existence here on earth.

Description (7)
The gospel is our anchor.  

Description: Plan of Happiness (7)
For that is what the Gospel is, principles of life, salvation here, happiness here, as well as hereafter.

Other Prophets, Seers, and Revelators
Stephen L. Richards

First Principles--Four (1)
The principles and ordinances of the Gospel of Christ are the laws of that kingdom. Faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of hands for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost, ordination to the Priesthood, -- are all essential requirements. Why? Because God has stipulated them and because also they are consonant with the spirit, the purpose and glory of the kingdom.

All Truth (6)
For my part, I construe the great principles of the gospel as being sufficiently broad and comprehensive to embrace all truth, and I circumscribe and limit their definition and operation, only by the broadmindedness of truth itself. Whatever is true, whatever is virtuous, whatever is of good report, lovely or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

All Truth: Various Doctrines (6)
The gospel of Christ is revelation. The Savior himself was a revelation, . . .

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1David O. McKay, Deseret News Church Section (Salt Lake City), February 17, 1962, 12.
3David O. McKay, C.R., 85s (October, 1914), 91.
5Ibid., 93s (October, 1922), 66.
Priesthood is an essential component of the gospel plan. . . .
I mention next the wisdom which the gospel of Christ brings to us about the human body, its status and its care. . . . All of the earlier pronouncements concerning marriage and family ties set forth in the ancient scriptures were adopted by and incorporated into the gospel of Christ.

The gospel provides us with full understanding of all the requisites for peace. It tells us that first there must be recognition of the supremacy of and love of God the Father, and secondly, that man recognizing himself as a son of God must love his fellow man.

All Truth: Various Doctrines (6)

The gospel teaches the fundamental laws of wealth—its acquisition and proper use. . . .

The gospel of Jesus Christ lays down also the laws which provide for the proper maintenance of our social order. . . . The gospel points out that the foundation of society is the home, and the marital relation. . . . We are taught in the gospel the proper relationship of man to man. . . . the principles of the gospel lie at the very foundation of just government. . . . it lays down the foundation for that which is indispensable in human life, real, genuine happiness.

Description (7)

The gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. . . . is the pearl of great price. It is the royal road to happiness. It is the Master Work of the ages. It means life in its fulness and exaltation.

Hugh B. Brown

First Principles: Eternal Judgment (1)

It is a gospel of glad tidings of great joy, a gospel of hope and saving power as was enjoyed by members of the Church in the days of the Savior and his apostles.

The restored gospel is also a warning of judgment to come, a judgment which is neither fiction nor superstition but is a tremendous and solemn truth, when all that is found valueless or out of

1 Ibid., 124a (April, 1954), 32-33.
2 Stephen L. Richards, C.R., 90a (April, 1920), 96-98.
harmony with the purposes of God must be abolished.

Some may not understand how this message of good news can include a warning of judgment to come, but judgment is integral to the gospel. It is the assertion of the final triumph of good and the abolition of evil.

Gifts (fruits) of the Spirit: Joy (2)

We never tire of proclaiming the inspiring truth of the Gospel that man is that he might have joy. 3

Orson F. Whitney

First Principles: Atonement (1)
All Truth: Eternal Progression (6)

When we consider the Gospel, therefore, we should bear in mind that it means something more than faith, repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands for the gift (giving) of the Holy Ghost, with other rituals and requirements in the Church of Christ. We cannot separate "the laws and ordinances of the Gospel" from the basic principles upon which they rest—the mighty foundation stones of Sacrifice and Redemption, without which all this sacred legislation would be of no effect. Nor . . . from the idea of Eternal Progression.

Description: Plan of Exaltation (7)

The Gospel of Christ is termed by Paul "the power of God unto salvation." The Apostle might have gone further, had he been so inclined, or had it been timely. He could have shown that the Gospel is also the power of God unto exaltation, . . . To redeem, save and glorify, is the threefold mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . The Fall of Man and the Redemption from the Fall, are the great vicissitudes of human experience. One is sequel to the other, and both are steps in the march of eternal progress. The Gospel, therefore, embraces the fall as well as the redemption. 4

Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

Says Joseph the Seer: . . . "[God] saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest [mankind] could have a privilege to advance like himself." . . .

3Ibid., 275-276. 4Whitney, Doctrine, 280-81.
The "laws" here referred to are the principles of the Everlasting Gospel. These principles are self-existent. God did not create them; He "instituted them . . ." The Gospel as a code or system of laws can readily be conceived as a divine creation. Not so the eternal principles which it embodies.

All Truth (6)

Even so, while we refer specifically to the Gospel, including in that reference such principles as faith, repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost--while these, in a specific sense, are the Gospel, in a larger view the Gospel means everything connected with the work of the Lord in which we are taking part.

The very word "Gospel" teaches this truth. It springs from an Anglo-Saxon term--"Godspell," signifying God-story, or the story of God. When we speak of the Gospel in this greater sense, we mean the career of that divine Being who left His glorious throne in heaven and descended upon this planet to die that man might live, who became the author of salvation and the giver of eternal glory to all who would believe on Him and obey Him. The God-story includes the choosing of the Christ in the councils of eternity, the creation, and the fall of Adam and Eve which prepared the way before the Savior and His great uplifting work. It includes His death upon the Cross, and His resurrection, concerning which He said: "Because I live ye shall live also." It includes all the dispensations of the Gospel from the days of Adam to the present time. It covers this great and final dispensation, which will gather to its bosom all former dispensations of God's dealings with man, and bind them together in one harmonious whole. It comprises the work of Joseph the Prophet and the latter-day restoration of the Gospel. It extends over the future, over the Millennium that is to come, the reign of universal peace and good will, and over the glorification of our planet and its conversion into a heaven, the abode of the righteous forevermore. These are all parts of the great God-story, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . The Latter-day Saints realize that the Gospel embraces temporal as well as spiritual duties; . . .

Descriptive Plan of Salvation (7)

But the Gospel is more than a means of escape from impending ills; more than a lifeboat, a fire-escape, or a way out of a perilous situation. It is all that and more. A divine plan for human progress, the foreordained Pathway to Perfection--such is Christ's Gospel, as revealed to and proclaimed by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

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3 Whitney, Doctrine, pp. 274-75.
Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the ladder to freedom and light. Without it there is no salvation. . . . But . . . the Gospel is not a substitute for self-help. It does not supersede man's efforts in his own behalf. But it is the means whereby those efforts are made effectual. It does for man what he cannot do for himself.

Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

The Gospel is the plan of eternal progression, and perfection is its goal.

John A. Widtsoe

All Truth (6)

The Gospel is a product of the mind and will of the Lord. It teaches that a divine purpose runs through the universe, encompassing every fact, law, and principle, and enlivening all the works of nature. Thus the Gospel in its fulness becomes the structure or house of truth, into which all truth may be fitted. As the home of truth, the Gospel claims all truth, and places all truth in its proper place and position with respect to the present and future welfare of man.

James E. Talmage

First Principles--Six (1)

Be it remembered that the effect of the Atonement is twofold: (1) Redemption of the human race from physical death, which entered the world as a result of Adam's transgression; and (2) Salvation, whereby means of relief from the results of individual sin are provided. . . .

The second effect of the Atonement makes salvation possible to all men through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel; and of these the following are fundamental: (1) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) Repentance; (3) Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; (4) Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

1Ibid., 433.


4James E. Talmage, "Philosophy of the Atonement," Era, XXI (June, 1918), 726.
All Truth (6)

We speak of faith, repentance, baptism, and laying on of hands, as the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. We have gone so far as to number them—the first, the second, the third and fourth principles, and the first and the second ordinances. Are there others? Verily, verily, yes. What, a fifth? Yes, and a sixth, and a seventh, aye, and a tenth, and a hundredth and a thousandth. There is no end to the principles of truth embodied in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and yet each one is dependent upon the fundamentals, and each one grows out of those that have been given before.

Description: Fullness (7)

We have learned the solemn truth that the gospel is greater than any book. More is included in the gospel than all scripture thus far written; and the living oracles are established in the Church to give unto the people from time to time the mind and the will of God in addition to what has been placed upon record with relation to the ages past. . .

What, some may ask, are we not told that we have the fulness of the gospel? Verily so; but "fulness" is relative, even as perfection is.

John Henry Smith

All Truth (6)

There is no truth in the world, whether in the sciences of men or from the revelations of God, but what is part and parcel of the Gospel which the Redeemer has given us.

Charles A. Callis

All Truth: Self-denial (6)

The Gospel teaches self-denial and forbearance from gratifying one's own wrong desires. Better is it to go to heaven through much self-denial than to wreck a human life in a course of self-indulgence.

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1 James E. Talmage, C.R., 88a (April, 1918), 163.
2 Ibid., 160.
3 John Henry Smith, C.R., 78a (April, 1908), 25.
Joseph Fielding Smith

**All Truth (6)**

The only truth that makes us free is the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, all truth belongs to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Albert E. Bowen

**All Truth: Various Doctrines (6)**

One of the results of a reign of violence is the denial of justice, but justice is a cardinal part of the Gospel law. And how useless it [war] all is. Instead of reprisals or vengeance the Gospel message teaches forgiveness and peace.

Marion G. Romney

**First Principles--Six (1)**

[He quoted 3 Nephi 27:13-15, 20-21, then stated:]

In this short statement the Master named four eternal verities upon which all else in his gospel is founded: first, the relationship between himself and his Father; second, the fact of his atonement; third, the universal resurrection; and fourth, the judgment. As to this relationship between himself and his Father... This verity, so simply put, is the cornerstone of his gospel...
The very burden of the Master's message during all his life was that he is the Son of God. The Father himself, who seldom speaks on any other question, time after time bore witness that Jesus is his Son. That fact is an essential part of the message of the restoration.

That the atonement was a fact is as essential to the gospel of Jesus Christ as is the Sonship of Jesus... The only purpose, or at least the main purpose, for which Jesus came into the world was to make the atonement. Others could have been sent to preach the gospel...

The resurrection is inherent in the atonement. Jesus said he came to do the will of his Father, and that the will of his Father was that he should be lifted up upon the cross. He further said that the purpose for which he was to be lifted up upon the cross was that he might draw all men to him. That he does through the resurrection.

The purpose for which men are to come before him after the resurrection is that they may be judged of the works which they have done in the flesh.

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2 Albert E. Bowen, *C.R.*, 111a (April, 1941), 86-88.
These are the fundamentals of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as he put them in his own language.

Other General Authorities

Charles H. Hart

Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

The beauty of this gospel of ours is that not only is it the plan of life and salvation to individuals but also to nations.

First Principles: Sanctification (1)

Sanctification is a basic doctrine of the gospel (D. & C. 20:31-34): indeed the very reason men are commanded to believe, repent, and be baptized is so they "may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost," and, thereby be enabled to stand spotless before the judgment bar of Christ. (3 Ne. 27:19-21)  

All Truth (6)

In the broadest sense, all truth is part of the gospel; for all truth is known to, is ordained by, and comes from Deity; and all truth is aidful to progression and advancement. But in the high spiritual sense in which the term is used in the revelations, the gospel is concerned with those particular religious truths by conformity to which men can sanctify and cleanse their own souls, thus gaining for themselves salvation in the eternal worlds.

Description: Plan of Salvation (7)

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan of salvation. It embraces all of the laws, principles, doctrines, rites, ordinances, acts, powers, authorities, and keys necessary to save and exalt men in the highest heaven hereafter. It is the covenant of salvation which the Lord makes with men on earth.

Description: Fullness (6)

The fulness of the gospel consists in those laws, doctrines,

1. Marion G. Romney, C.R., 125a (April, 1955), 32.
2. Charles H. Hart, C.R., 93s (October, 1922), 114.
3. Ibid., 675.  
5. Ibid., 331.
ordinances, powers, and authorities needed to enable men to gain the fulness of salvation. Those who have the gospel fulness do not necessarily enjoy the fulness of gospel knowledge or understand all of the doctrines of the plan of salvation. But they do have the fulness of the priesthood and sealing power by which men can be sealed up unto eternal life. The fulness of the Gospel grows out of the fulness of the sealing power and not the fulness of gospel knowledge."

Milton R. Hunter

Eternal Marriage: Large Families (4)

The Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches today that it is the duty of parents, when they are physically and mentally capable, to rear large families in order that the numerous spirits in the spirit world may have opportunity to come to the earth and receive mortal bodies.

Ward Teacher's Message

All Truth: Various Doctrines (6)

What is the Gospel? It is sometimes called the plan of salvation. Part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is embodied in the modern code of ethics or moral teachings, for the science of ethics is based on the teachings of Christ. But the Gospel includes more than what is embraced in the science of ethics, or the rules of moral conduct. It not only names the virtues that should be cultivated to insure happiness, but furnishes the means whereby these virtues may be made a part of one's life. It is not enough to know what conduct will bring happiness: one must also possess the appliances or aids that assist him to produce it in his life. The Gospel supplies the appliance [sic]. They include faith, repentance, baptism, confirmation, prayer, obedience, and Church service.

Brigham Young University Committee

First Principles--Four (1)

Some aspects of the Gospel are concerned primarily with man's

1Ibid., 333.
4Committee from the Division of Religion, "A Brief Statement Concerning the Question of What is Meant by the Term 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ,'" (Provo, Utah: Division of Religion, Brigham Young University, n.d.) 1-2. This was a committee of professors in the Division of Religion.
regaining the presence of God, whereas other aspects of the Gospel are concerned primarily with the exaltation of man within the celestial kingdom after he has regained God's presence. Those aspects of the Gospel which are concerned with man's regaining the presence of God might be called the "saving" or the "celestial" aspects of the Gospel. These are the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; repentance; baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

All Truth: Various Doctrines (6)

There is more to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, however, than merely being saved in the presence of God. Certain aspects of the Gospel, for example, are concerned with the "exaltation" of man within the presence of God or within the celestial kingdom. The principles and ordinances of the Gospel which are primarily concerned with man's exaltation include the receiving of priesthood authority and the honoring of this authority, the temple endowment, and temple marriage for time and eternity. These help constitute the "fulness" of the Gospel and are made effective in the lives of men through the fulness of the sealing power.²

All Truth (6)

Theoretically the Gospel may be said to embrace all truth, but the fact remains that man in mortality does not receive all truth and yet he can, if willing and obedient, receive the aspects of the Gospel which deal with his salvation and exaltation. Thus, we might say the Gospel will lead man, if faithful, unto all truth; that is, all truth will be made manifest to those who accept the celestial principles of the Gospel and who live by these principles until the end.

Dr. Richard L. Anderson

First Principles--Six (1)

In one sense any doctrine of the New Testament is a part of the gospel or message of the Church. But such a formless approach is unreasoning because it is quantitative and not qualitative in its evaluation. The gospel as defined by a study of contexts of terms of evangelization is a rather precise generalization wherein the relationship of New Testament doctrines is defined. All doctrines of the New Testament Church are parts of the New Testament gospel, but that gospel is a statement of their fundamental structure.

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., 3.
³Ibid., 4.
The actual content of the New Testament gospel may be summarized in the double question of who Christ is and how one accepts him. The assertion concerning Christ establish through him a general resurrection, a conditional redemption from sin, and ultimate accountability to him as Lord and Judge. This reconstruction generally confirms what capable scholars have noted as to the New Testament gospel concerning Christ. However, its precise formulation in Acts is grafted into sharper focus in this study by isolating the factors common to both Jewish and Gentile preaching. The second set of assertions of the New Testament gospel specifies the conditions of accepting Christ's redemption. They are faith in Christ, initial repentance maturing in continuing righteousness, formal acceptance of Christ's redemption through baptism, and the reception of the Holy Ghost (by the laying on of hands).

Dr. Hyrum L. Andrus

First Principles--Four (1)

In looking at things in light of the above views, it is evident that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is more than just a philosophy of life. If some people were asked to define the Gospel, they would include everything the Lord has revealed about the three degrees of glory down to the last and most degraded level in hell. They would say that the Gospel included everything. But the Lord says in the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 20, that the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the Gospel. Yet the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the Gospel. Yet the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the Gospel.

Wherein does the Book of Mormon contain the fulness of the Gospel? It does so because it contains many explicit statements of how one can bring himself into relationship with the light and power of Christ in its more pure and refined degrees, through His atonement.

Now what is Christ's Gospel? It consists of the requirement to have genuine and living faith in Christ and of repentance, by which man may bring his life into harmony with the Savior. It consists of the ordinance of baptism in which men make covenant with Christ to do His will and receive a remission of sins through His atonement. Finally, it consists of the extension of the powers of the Holy Ghost to man, to enlighten him, to regenerate his soul and to purify and sanctify his heart to where he may enter into God's presence. This, essentially, is the Gospel.

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1Anderson, "Evangelion," 229.
First Principles—Four (1),
Gifts of the Spirit (2),
Sealing unto eternal life (5)

According to the Pearl of Great Price, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a divine formula by which the mercy, power, and blessings of God are given to fallen man. This divine plan requires that man exercise living faith in Jesus Christ, repent of all sin, be baptized by immersion for the remission of sins, and receive the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. This latter gift gives man a legal right to draw upon the truth, power, and blessings that are administered to man through the Holy Ghost. In this way, man may be regenerated and enter into a newness of life. . . . Having been born into the kingdom of God, the faithful have power to become sons and daughters of Christ by growing up in Him unto eternal life. After man has matured sufficiently in the fruits, gifts, and blessings of the Gospel, the Holy Priesthood may act to seal him unto eternal life. By faith and subject to the will of God, he may then come back into the presence of God and commune with those who reside in glory. This is the plan of salvation for all men through the power and atonement of Jesus Christ.¹

Glenn L. Pearson

First Principles—Eight (1)

There is a doctrine of the fall, a doctrine of pre-mortal existence, and a doctrine of Christ. Each of these embraces numerous principles. Some embrace ordinances. The doctrine of Christ embraces the information, principles, and ordinances necessary to restore fallen man spotless and clean into the presence of his Heavenly Father, and a warning of the consequence of noncompliance when the message has been received. This doctrine, then, is the same thing as the gospel. . . . [Quoted 3 Nephi 27:13-21, then stated:]

If we analyze the verses quoted above, we will see that the following principles are enumerated.
1. The atonement of Christ
2. The doctrine of the universal resurrection.
3. The doctrine of the universal judgment.
5. Repentance.
6. Baptism by water.
8. The necessity of enduring in faith and repentance to the end in faithful imitation of the life of Christ as far as it is known to us.²

¹Andrus, Doctrinal Commentary, 282.
²Pearson, Know Your Religion, 49.
Professor Pearson made the further statement that the term "gospel" is used too loosely and unscripturally when it is equated with "all truth in the universe." He based this view on the fact, as he perceived it, that the four standard works do not support such a usage.1 Explaining the "fullness" of the gospel in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures, he stated that eight basic principles actually constitute the gospel, or the means of entering into the celestial kingdom. Since these are in the Book of Mormon, that book contains the fullness of the gospel.2 The other teachings of the Church he classified as being either supports or additions to the gospel, designed for gaining exaltation after first entering the celestial kingdom.3 As shown above, Dr. Andrus concurred essentially in this view of the subject. Their main contention is largely a matter of semantics, applying the word "gospel" strictly to the initial saving ordinances and Christ's atonement. They agree that the full program of the plan of salvation eventually embraces and distributes to the righteous all truth, but they assert that the gospel per se is that body of doctrines designed to bring man back into the presence of God, where he may be endowed with the Spirit of truth in its fullness and thereby know all things.4

These recent scholars, as well as the General Authorities, have evidently attempted to reverse a trend which they felt existed among some members of the Church since the early parts of this century. The tendency was to believe in the gospel of all truth, but in a humanistic setting. Stated another way, some believe that good social ethics, scientific findings, the beauties of the arts, and all other truths are of equal efficacy in saving mankind. In opposition to this, these writers have emphasized the saving doctrines of the gospel—the first principles and ordinances which lead man to a close personal relationship with the Lord. The acquisition of such fundamental truths prepares men for the revelation of all truth in its proper balance, as structured within the gospel framework.

By strongly asserting the necessity of the first principles, these scholars have at times (perhaps unintentionally) neglected to state the

1Ibid., 24, 41-42.  
2Ibid., 26.  
3Ibid., 63.  
4See D&C 88:66-68; 93:24-27.
fully-rounded picture of the gospel. The pendulum had swung to one side, and in order to reach some equilibrium again the current scholars have stressed the other side of the swing. It now appears that a more accurate, balanced definition would state the primary principles and then include the additional superstructure which expands to embrace all truth. The gospel plan and results may be likened to an infinitely expanding "horn of plenty," with the first principles as the point from which the horn expands.

Nephi Jensen

The final definition from this period is likewise opposed to defining the gospel as all truth. His evidence is essentially the same as that of the two preceding authors. The following comments deal with the atonement and its major results, but further truths and ordinances are not fully delineated. The implication is that the first principles are of greatest significance.

First Principles (1)

One of our writers has gone so far as to say that "the gospel includes all truth." This statement is most misleading. It tends to indefiniteness and inaccurate thinking and speaking. Worse still, it results in a failure to emphasize the great central truth of our religion. As a matter of fact, the gospel does not include even the full content of our religion.

These principles and ordinances derive all their virtue and efficacy from Christ's great atoning sacrifice.

So, the gospel . . . is the truth concerning the love-inspired sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sin, by which he draws the hearts of the children of men to God, and his purity; and the truth concerning Christ's victory over the grave, wrought by the power of the resurrection in him, by which he brought to pass the immortality of mankind; and the redemption becomes a saving power in our lives.

Considering this period within the frame of the four thesis questions, the results are as follows:

1. What is the gospel of Jesus Christ as defined in the Latter-day Saint literature of this period? The teachings of the various General Authorities were unanimous in defining the gospel as a system of principles and ordinances which leads men back to God, to all truth, and to glorification. The first principles are the fundamental structure upon which the Lord builds or reveals all other truths and ordinances. Again in this period, the Church leaders used the first principles in proselyting situations, and the advanced principles for instructing Church members.

The definitions covered the full range of categories discussed in prior chapters. However, The author found only one definition which included the doctrine of being sealed to eternal life. Other authorities touched on the subject, but not in a definition context.

Some of the more significant concepts expressed in the definitions are the following: Joseph F. Smith stressed that the gospel was founded upon love, was composed of all truth, and included the important doctrine of accountability. George Albert Smith stressed "all truth." David O. McKay has taught that the gospel is all truth and is the way to happiness. Stephen L. Richards frequently expounded upon the first four principles (as did many of the brethren, although not included in the body of quotations above); he also stressed that the gospel, including all truth, was concerned with all temporal affairs of man. Orson F. Whitney was a prolific definer of the gospel, saying that it was the power unto exaltation as well as salvation. He termed it a ladder to freedom and eternal pro-
gression. Again, he stated emphatically that the gospel included all truth and the work of all dispensations of the gospel. James E. Talmage taught clearly that the gospel was the first six principles, but that it also circumscribed all truth. Marion G. Romney, using the standard definition as a basis, declared that the fundamental principles of the gospel were the first four principles and ordinances, with the atonement as the core of man's salvation. He did not, however, say that that alone was the gospel, as some might suppose from a too-hurried reading of his statement. Bruce R. McConkie taught that the gospel expands to embrace all truth, with the central principles as the beginning point. A committee from Brigham Young University, the Division of Religion, noted that the gospel is divided up into two aspects: saving principles, to reach the celestial kingdom; and exalting principles, all higher priesthood ordinances which will lift man from the entrance of the celestial kingdom and place him in a closer personal relationship with the Father, providing exaltation for man. Hyrum L. Andrus has stressed frequently the importance of the spiritual powers and gifts in the gospel. He disagreed with the idea that the gospel may be defined merely as all truth, holding to the concept that the first four principles and ordinances and the atonement constitute the program by which man may attain the truth and power of Christ. Glenn Pearson also stated that in the strictly correct usage of the term the gospel was only eight principles, and was not all truth. Finally, Nephi Jensen expressed the same basic thoughts which the two preceding men voiced, again basing his definition on the standard definition in the Book of Mormon.

2. *Is there agreement among ancient Scriptures, modern Scriptures, and modern prophets of the Church during this period, on the issue of the*
definition of the gospel? Again in this period the scriptures and the modern prophets were solidly in agreement. Some of the modern prophets and writers, however, opposed the trend among some Church members to define the gospel loosely by valuing all of man's knowledge as highly as the saving principles of Christ's teachings. The General Authorities re-emphasized the spiritual powers in the gospel and the importance of man's becoming a partaker of the "divine nature." President McKay has particularly dwelt upon the doctrine that men must become spiritually rejuvenated by the Spirit and seek to live a more God-like, higher type of life.

3. What, if any, have been the important historical developments in the definition of the gospel, as found in the Latter-day Saint literature of this period? Some have suggested that the tendency to define the gospel as "all truth" has been merely a reflection of the Latter-day Saint desire to become accepted, to be considered broad-minded, and to be in step with the rapidly burgeoning fields of science. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that during the twentieth century the advancements of science have been much more rapid than they were during Brigham Young's time, when the most was said about the gospel embracing or being all truth.

As noted above, the General Authorities have recently laid new emphasis upon the basic ordinances, gifts, and spiritual powers in the gospel. This has de-emphasized the humanistic approach to the gospel. Latter-day Saint scholars have also expounded this concept.

The author has observed the following additional developments in his study of the sources of this period:

A. In the early part of the century there existed a strong
interest in defining the gospel. Numerous ordinances and teachings of
the Church were stated to be parts of the gospel—viz., the sacrament,
love, eternal marriage, justice, etc.

B. During President Heber J. Grant's administration there were
few statements which defined the gospel. The definitions during that
period of economic depression primarily referred to temporal salvation—
the Word of Wisdom, the law of tithing, thrift, moral cleanliness, etc.,
as being parts of the gospel.

C. Following World War II, in the administrations of George Albert
Smith and David O. McKay, there has been a resurgence of emphasis upon
the spiritual powers inherent in the gospel. During this period of
social and moral upheaval the Church authorities, and also Latter-day
Saint writers, have stressed as the basic program of the gospel the first
principles, spiritual gifts, personal revelation, sealing to eternal life,
and the role of the Holy Spirit in revealing all truth after men accept
the fundamental plan of the gospel. This type of emphasis greatly resem-
bles that of the Joseph Smith period, when the world was unfamiliar with
the restored Church and gospel and needed this type of emphasis.

4. What are some possible reasons for any differing definitions?
As expounded in earlier chapters, the fact that authors spoke to meet the
needs of the occasion appears to explain satisfactorily the minor dif-
ferences in definitions during this period. Not always did they deem it
requisite to define the gospel in scholarly completeness. This is observ-
servably a common human trait. Consequently, partly complete formulas
for the gospel plan, judged on the basis of the standard definition, need
not be taken as either dissenting or differing views. Likewise, the dif-
fering opinions of the three writers last cited deviate from the other
opinions primarily only in emphasis and in semantics. They emphasized
the first principles as the basic formula of spiritual union with God, in
an effort to avoid the nebulous concepts espoused by some that all types
of truth have the same power to save.

Finally, it was observed in the literature consulted that the unusual and unique definitions became less numerous, the closer one
approaches the present. This might indicate that the subject has been
somewhat exhausted in the past, placing most of the later definitions in
the repetition category.
CHAPTER SIX

BIBLE PARALLELS TO LATTER-DAY SAINT DEFINITIONS
OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

The Bible teaches the gospel of Jesus Christ, according to the Lord's own declaration. 

1 Nevertheless, due to the loss of certain passages containing the truth in plainness, the Old Testament does not contain a single mention of the word "gospel." In the New Testament the problem is not too much better in comparison with the clear-cut type of definitions which one finds in the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants. Fortunately, in the New Testament there are numerous functional synonyms of the word "gospel," as well as allusions to its principles. Anderson has shown that words such as "testimony" and "the word of God" are repeatedly used in that manner. Evidently no one single term "pre-empted the concept of the fundamental Christian message." 

2 However, lacking crystal-clear statements which say, "thus and so is the gospel," one is left with the alternative of fabricating, patching together, and amalgamating the bits and shreds of evidence throughout the New Testament, in the hope of being able to construct a useable definition of the gospel.

In accordance with the delimitations set forth at the beginning, no attempt will be made to analyze linguistically the various Greek

words behind the word and concept "gospel." Anderson and others have covered that ground thoroughly. The purpose of this chapter is to make a simple comparison to determine if the concepts discussed in the previous chapters on Latter-day Saint literature are also visible in the New Testament.

The issues involved in this "simple comparison" should, in reality, not be underestimated. The excellent studies done by Dodd, Hunter, Anderson, and others have revealed many labyrinthian subjects underneath the surface. The interested student will find much of value in their works. Many of the scholarly problems have to do with the Greek texts, and are therefore outside the purview of this study. The present investigation will confine itself to an analysis of the Authorized Version translation, seeking to identify therein the existence of teachings similar to those in earlier chapters.

In order that the reader may fairly judge the evidence in this chapter, it would be well to restate briefly the Latter-day Saint definition of the gospel as established in the foregoing chapters.

It has been shown that the gospel is a system or plan laid out in an orderly sequence. The Lord intends that his children comprehend the full plan. To do this, man must progressively understand and act upon first one principle and then another, step by step. The Lord has entitled some of these as "first principles and ordinances."

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There are also advanced or later principles and ordinances of the gospel which are likewise laid out in an orderly sequence.

In addition to viewing the gospel as abstract truths revealed by the Father, one must also remember that it involves concrete actions. Christ performed his role in relation to these principles, and men must become involved with them also. These abstract principles are thus the stage of action, with Christ and man as performers on stage.

This chapter will discuss the definitions in the New Testament, analyzing them and comparing them to the Latter-day Saint definitions presented in the preceding chapters. No extended analysis of the various definitions is necessary--it will suffice to demonstrate merely the presence of similarities and leave the reader to judge the issue for himself.

First Principles of the Gospel

Preparatory gospel

The first item of interest is the "preparatory gospel" of Moses. Former chapters explained that this gospel pertained to faith, repentance, and baptism--those ordinances which prepare man for the higher and more spiritual things of the gospel, even the gift of the Holy Ghost with all that entails. Several generations after Abraham, following the dark days in Egypt, the Lord prepared to restore the fullness of the gospel to the children of Israel. Due, however, to their wickedness and lack of faith, the Lord took from them the greater portion of the priesthood\(^1\) and the fullness of the gospel. He later

told the writer of Hebrews: "Wherefore I was grieved with that
generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have
not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into
my rest."\(^1\)

In lieu of the full gospel, the Lord gave Israel a preparatory
pel in conjunction with the law of carnal commandments. Paul viewed
the law of carnal commandments as "our schoolmaster to bring us unto
Christ, that we might be justified by faith."\(^2\) In other words, they
needed to grow in the principle of faith to the point of receiving the
greater revelations of the gospel.\(^3\)

As evidence that they knew of Christ and were looking forward to
him, Paul wrote that the Israelites under Moses "... did all drink
the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that
followed them: and that Rock was Christ."\(^4\) The Savior also told the
unbelieving Jews: "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed
me: for he wrote of me."\(^5\) John the Baptist, the final preparer for
the Savior himself,\(^6\) preached this same preparatory gospel. His message
was part of the gospel which the Savior later taught: "I indeed baptize
you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier
than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with
the Holy Ghost, and with fire."\(^7\) The Latter-day Saints believe that

John the Baptist came as a resurrected being and restored the keys of

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\(^{1}\)Heb. 3:10-11; see also D&C 84:23-27. \(^{2}\)Gal. 3:24. \(^{3}\)Heb. 3:18-19.
\(^{4}\)1 Cor. 10:1-4; see also Heb. 11:24-26. \(^{5}\)John 5:46.
\(^{6}\)Mark 1:1-4. \(^{7}\)Matt. 3:11.
authority to administer the preparatory gospel.¹

The foregoing indicates the presence of the principle of faith during the Mosaic dispensation. Did they also repent, and were they baptized? The Old Testament of course reports numerous instances wherein the people repented when the Lord and his prophets warned them of impending judgments.² It was also repentance whenever the people turned from any wickedness to serve the Lord.³ Nevertheless, the Old Testament does not use the word "repentance" very frequently.

Of baptism one reads nothing in the Old Testament. Filling this void of information, the Doctrine and Covenants indicates that the Aaronic Priesthood held the keys for administering baptism to the repentant. Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the Bible supplied the further evidence that baptism was known to Adam and those who succeeded him.⁴ As a final note, the discovery of certain ancient documents and ruins in the Near East has of late suggested strongly that baptism was a feature of Judaism before the time of Christ.

Definitions from Christ

Throughout his ministry the Lord proclaimed the gospel, but in none of his sermons did he specifically define the first principles of his gospel message—at least as reported in our present New Testament. Nevertheless, the book is replete with references to the

¹D&C 13.
⁴Gen. 6:67-69 (Inspr. V.)
individual first principles of his gospel. The Lord frequently taught faith, as well as repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The same is true of the principles of resurrection and eternal judgment. To find a full merger of these principles in a concise statement of the initial message of the gospel, however, one must turn to Christ's last recorded discussion with the apostles. Following the resurrection, the Lord gave what is known as his last commission. It is not surprising to note that the burden of his words was that they should preach the central message of the gospel, just as He had done during his ministry. (It is an interesting fact that it was a similar event on the American continent which elicited the important classic definition in Third Nephi in the Book of Mormon, discussed above.) The Savior's commission included the mention of four vital aspects of the gospel message: belief (faith), baptism, salvation-damnation, and signs of the Spirit (the evidence of the gift of the Holy Ghost). These four are plainly evident in the Latter-day Saint definitions, as presented in earlier chapters. Mark recorded the commission in these words:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach
the gospel to every creature.
He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that
believeth not shall be damned.
And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name
shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;
They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing,
it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they
shall recover.\(^1\)

On that solemn occasion the Lord outlined carefully the vital,
initial issues in the gospel message, his proclamation of salvation.
Repentance is not a visible doctrine in this passage in the present
text, although it is the logical consequence of faith in the teachings
of the Master and is a prerequisite to efficacious baptism. The apostles
in fact, understood repentance to be an integral part of the message, as
later definitions will show. Mark himself reported earlier that the
Savior's message of the gospel based itself upon repentance.\(^2\) In the
commission the Lord mentioned salvation and damnation, the results of
the eternal judgment, but did not speak of the resurrection. Perhaps
the very presence of the resurrected Lord was powerful enough as a
reminder of the doctrine. That this is true is seen from the Pentecost
sermon, shortly after the Ascension, wherein some of Peter's first
words proclaimed the fact of the Redeemer's resurrection.\(^3\) Essentially,
then, one finds in this definition of the gospel the basic elements
of the atonement (part of Christ's role), in conjunction with the
"commandment" (part of man's role), just as in the classic definition
in the Book of Mormon.\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Mark 16:15-18. \(^2\)Mark 1:15. \(^3\)Acts 2:22-24.

\(^4\)These doctrines are expressed here as parts of the respective
roles, but they are obviously to be taught as abstract principles,
according to the implication of verse fifteen.
Definitions from the apostles

Turning to the first sermon following the Ascension, according to the New Testament record, it is apparent that the apostles again stressed the same basic doctrines contained in Christ's final commission. The occasion was the day of Pentecost. Peter declared that God had "loosed the pains of death" from Christ in the resurrection.¹ He became "Lord and Christ,"² the focus of the plan of salvation, and "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."³ These doctrines, then, were part of Christ's role in the gospel, as taught by Peter. He further emphatically declared the "commandment" after the audience had responded to the opening part of the sermon:

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, men and brethren, what shall we do?
Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.⁴

On that occasion the chief apostle delineated the pathway to perfection, the same plan of salvation advocated by the Lord Jesus Christ. Note especially his listing of the gift of the Holy Ghost as a part of the initial gospel principles. Now that the Savior walked not among men upon the earth, the Holy Ghost's mission became more apparent.

Another discourse which expressed many of the first principles is the one by Paul to certain disciples at Ephesus:

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.
And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.\textsuperscript{1}

This passage expresses vividly the principles of belief (faith), repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and spiritual gifts.

A fourth scriptural quotation showing significant completeness in the message of the first principles and ordinances of the gospel is in Hebrews. Paul spoke of the "first principles,"\textsuperscript{2} declaring them in the following terms:

Therefore not leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.\textsuperscript{3}

Within the pages of the Bible there is no clearer definition of the first principles of the gospel than this one. Earlier parts of the thesis demonstrated that the Book of Mormon uses the phrase "doctrine of Christ" as a synonym for the gospel. Such would seem to be the case in this statement also, judging from its usage in context. Paul also strongly implied therein that the gospel leads to perfection through obedience to principles laid above and upon the foundation of the first principles. (6:1.) This implication may have some connection with the doctrine that the gospel, in its broadest interpretation, contains all truth and is thereby able to lead men to perfection and glorification.

\textsuperscript{1}Acts 19:1-6. \textsuperscript{2}Heb. 5:12. \textsuperscript{3}Heb. 6:1-2 (Inspr. V.).
The New Testament provides many additional passages\(^1\) which indicate that the apostles taught the same first principles proclaimed by the Savior to the Jews. This also is true of modern scriptures, which report the Savior's words to the Nephites and others. The foregoing will suffice, in this treatment of the subject, to verify that such is the case. The reader may wish to refer to Anderson's work for a complete discussion of all pertinent New Testament passages.

Some definitions dwell particularly upon two of the first principles, the resurrection and eternal judgment, particularly in their relation to Christ's role. Although the Old Testament contains prophecies concerning both the resurrection\(^2\) and the eternal judgment,\(^3\) this comparison will treat only the New Testament passages. Not only are they more numerous, but they are also more specifically in a gospel definition context.

Paul's famous statement in First Corinthians 15:1-8 hammered home to the Corinthian saints the nature of the resurrection. He began by saying "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you." He then commenced a review of that gospel, stating that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." (15:3-4.) From this point he developed the entire chapter on the resurrection.

\(^1\)Acts 5:29-32; 8:12-17; 10:44-48; 17:30-32.


\(^3\)Psalms 50:3-6; Daniel 7:9-14; 1 Chron. 16:33; Psalms 96:13; 98:9.
Again in Second Timothy Paul discussed the gospel, stating that "Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, . . . hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." President John Taylor referred frequently to this verse as evidence that the gospel is more than merely a written document, but that it is a principle with the promise of power from the Lord. In this verse the word "life" might refer to eternal life (frequently synonymous with salvation and exaltation), whereas the word "immortality" bears with it the normal meaning of a deathless state brought about through the resurrection. It is the redemption from death and sin which allows men to enter into a degree of salvation after their resurrection and judgment. These twin effects of the atonement are major parts of the gospel, being also some of the first principles thereof. Paul had these two effects of the atonement in mind when he said in the next chapter of Second Timothy, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel. . . . Therefore I endure all things for the elec'ts' sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."2

The only New Testament allusion to the principle of eternal judgment in conjunction with the word "gospel" occurs in the Apocalypse, where John wrote:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.  

12 Tim. 1:9-10.  
22 Tim. 2:8-12.  
In the present time the impending nature of God's judgment day, coming relatively close upon the heels of the restoration of the gospel by the angel flying in the midst of heaven, indicates very forcibly to the Latter-day Saints why the Lord inspired Joseph Smith to class this principle of eternal judgment as one of the first principles of the gospel in this dispensation (if not in other dispensations). What an ominous warning the restoring angel intoned: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come."

As cited earlier in this chapter, the author of Hebrews included the principle of eternal judgment in the category of the first principles of the "doctrine of Christ," meaning the gospel of Christ.

**Advanced Principles of the Gospel**

Relatively few passages in the New Testament employ the word "gospel" in a definition context or in conjunction with any specific advanced principles of the gospel. Perhaps this is owing to the fact that a great amount concerning these principles was revealed to the apostles by Christ during the forty days before the Ascension. The records of this valuable period were particularly sacred and guarded with secrecy, so that only fragments come down to the present in the form of ceremonies and rites of the various mystery cults of early Christianity. The few comments available in the New Testament, however, yield some very interesting corroboratory evidence in connecting the New Testament doctrines with the teachings of the other Latter-day Saint sources. The following sub-sections present these passages in a comparison with the categories established in preceding chapters.
Gifts of the Spirit

Perhaps the most famous gospel definition is that given by Paul when he told the Romans, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."\(^1\) Without the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, as promised by Peter on the day of Pentecost, the gospel is not truly operative in the lives of members of the Church of Jesus Christ in terms of being a power unto salvation. Paul wrote extensively on the importance of this power, or the gifts of the Spirit.\(^2\) The reader may compare Paul's treatment of the subject with the modern scriptures by referring to the chart in an earlier chapter.\(^3\)

The Savior accompanied the preaching of his gospel with manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit, such as healing: "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."\(^4\) Christ bestowed this same power upon his apostles and other disciples.\(^5\) The scriptures record that they too were blessed in exercising these spiritual powers.

Paul noted the inseparable nature of the gospel message and the power manifested to those who truly accepted it: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."\(^6\)

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\(^1\) Rom. 1:16.  
\(^2\) 1 Cor. 12.  
\(^3\) Above, p. 98.  
\(^4\) Matt. 4:23.  
\(^6\) 1 Thess. 1:5.
The New Testament asserts that there was constant evidence of spiritual gifts throughout the ministries of Jesus Christ and his apostles. It refers to the gifts of tongues, revelation, visions, prophecy, and healing, as well as numerous others. The existence of spiritual gifts through the gift of the Holy Ghost has been the hallmark of the restored Church from its very inception. This along is enough to set it apart from Christendom at large. The bold assertion made by Peter, that the Holy Ghost would come to those who accepted baptism, is repeated again in this day by the Church. No man can direct the hand of the Almighty, nor promise that the Holy Spirit will come to someone. Consequently, the presence of spiritual gifts and the influence of the Holy Ghost in the Church today is claimed by the Church as an irrefragable proof of its divine origin.

The presence of the Holy Ghost produces other impressive effects upon the individual who lives the gospel. Of these manifestations Paul wrote to the Galatians: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Numerous other passages extoll the value of these fruits of the gospel plan. Latter-day Saints likewise testify that these effects have resulted in their lives from obedience to the restored gospel, through the influence of the Holy Ghost.

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6 Gal. 5:22-23; see also Eph. 5:9.
Priesthood and priesthood ordinances

Earlier chapters mentioned five aspects of this topic: offices as gifts of the Spirit, vicarious work for the dead, sacrifice, endowment, and law of consecration. Many scholars think that the New Testament says little about the necessity for priesthood authority in connection with the new order established by Christ. Latter-day Saints take the view that little is spelled out in detail, but that what is there is explicit, if one has the key to understanding it. The paragraphs to follow discuss these five aspects of priesthood in connection with gospel definitions in the New Testament.

The Bible teaches that an ordained office or calling in the priesthood is necessary to preach the gospel or perform any function connected therewith. The writer of Numbers declared that an office was a product of one gift of the Spirit, namely prophecy.\(^1\) Matthew recorded that the apostles were ordained in order to minister.\(^2\) Mark stated that the priesthood was necessary to preach the gospel or heal the sick.\(^3\) Likewise, Luke wrote that the ordained seventies were empowered to subjugate devils--this through their ordination.\(^4\) In Acts one reads that Matthias was ordained an apostle, that he might stand as a witness of the resurrection.\(^5\) There it also states that priesthood authority was needful to baptize someone.\(^6\) All of these passages lead one to the conclusion that priesthood offices were a vital aspect of the New Testament gospel program.

\(^1\)Num. 27:18-23. \(^2\)Matt. 10:1. \(^3\)Mark 3:14-15. \\
Vicarious work for the dead is a cardinal tenet of the Church in modern times. The Church teaches that evidence for such a belief in the New Testament era is to be found in several passages of scripture. As a basis for vicarious work, one must accept the fact that the dead have a chance to repent, having heard the gospel message. The Lord declared it this way: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."¹ Peter taught the same doctrine, stressing the fact that Christ visited the dead in their prison:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:
By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;
Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.²

As it is impossible for spirits to become justified and sanctified without going through the various steps and ordinances of the gospel, vicarious baptism was instituted, as Paul described: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?"³ Today the Church teaches, therefore, that the practice of vicarious work for the dead as taught in the modern era had its foundation in the time of Christ. The keys of authority for performing this work are also again upon the earth, having been restored by Elijah the prophet.⁴

Sacrifice is a third feature of the priesthood in connection with the gospel. The coming of the Lord did away with animal sacrifice, for such was a type or shadow of the great atonement and sacrifice by the Lord.¹ The New Testament does speak of the restoration of all things,² however, which certainly does not rule out a restoration of animal sacrifice. In this respect it leaves open the way for the view held by the Latter-day Saints.

Christ's apostles talked very plainly about a second type of sacrifice, even a spiritual sacrifice.³ Paul wrote to the Romans, urging them to live righteous lives and thus be "living sacrifices."⁴ Even more explicitly he explained:

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.
But to do good and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.⁵

This would seem to be sufficient evidence to show that the New Testament treats both types of sacrifice discussed in modern Latter-day Saint scriptures and writings.

The priesthood endowment ordinance is the fourth point under consideration. From the New Testament alone one could scarcely construct the concept that the Lord communicated a specific ordinance of this type to the apostles. After gaining the key of comprehension from Latter-day Saint scriptures, however, one can connect some fragments in the New Testament into a meaningful structure.

John reported the sacred moment when the resurrected Lord appeared to the disciples and said, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."\(^1\) This was the gift of the Holy Ghost which the apostles later conferred on others by the laying on of hands.\(^2\) It was not, however, the endowment to which Christ referred on the occasion of his final leave-taking, when He declared: "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."\(^3\) This special endowment of power is the same which faithful Latter-day Saints receive through participation in temple ordinances today.

Joseph Fielding Smith has taught as his belief that the three chief apostles, Peter, James, and John, received the endowment rites on the Mount of Transfiguration.\(^4\) In this same connection it should be noted that scholars have recently been intently studying the ancient texts which they term the "forty day literature," referring to the secret instructions which Christ reputedly gave to all of the twelve apostles during the forty days following his resurrection and before his ascension. These ceremonies and doctrines come down to us in varied form, but there is enough uniformity to lend historical credibility to the fact that Christ did give some type of special instructions to his chosen disciples. Latter-day Saints believe that in consequence of this, the early saints were endowed with special spiritual mani-


\(^4\)Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, comp. by Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), II, 165.
festations and powers, beginning at the day of Pentecost. Armed with this power, they were well prepared to launch forth on their missions to the world. It is remarkable to note that many of the same experiences of that day re-occurred in this dispensation when the endowments were first given at the dedication of the Kirtland temple.¹

The final area to consider under priesthood functions is consecration. The New Testament records a type of economic equality and unity, which the world has long misunderstood. Of the early saints the book of Acts states: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."² Further on on the book it again comments on this system:

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.³

Having all things in "common" does not necessarily connote community ownership, communism, socialism, or the like. The high spiritual values contextually associated with the system indicate that the participants were genuinely concerned with helping their fellow saints. This led them to consecrate their all to the Church, under the inspired supervision of the apostles. The apostles, in turn, dealt out according to the needs of the members. No one claimed his goods as his own (4:32), for each recognized that all things belonged to God anyway.⁴

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Upon receiving what he needed, however, it is obvious that a man would use it to his best advantage, operating under a free-enterprise system such as existed in those days. His growth would naturally benefit the Church, for unselfishness seems to have been the predominant mood. Note carefully that the record does not state that the Church maintained ownership of the stewardship, once it was allotted. The same system seems to have prevailed as the one which Christ spoke of in the parable of the talents.¹ Finally, this conforms directly to the law of consecration and stewardship which the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith.

_Patriarchal order_

As discussed in an earlier chapter, the "gospel of Abraham" is the patriarchal gospel, the priesthood power binding families together for eternity in a patriarchal society with Adam as the head of the family, under Christ and God the Father. In this chapter one must ask the question, does the Bible give evidence of this eternal family relationship, and is it part of the gospel in the Bible?

According to John, Abraham had a knowledge of Christ. John reported that the Lord told the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad."² From the Bible alone one could logically assume that Abraham's faith in his future Redeemer would lead him to repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and all other ordinances which the Lord would desire to bestow upon him. Latter-day revelation has made this assumption a reality.³

¹Matt. 25:14-30. ²John 8:56. ³Gen. 5:12; 17:4-5 (Inspr. V.)
The special "gospel" or patriarchal promise was only part of the full gospel revealed to Abraham. Although the New Testament does not elaborate on this, Paul's letter to the Galatians leaves no doubt with regard to the fact that the gospel was taught to Abraham. The Apostle wrote, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." The scriptures teach that all men must be baptized. They also state that Abraham now dwells with God. The logical conclusion is that Abraham must have been baptized and must have accepted the fullness of the everlasting gospel. This means, then, that the Abrahamic covenant is a part of the fullness of the gospel. It also indicates that the full gospel existed in Old Testament times, although not reported fully in that book.

The Bible supplies evidence that the righteous will be part of the family of Abraham, and thus of the larger family of Christ. Paul told the Ephesians that the Father had "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." To the Galatians Paul wrote more extensively on the subject, saying:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.

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5Eph. 1:5; see also 1 John 3:1-2.
To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.
And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.
Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.  

In addition to being adopted as sons and heirs of Christ, the faithful become sons also of Abraham: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." It is not merely by birth, however, that men become sons of Abraham. Righteousness is a prerequisite to that status: "Know ye therefore that they are which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." These passages thus indicate that in eternity the righteous will have a close family relationship, under the gospel or patriarchal promise of Abraham.

The Bible further shows that individual family ties are meant to be eternal. It teaches clearly that God himself instituted marriage and intended it to be eternal. The Lord bestowed upon Peter the divine sealing power and authority, and one may logically conclude that this would also cover marriages. Indeed, this authority was restored in the latter days, as the Lord had promised, that eternal marriages might again take place upon the earth. It is necessary that they be performed here, for they are part of the gospel which men must accept before the final judgment day. It is a vital phase of the gospel plan that men and women be married eternally. Paul explained

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1Gal. 4:4-7; see also Eph. 3:5-6.  2Gal. 3:29.
3Gal. 3:7; see also John 8:39.
6Malachi 4:5-6.  7Mark 12:25.
to the Corinthians that "neither is the man without the woman, neither
the woman without the man, in the Lord."¹ Many people misunderstand
Paul's writings, wherein he counseled some not to marry at that time.
What the particular cases were, we know not, but the full context
of his epistles supports the importance of marriage. In conclusion,
let Peter be cited as an advocate of the eternal nature of the marriage
relationship, in connection with the gospel: "Likewise, ye husbands,
dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife,
as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace
of life; that your prayers be not hindered."² This portrays very
accurately the doctrine of the Church today, that a man and a woman
will share equally in the blessings of eternal life and glory, but
that each has his or her personal identity and responsibilities. The
man may lead the family, but he should give honor to the wife for
her greatness in being the center of the home and family.

Sealing unto eternal life

The basic elements of this principle are evident in the New
Testament, although it does not go into details thereon. The Lord
promised his apostles that He would come to them as "another Comforter"
in addition to the Holy Ghost.³ He even promised to reveal the Father
to them. This would come as the result of righteousness, and after
having demonstrated an undeviating determination to serve the Lord.
Peter wrote of the experience of the three apostles on the Mount of

¹1 Cor. 11:11. ²1 Pet. 3:7. ³John 14:18, 21, 23.
Transfiguration, stating that in addition to the testimony acquired through seeing the vision and hearing the voice of the Father, they also had "a more sure word of prophecy," meaning that their knowledge concerning Deity and the guarantee of their salvation was a sure testimony born of the witness of the Spirit. They had made their "calling and election sure." John spoke of receiving the promise of eternal life. Finally, Paul wrote of being sealed by "that Holy Spirit of Promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." He also spoke of the promise of entering into the Lord's rest. This "rest" is the fullness of the Lord's glory, as indicated in a preceding chapter.

Such are the passages which refer to this sacred doctrine and ordinance. The New Testament says nothing about the actual ordinance, but it is clear on the doctrine. It corresponds precisely to the teachings of the Church today.

All truth and glorification

The Bible declares that man may become perfect through the gospel plan. It does not go into detail, as do latter-day revelations, but the principle is there regardless.

As early as Abraham's time the Lord gave this commandment: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect." Obviously

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1 2 Pet. 1:18-19; see also Inspr. V. 2 2 Pet. 1:10-11.
3 1 John 2:25-27. 4 Eph. 1:13-14; see also Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:21-22.
5 Heb. 4:1-2. 6 D&C 84:24. 7 Gen 17:1; see also Inspr. V.
such a goal must be possible, or else the Lord would never command
anyone to become perfect. Jesus Christ proclaimed the same doctrine
during his earthly mission: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your
Father which is in heaven is perfect."¹

The Savior knew that the law of Moses could perfect no man,² so He restored the gospel plan as a means of doing so. It is designed
to make men perfect in unity.³ Paul stated that "the gift of God is
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."⁴ In this he was referring
to a glorified life, not mere immortality, for he contrasted it to
the spiritual death caused by sin. Only through Christ can mankind
gain eternal life. Each individual must match Christ's gift with the
gift of his own effort, however. This must come in the form of obeying
the initial principles and then the advanced principles of the gospel.
Speaking of this, Paul wrote:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have
need that one teach you again which be the first principles
of the oracles of God; ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...
Therefore [not] leaving the principles of the doctrine
of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.⁵

The only way to perfection, then, is through obedience to all advanced
principles. This and the former quotations lead one to the conclusion
that the Bible definitely teaches the doctrine of the perfectibility of
man through the gospel.

The Lord also taught that the Holy Ghost has the office in the
gospel plan of leading men to all truth. "He shall teach you all

¹Matt. 5:48; see also Eph. 4:12. ²Heb. 10:1.
³John 17:23. ⁴Rom. 6:23. ⁵Heb. 5:12; 6:1.
things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you," the Savior told the Twelve. Again He said:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

A final aspect of this principle concerns the eventual glorification of the righteous. Paul believed that this glorification came through Christ, for "whom he justified, them he also glorified." Again, it is Christ who brings his sons glorification, as described in Hebrews. On the other hand, Paul also taught that the Holy Ghost's role in the gospel was to change men to the point of glorification that they might benefit in full from Christ's atonement.

This evidence demonstrates that the Bible taught the doctrine of all truth and glorification in conjunction with all former principles, for it is the climax to them all. It parallels directly the Latter-day Saints' belief in the eventual perfectibility of the righteous through obedience to the gospel.

**New Testament Descriptive Definitions**

In the New Testament the only prominent descriptive definition of the gospel portrays it as truth and a source of salvation. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: "Ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." This agrees precisely with the more extensive descriptive definition in Latter-day Saint literature. The doctrines and context

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1 John 14:26. 
2 John 16:13. 
3 Rom. 8:30. 
4 Heb. 2:10. 
5 2 Cor. 13:18. 
of the entire New Testament also agree with Latter-day Saint literature even though the New Testament does not carry over nearly as many descriptive qualities of the gospel into definition contexts.

The Gospel According to Christian Scholars

Having dealt with the Biblical definitions of the gospel, it would be well to note briefly the comments of Christian scholars on this subject before proceeding to the summary and conclusion of this chapter. Two authors are cited here, not to stire up an argument, but to note in passing the resemblance between their analysis of the New Testament gospel and certain findings of this study.

As indicated previously, it is important to realize that C. H. Dodd, Archibald M. Hunter, and others do not include the gifts of the Spirit and the active direction of the Holy Ghost as an integral part of the first principles of the gospel as they see them. Furthermore, they mention nothing about the advanced principles of the gospel. Herein lies the essential difference between their view and the Latter-day Saint interpretation. Many of their views on the first principles, however, agree basically with those of the Latter-day Saints.

Dodd has classed the apostolic gospel (kerygma) under six basic headings:

First, the age of fulfillment has dawned.
Secondly, this has taken place through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
Thirdly, by virtue of the resurrection, Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God, as Messianic head of the new Israel.
Fourthly, the holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory.
Fifthly, the Messianic Age will shortly reach its consummation in the return of Christ.
Finally, the *kerygma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of "salvation," . . .

Dodd included the historical events of Christ's role as part of the gospel's central message. Although he mentioned the Holy Ghost, he did not include his functions aside from being a sign of Christ's power. His book does not include spiritual gifts in the gospel beyond the point of being manifestations of God's power.

Hunter's opinion differs from Dodd's, although not too radically. He described the gospel (*kerygma*) as having three main headings:

1. A claim that their message was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
2. A historical exposition setting forth Jesus in his life, death, resurrection, and exaltation (all conceived as one great act of God), . . . .
3. A summons to repent and accept the forgiveness of sins in Jesus.  

There is no question that the above items from the New Testament constituted part of the apostles' message. Regardless of that, the vitally important priesthood powers, the gifts of the Spirit, and the ordinances form the superstructure, the flesh and bones, of the gospel plan. Its basis is Christ, but a true definition of the gospel must include all of the basic and advanced principles, for they are the means of regaining God's presence.

The Latter-day Saint view of the gospel is decidedly not evolutionary. The Church teaches that the gospel is eternal and unchangeable, having existed with God throughout all past time and eternity. Consequently, the Church considers untenable those opinions

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1Dodd, *Preaching*, 21-23.  
which declare that the gospel evolved partly through Christ, with large
developments later on coming from Peter and especially from Paul.
Anderson has shown that the basic gospel message was taught by Christ
originally, and that from Christ the apostles gained their knowledge
and the message they preached.\(^1\)

\(^1\) As seen by many Christian scholars, however, the gospel is an evolved message without the activating power
of the Holy Spirit, the authority to preach it, or any of its advanced
principles. As the above evidence indicates, the restored Church does
not share this view of the New Testament.

**Summary and Conclusion**

Having viewed the evidence in this chapter, the reader is invited
to draw his own conclusions as to the existence in the New Testament
of the teachings which the Latter-day Saints have espoused. Realizing
that pure and perfect objectivity in scholarship is a difficult ideal,
nonetheless the writer has sought to be as objective as possible in
this comparative study. A thorough search of the New Testament has
yielded the above passages which employed the word "gospel" in a
definition setting, as well as providing examples of doctrines which
resembled the foregoing Latter-day Saint definitions. These were
classified and quoted, putting the case in the reader's candid hands.
Without going into a detailed, formal comparison as in the summaries
of former chapters, in the writer's opinion it is evident that the
New Testament does contain the everlasting gospel as taught by the
Latter-day Saints. The mission and atonement of Christ and other
first principles and ordinances are clearly set forth to the honest

\(^1\) Anderson, "Euangelion," 216-23.
seeker for truth. Furthermore, the advanced principles of the gospel are visible in the New Testament to the student who possesses the key of understanding what he is looking at.

An analysis of the historical development of the definitions reveals that during Christ's mission He particularly taught the first three principles, referring to the Holy Ghost only near the end as He was about to depart. The Lord taught just a few advanced principles in public, leaving most to be taught to the apostles, and then by them to the world. The New Testament does, however, make a sharp distinction between first principles and advanced principles. First principles are for entering the Church; advanced ones are for members to grow in as they continue to hold to the first principles (Heb. 5:12-6:2).
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND SYNTHESIS

The gospel might well be compared to a watch—removing parts of the watch will cause difficulties, especially if in reassembling it some pieces are left out. So, too, all parts of the gospel are vital if a man desires to reach the goal of eternal life, which is the objective of the gospel plan. The results of this research reveal that the gospel is a complex system, the conceived institution of the Almighty. Being from God, it is profoundly simple—but still simply profound and extremely comprehensive. The intent of this thesis has not been to over-simplify or underestimate the problems inherent in an investigation of this type. The results of the study, nonetheless, have led the author to the conclusion that the gospel is plain and uncomplicated, in spite of being all-encompassing.

In view of the fact that today the Church members preach the message of the gospel with nearly equal frequency to members and non-members alike, it would doubtlessly be wise to present the gospel in sharply defined and simple terms, lest there be confusion as to its true definition. Words have different meanings assigned to them by the users of the words. Consequently, the term "gospel" may have a variety of meanings, all depending upon what thought the respective author loads upon the willing back of the word.

Coming to final grips with the four problems stated at the
beginning, the answers to these thesis questions are the following:

1. WHAT IS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST AS DEFINED IN LATTER-DAY SAINT LITERATURE? In all periods of the Church, and in each of the four standard works, the Lord's servants have defined the gospel as a graded plan comprising certain basic or "first" principles, with advanced principles built thereon. It is a plan which the Father revealed in the form of abstract truths. The Lord Jesus Christ, a perfect example of obedience, acted out his role in harmony with the plan. Now He judges men according to how they act out their roles in relation to those same principles revealed by the Father.

The term "first principles" logically implies the existence of other principles. Man's humble compliance with the "commandment" is merely the beginning of his pathway to perfection. On the other hand, the supreme act of the atonement was likewise not the only effort which the Lord will make in man's behalf. His role in the gospel is extended throughout eternity, for he will resurrect men, train them and direct them in their progression, aid them in the creation of worlds, and bestow happiness and glory upon them forever.

In order that the gospel of Jesus Christ may govern all men throughout eternity, the logical viewpoint is that there must be a much larger realm of truth within the gospel than is at present within man's finite grasp. Since the gospel embraces all eternity with its challenges, it likewise must embrace all truth in order to cope with those same challenges. The gospel therefore may truly be defined as a body of eternal laws, revealed to man in proportion to the heed which he pays to them and the needs which he faces in progressing toward godhood. In its ultimate definition, the gospel as a plan leads man
to comprehend all truth, for it circumscribes all truth. The first principles lead man to membership in the Church, and the advanced principles lead him the rest of the way to godhood.

If the gospel equals the plan of salvation, what truths exist outside of it? The plan of salvation apparently (from the scriptures) comprises the pre-earth existence, plus all truths, powers, operations, and dominions during and after this life. Therefore, the gospel may circumspectly be described as all truth, for all truths evidently are purposeful, valuable, and coordinated with each other in the great plan of eternal happiness. A definition of the gospel is not formless just because it includes all truth. Truth is not formless, but is organized into a meaningful, eternal plan—the plan of salvation. Despite the fact that the Lord has not yet revealed all truths of this plan to his Church, those truths are instituted parts of his plan which He will eventually reveal as more of his gospel.

The General Authorities advocate that one should avoid the extreme approach of esteeming the truths of the present material world as highly as the spiritual truths which lead man to eternal life. Eternal truths of science, the arts, and other disciplines are not saving truths, but they, too, will eventually have their part in the perfecting of an individual. The gospel is a highly organized, step-by-step method of eternal education. It is a structured system of truth, not a nebulous statement of random truths or bits of knowledge, loosely connected. The structure reaches out to include and use every truth in existence, fitting each into its proper niche.

One should also avoid the other extreme of limiting the definition

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1P. of G. P., Moses 6:62. 2McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 575-76.
of the gospel to a certain few principles. At no time has the Lord said through his servants, "Such and such are the components of my gospel, but all other doctrines which I reveal are not to be designated as "gospel." It is true that certain principles are fundamental to getting started on the pathway toward perfection, but the last steps in the path are just as important as the first. It seems wisest, therefore, to accept as standard Latter-day Saint teaching the words of the General Authorities, who have repeatedly said that the gospel includes saving principles in a graded manner, but also includes or embodies all truth. Man's efforts to define the gospel may be likened to a child's teeter-totter: laying too much weight on either extreme end creates an imbalance.

Church leaders have apparently stressed those things in their definitions which were most needed at the moment, for they obviously could not preach the entire gospel in every sermon. For this reason they have defined the gospel in some combination of the following several ways: the first four principles (sometimes three, or six), the power of God unto salvation, all truth, the plan of salvation, power, the perfect law of liberty, etc.

In light of the above, it appears that the following are not correct and complete definitions of the gospel, and are not stated in authoritative Latter-day Saint literature:

1. The gospel includes only the first four, six, eight, etc., principles.

2. The gospel includes the first principles in structured form, and all truth in a non-structured, equal-value form.
3. The gospel is all truth with no structuring or valuation of these bits of knowledge. All truths of science, philosophy, theology, and other disciplines bear equal weight therein.

The New Testament definitions of the gospel parallel the ones in Latter-day Saint writings, according to the findings of this study. Evidence from the New Testament is not as prolific as in modern sources, but the basic outline of the gospel is there if one searches carefully.

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that a variety of factors go into the making of an accurate and comprehensive definition of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The author offers the following as a concise, workable definition, representing a synthesis of the findings of this study:

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the Father's plan of truths and powers, which Jesus Christ administers for the redemption and exaltation of man. Jesus Christ's pre-mortal, mortal, and post-mortal roles (particularly the atonement) are the basis of the gospel. Man's role is to accept and live the Lord's teachings. These consist of eternal truths, including six "first principles" designed to save man in the presence of God, namely faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, the laying on of hands for the sanctifying gift of the Holy Ghost, resurrection, and eternal judgment. Secondly, the gospel contains numerous advanced principles which are for the purpose of exalting man to godhood. These may be conveniently classified into five groups: gifts of the Spirit, priesthood and priesthood functions, the eternal patriarchal order of marriage, election and sealing unto eternal life (with the promise of the Second Comforter), and the acquisition of all truth and perfection in order to become a god. The gospel is a simple, but exactly structured plan. Nevertheless, as eventually revealed by the Father, it contains and employs all truth. The everlasting gospel supersedes the lesser, preparatory gospel of Moses, revealing the "fullness" of those truths necessary for exaltation. The Lord reveals these truths in a "fullness" related to the worthiness of men. The gospel is intended for all men, but the advanced principles are especially for the benefit and comprehension of the membership of the Church.
2. IS THERE AGREEMENT AMONG ANCIENT SCRIPTURES, MODERN SCRIPTURES, AND MODERN PROPHETS OF THE CHURCH ON THE ISSUE OF THE DEFINITION OF THE GOSPEL? A simple "yes" basically suffices for this question. No real contradictions were visible among the principal sources of this study. Question four below discusses the problem of partial definitions, explaining why some definitions seem to be contradictory because of not being as complete as others. One aspect of this problem is the fact that one writer might emphasize certain doctrines to fit the needs of the occasion or period of time. The seeming neglect of other doctrines does not always mean that the writer did not believe in those as part of the gospel. Semantic differences are likewise no evidence of intrinsic disagreement.

3. WHAT, IF ANY, HAVE BEEN THE IMPORTANT HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DEFINITION OF THE GOSPEL, AS FOUND IN LATTER-DAY SAINT LITERATURE? The first developed definitions appear in the Book of Mormon, which particularly emphasizes six basic principles. It teaches some advanced principles, but not in great detail nor in the context of definitions of the gospel. Later in Joseph Smith's era, the Prophet gradually expounded the full, well-rounded gospel plan pertaining to man's present needs. He spoke first of three, then four, and finally six doctrines as being "first principles." Subsequently he taught that the gospel includes all truth. Later writers have expanded upon this theme, mentioning more and more principles as part of the definition of the gospel. Nevertheless, they still emphasize the simple, basic principles as the core of the gospel.

It should be remembered that principles such as obedience, love, the patriarchal order, etc., may have been taught as vital parts of
the gospel before anyone got around to defining them as such by using the principle with the word "gospel" in a definition context. This investigation of historical developments was necessarily limited to definitions, and no effort was made to note the emergence of the doctrines themselves. It is a well-recognized fact that all of the basic teachings of the Church were revealed and restored through Joseph Smith. In this sense all of the principal developments in gospel definitions came before his death in 1844.

4. WHAT ARE SOME POSSIBLE REASONS FOR ANY DIFFERING DEFINITIONS? Speakers or writers frequently may have defined the gospel without consciously having done so in the strict, precise manner they normally would have done had they been called upon to give a concise definition per se. Logically so, the definitions usually fit the context of the talk or written work in which they are found. The author's education, his formal or informal style, looseness or exactness of expression, the audience's needs, and the degree of inspiration from the Lord—all had some influence upon the definition. It is therefore not surprising to note that the same author might seem to contradict himself even within a page or two of what he first appeared to declare. Upon closer examination, however, as discussed in the chapter on the Book of Mormon, it becomes apparent that partial definitions and variety of expression and emphasis are the results of the particular needs of the moment. Authors have constantly sought to apply the gospel to solve the problems and issues of the times, and this has resulted in a wide diversification of gospel definitions. In the end, however, it has been shown that the Church leaders are in harmony with each other and with the full picture of the gospel plan.
Anderson has pointed out, in his discussion of the New Testament evangelion or gospel, a principle which holds true for all of the sources in this study:

... It is well to remind those who evaluate this evidence that the subtleties of expression and objectives of the New Testament writing defy statistical decisions. If there are few references to the introductory ordinances, they are nevertheless clear; "that comparatively little is said about them means probably that there was no controversy about them." Because the pattern of conversion is quite accidentally disclosed in some epistles, the argument from silence where a component of the pattern is not mentioned in other epistles cannot be trusted....

It has been suggested, for instance, that in analyzing the historical record of Acts, it is "a sound rule to attach most importance to those items which appear every time and not to include in the essential Kerygma those which only have occasional mention. Individual expression is one thing, but to apply this rule to what is clearly asserted to be part of the message is unrealistic. It demands a precision of expression that is ideal but certainly not actual.\(^1\)

If, for example, an author mentioned the principles of faith and baptism, does this imply that he did not believe in repentance and the gift of the Holy Ghost, nor in the principles of resurrection and eternal judgment, nor in celestial marriage and eventual perfection and glorification? Indeed, no such implication may be assumed. The total context of the author's works is essential, as well as the doctrines taught by his colleagues, in order to determine the extent of his beliefs.

By the same token, no one is justified in taking one or perhaps a few principles of the gospel and stating emphatically that those are the gospel, excluding anything else from his definition. For this reason the author has endeavored in this study to present the full picture of the gospel, and to give fair representation to all

\(^{1}\) Anderson, "Evangelion," 26-27.
significant definitions.

Let this be the final word and summation of it all, that the full definition of the gospel must embrace all principles and the full picture of the plan of salvation, not merely a part. In this connection it would not be amiss to repeat a statement which was quoted above, wherein President Joseph F. Smith warned against "pick and choose" practices, or gospel "hobbies":

So that, while the first principles of the gospel, faith in God, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, the healing of the sick, the resurrection, and, for that matter, all the revealed principles of the Gospel of Christ are necessary and essential in the plan of salvation, it is neither good policy nor sound doctrine to take any of these, single it out from the whole plan of gospel truth, make it a special hobby, and depend upon it for our salvation and progress either in this world or the world to come. They are all necessary.¹

¹Joseph F. Smith, "Editors' Table," Era, XV (July, 1912), 843-44.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to treat four problems: What is the gospel, as defined in Latter-day Saint literature? Do ancient and modern sources agree? Has there been an historical development of the definitions? Can any disagreements be rationalized? The results of this research reveal that the gospel is complex in that it is capable of handling all the problems of eternity, yet it is simple in that it is a plan of specific principles which lead man step by step to perfection. The author determined that ancient and modern sources do agree in placing six "first principles" at the beginning of man's gospel knowledge, but they then add many advanced principles of the gospel to aid man in his climb to eternal life. In the broad sense of the term, the gospel does include all truth, but all truth in a systematic structure. There has been an historical development of the definitions, for they gradually became more explicit in including all truths and principles. The differences in definitions are apparently due to the progressive revelation of principles, and to the authors' efforts to teach the principles needed by their audiences.
APPROVED: 

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