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~ INTRODUCTION

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Apart from the fact that everything written here is only my personal opinion. I frequently quote the scriptures, and the writings of competent scholars, but in the end that proves nothing. I quote scriptures that support my opinions, and quote the scholars who agree with me. The secelection process - deciding who and what I will quote - is also an exercise in my own opinion, so in the end all the assertions I make here are, at best, only my opinions.

For some time my sister and other close friends have urged me to write a brief glossary of some of the scriptural “code words.” Heretofore I have been reluctant to do that because the very nature of a glossary suggests it should be used as a reference - and that, in turn, implies that it carries some weight of authority. It is a personal reference guide written as an aid so my family and friends, and I can communicate more easily. It is not an authoritative source for reading or understanding the scriptures. It is not because I have no ecclesiastical or academic authority to interpret the scriptures for anyone. So I say quite emphatically that I understand that everything I write here is only my opinion, and I am willing to write it only because I believe you understand that also. Therefore, let me say again, as an authoritative source, this glossary has no value whatever.

Several years ago, Elder Oaks wrote

Those who believe the scriptural canon is closed typically approach the reading of scriptures by focusing on what was meant at the time the scriptural words were spoken or written. In this approach, a passage of scripture may appear to have a single meaning and the reader typically relies on scholarship and historical methods to determine it.

The Latter-day Saint approach is different. Professor Hugh Nibley illuminates this in his essay "The Prophets and the Scripture." He observes that "men fool themselves when they think for a moment that they can read the scripture without ever adding something to the text, or omitting something from it. For in the wise words of St. Hilary,... ' Scripture consists not in what one reads, but in what one understands.'" Consequently, he continues, "in the reading of the scripture we must always have an interpreter" (The World and the Prophets, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, 12 vols., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book -Co., 1987, 3:202).

"He concludes: 'The question is not whether or not one shall add to the word of the scripture -- thousands of volumes of learned commentary have already done that -- but whether such addition shall come by the wisdom of men or the revelation of God" (ibid., p.206) [Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "Scripture Reading & Revelation," Ensign, Jan. 1995, p 7-9]

One of the reasons the scriptures must be understood by personal revelation is that the meanings of words change with one's spiritual maturation. The Book of Mormon itself, is a splendid example of that. A collage student who was determined to become active in the Church again described it as "a wonderful book about people like me - who had messed up in their lives and how God helped them to change." He was correct. That is precisely what it is. The Book is the greatest missionary tool ever written. It is other things also. To many of my friends and I it is a definitive commentary on the ancient Israelite temple ceremonies. But, of course, it can only be that to people who know the temple. One simple example will suffice. The phrase "come unto Christ" means that one must keep the commandments, repent, be baptized, listen to the Holy Ghost. It does mean that, but usually (as in Moroni 10) it is an encoded invitation to approach the veil.

The gospel has its own cultural language: and knowing that language is a part of knowing the gospel. Here are some examples: The King James Bible reads that one must "repent" of one's sins. Using that word was a very hot issue at the time of its translation, because "repent" was a Protestant concept. The Catholic text reads that one must "confess" one's sins (implicitly, to a priest). "Baptism" also means different things to different people. The word itself means to immerse in water, but to many Christians it has come to mean to pour or sprinkle water upon someone. But to the LDS understanding "baptism" has multifaceted connotations. To be baptized means: (1) to be immersed in water by one having the proper authority; who says the right words and holds his arm to the square; (2) to become clean - washed from one's sins; (3) to be received into membership of the Church; (4) to become qualified to receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost; (5) to receive a new birth - to be adopted as a child of Christ - to take upon oneself his name. (6) Baptism symbolizes the burial and resurrection of the Saviour, and the application of the blessings of the Saviour's atonement to the person being baptized. It means all those things and much more. My point is that "baptism" is a code word whose meaning is interpreted through the understanding of the person who speaks, hears, or reads it. One finds the same thing with the 23rd Psalm. It is a beautiful pastoral hymn of peace when read only on the surface text, but it is more

beautiful, and speaks of greater peace when when one reads it as a succinct, but remarkably complete, summation of the ancient Israelite temple ceremony.

Elder Maxwell mentioned other code words and phrases when he addressed the question of why Latter-day Saints seem to say the same things when we bear testimony.

Because the same truths are being affirmed. Because, like other groups, disciples use code words and semantic shorthand. Thus, when I witness as I now do—that God lives; that Jesus Christ is his literally resurrected Son who has atoned for our sins, guaranteeing us immortality and giving us an opportunity for eternal life; that Joseph Smith was the first of a dozen presidents—living prophets in this dispensation—I am testifying of truths that are pyramid points among many powerful truths. I am saying that precisely because these things are so, many more are true, too. All of which I gladly and yet soberly say in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen! (Neal A. Maxwell, *Deposition of a Disciple* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], 99.)

When a child says “I know that God lives,” the child is speaking the truth. When the Prophet Joseph wrote “And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!” (D&C 76:22) The Prophet was declaring truth. Even though the words may be almost the same the experiential fountain from which they spring is quite different. Each statement contains its own connotations, and understanding those differences is the key to understanding their codes.

Persons who know the gospel have always spoken in a different language from those who do not. Nibley explains:

The center and pivot of the whole plan of history is, of course, the Messiah in the Book of Mormon: "None of the prophets have written, nor prophesied, save they have spoken concerning this Christ" (Jacob 7:11). "All the prophets . . . ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?" (Mosiah 13:33).

Compare this with the teaching of the Talmud: "All the prophets have prophesied of nothing save the days of the Messiah, that is, of the eternal order to come." Gunkel, before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, found in the pre-Christian apocryphal writings frequent reference to a divine redeemer, a new heaven and a new earth, the millennial rule of the Lord in person on earth, a Messiah who is to come as a human being and yet be more than human, a carefully cultivated "Wisdom" literature, the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, the practice of baptism in water, the belief that the eighth day rather than the seventh is the holiest of days, the reports of a Lord who is meek and humble, despised and put to death, resurrected, ascended to heaven, and who visits the spirits in prison. Also he found in the apocalyptic writings the use of such baffling code-words as "water of life," "second death," "first Adam," etc., and a conception of cosmology and world history totally at variance with that of the official schools of the Jews and Christians. All this sort of thing has been brought to light by the studies of the past two generations. (Hugh Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co., Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1988], 202.)

I am intrigued that he would include “the belief that the eighth day rather than the seventh is the holiest of days.” I have not read enough of Nibley’s works to know why he did so, but here is my supposition: The Israelite New Year Festival lasted 22 days, concluding with the temple drama of the 7-day Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast was unique in that it had one more day added at the end. That extra day - the 8th day - was a time of sacrifice, feasting, and rejoicing (probably the “great feast” mentioned by John), and seems to have represented the establishment of Zion and the millennial reign of Jehovah. If that is the 8th day Nibley’s sources were referring to, then it a very special Sabbath indeed.

Our language - that is, the way we commonly use words - often gets in the way of our understanding. For example if one understands “faith” to mean belief - whether rational or irrational; and if one understands “hope” to mean wishing hard; and if “charity” is giving stuff to poor people; then one is left to wonder why “faith, hope, and charity” are located at the very pinnacle of the teachings of the Book of Mormon. (Ether 12, Moroni 7 & 10)

Here is a more obvious example of the way we commonly use words getting in the way of what the words actually say: We use the word “forward” to mean to project something into the future of either time or space, and that is the way it is used in Alma 13:2.

And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.

However, if one insists on using that same definition in the verse immediately preceding that one, the word makes no sense whatever:

And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave [past tense] these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained [also past tense] priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people. (Alma 13:1)

Here “forward” clearly means backward! and would be very confusing if one did not understand that the Book of Mormon translators had a perfect knowledge of the English language and used words with great precision. So we go to the OED (Oxford English Dictionary) and find that the first definition of “forward” is “The front part of (any thing material); the first or earliest part of (a period of time, etc.)” So Joseph used the best word in the English language to mean exactly what he intended: “I would cite your minds forward to the (earliest part of) time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children.”

To me, the translation of the Book of Mormon was an amazing feat on two levels. First: the surface-text language is so perfect that Nephi’s poetic style comes through as clearly as Mormon’s powerful prose. Second: the symbolic and specific sub-textual language has also been preserved so that the entire book actually is a commentary on the ancient Israelite temple ceremonies. This is achieved because the Book of Mormon is written in a way that is enough like the King James Bible, that the Bible’s temple code words are also incorporated into the Book of Mormon’s temple code. The result is that one can use the scriptures interchangeably, knowing

that the words used in one, and the words used in the other are the same. I believe the Book of Mormon was so carefully translated that one can use the other scriptures to understand its meaning of its code words, and one can also use the Book of Mormon to understand the encoded meaning of the other scriptures. Let me give you just one example.

The Anchor Bible translation of Matthew is by eminent scholars,. They are very capable scholars, and I truly admire their work. But what they did with “poor in spirit” is the same sort of thing they did with “Blessed.” In the text of Matthew, they translated it as “humble in spirit,” then in the footnote they suggested an altogether different. and more powerful meaning: “Those living in uprightness, or ‘perfection.’” That idea comes remarkably close to their footnote statement that “blessed” means “in the state of the gods.”

This is one of my favorite examples of Joseph’s “We believe the Bible to be the word of God so far as it is translated correctly.” The translators of the King James Bible rendered the Greek word that began each of the Beatitudes as “blessed” – probably because they didn’t believe what it really said. When W. F. Albright, a distinguished Old Testament scholar, and C. S. Mann, an equally distinguished New Testament scholar, translated Matthew for The Anchor Bible’s, they chose “fortunate” instead of “blessed.” This is the way they translate the Beatitudes.

3 Fortunate are the humble in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. 4 Fortunate are those who mourn, for they shall be consoled. 5 Fortunate are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Fortunate are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 Fortunate are the merciful, for they shall have mercy shown to them. 8 Fortunate are the pure-minded, for they shall see God. 9 Fortunate are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. [and so on]

In a footnote, they explain why they chose the word “fortunate.”

3.Fortunate. The word in Greek was used in classical times of the state of the gods in contrast to men. The usual English “blessed” has more and more come to have liturgical or ecclesiastical overtones, and we have chosen “fortunate” as being the best translation available to us. [W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, The Anchor Bible, Matthew (New York, Doubleday, 1971), p.45.]

It is important to me that in the Book of Mormon Joseph used the same word, “blessed,” that is in the King James Matthew. Because he did, we could compare the Bible and the Book of Mormon with confidence, knowing that the Book of Mormon carries the same understanding as the Bible. It is also important that these two scholars have clarified what the Bible – and therefore what the Book of Mormon – means. The thing that is so interesting to me about the clarification is that these world-class scholars knew what the Greek word said – “in the state of the gods” – but didn’t believe what it said, so they came up with a watered-down word – “fortunate” – because that made more sense to them. Then, consistent with their training as scholars, they put the real meaning in a footnote.

I frequently find myself being astonished at the consistency of Joseph's word choices when he translated the Book of Mormon. He apparently found an Egyptian word on the Small Plates that had the same meaning as the words translated as "blessed" in the Greek New Testament and in Third Nephi. So now for us, "blessed" becomes a code word that adds a great deal of meaning to its context. Here are two examples where the word "blessed" is used in First Nephi in a way that might best be understood as "in the state of the gods," meaning the condition of the past, present, and future members of the Council in Heaven.

"And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto me, saying: Blessed art thou, Nephi, because of thy faith, ... And inasmuch as thou shalt keep my commandments, thou shalt be made a ruler and a teacher [king and priest] over thy brethren." (1 Ne. 2:19-22)

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"And when I had spoken these words, the Spirit cried with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna to the Lord, the most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all. And blessed art thou, Nephi, because thou believest in the Son of the most high God; wherefore, thou shalt behold the things which thou hast desired." (1 Nephi 11:6)

The wonderful thing about both of those statements by Nephi is that no matter how one reads "blessed," the scriptures speak truth to the reader in the language the reader is most able to understand, and are interpreted by the Holy Ghost to mean just what the reader most needs to know.

This brings us back to the quote from Elder Oaks where he said that the scholarly approach is dangerous when one relies on scholarship alone, but the scriptures become alive when their multi-faceted meanings are illuminated by the Spirit.

Those of you who know me well, know that I do not read either Greek or Hebrew, and that I try to make up for those deficiencies by studying the works of scholars who do read them. And you also know that I have developed some rather strong opinions - which I enjoy talking and writing about, but to which I expect others to give no more credence than they are worth.

As far as I can tell, there are three kinds of code words in the scriptures.

1) Words which were clearly understood by both the writer and the reader at the time they were written, and so were never intended to be code words at all. Like the word translated "blessed" which was understood by the Saviour's listeners to mean "in the state of the gods." Other examples are the words translated as "faith," "righteous," and "redeem."

2) Words which seem to have been deliberately used by an author to encode his ideas, such as Isaiah's "mountain," "walk," "path," and "way"; and Job's descriptions of behemoth and leviathan.

3) Words which were probably understood by their original audience, but whose meanings are obscured to us. I suppose examples would be Isaiah's "double" and the names of the sacred garments as found in the Psalms and in the Lord's command to Job: "Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty." (Job 40:10.)

Our difficulty is that we are so far removed from the original writings - both in language and in culture - that it is impossible to know with any certainty which code words and phrases in the scriptures fall into which of those three categories. It seems quite possible to me that there is really only one category: Words which were understood by their original audience, but whose meanings are obscured to us.

All this business about original meanings and code words is interesting, and may be valuable, but its value must be tempered by one's individual inspiration. No one except the prophet has the right to assert that his own individual beliefs ought to be accepted by anyone else as either truth or as a standard by which to measure truth. There are only two acceptable standards: What the scriptures and the Brethren teach, and what the Holy Ghost confirms.

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The symbolism of the coronation can be lost in the details of the ceremony if the rites are not understood as a single event: He was washed, ordained a "priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110), clothed in sacred garments, and anointed with a dual ordinance wherein he was adopted and given the new name of "son of God" (Psalm 2), and made king of Israel. Thus he was the legitimate "son" and legal heir to the throne. His anointing was also a coronation ordinance where he received "a special endowment of the Spirit [which] is clearly associated with the rite" of anointing.¹ He was crowned with a golden crown. Then the living king ascended to the throne of God, which was also representative of the throne of Adam. Thus the living king became as Adam, the first king and the son of God – the king was father to the then present generation.²

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1 Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1967, p. 15. The Bible records the anointings of six Israelite kings: Saul: 1 Samuel 10:1, David: 2 Samuel 5:3, Solomon: 1 Kings 1:39, Jehu: 2 Kings 9:6, Josh: 2 Kings 11:12, Jehoahaz: 2 Kings 23:30. Absalom was also anointed to be king: 2 Samuel 19:11.

2 Frederick H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History*, SCM Press Ltd., London, 1967, p. 152.

"There Adam is definitely a divine being, who came into existence before creation, as a cosmogonic principle (macrocosm), as the Primordial Soul, as the original type of the godly, righteous fulfiller of the Law...." Sigmund Mowinckel, *He that Cometh* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), 426.