
Great are the Words of Isaiah

*AND now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things.
Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things
diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah*

—Words of the Savior in His visit to the ancient inhabitants of America, 3 Nephi 23:1

I have always had a curiosity for the scriptures, especially the Hebrew Scriptures (or the Old Testament). My paternal grandfather was a Lithuanian Jew and grandmother a German Jew. My maternal grandparents are both Chilean. I was converted and baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1974, when I was 19, after reading the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Christ. It was the Book of Mormon that compelled me to go back and become more interested in my Jewish roots.

Between my first reading of the Book of Mormon and my baptism three months later, the missionaries encouraged me to write my questions on the margins. I accepted that challenge and filled my Book of Mormon with questions and notes. I am a very slow reader but over the years devoured the writings of as many of the modern-day prophets as I could get my hands on, as well as the scriptures. It did not take long to fill the margins of my scriptures with notes, quotes and testimonies.

My interest in the Hebrew Scriptures grew after I joined the Church. In my personal journal I talk about studying the *great Prophet Isaiah* as early as 1983. While the writings of Isaiah and the Prophets have always held a special appeal for me, it was in 1996, while reading the Book of Mormon, that the words of our Savior sank deep into my heart: “And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yeah, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1). I was somewhat surprised and asked myself: why did the Lord want me to study Isaiah? The Savior also admonished: “Search the prophets” (3 Nephi 23:5b), **נְבִיאִים** or NEVI’IM (the Jewish Scriptures are divided into three major categories, the *law*, the *prophets* and the *writings*).

These admonitions turned into a labor of love. I wrote this book, above all, as one of reflections for myself. When the margins of my scriptures could no longer hold my notes, my wife suggested that I keep a separate journal. These notes represent my electronic Scripture journal. I finished my handwritten journal on Isaiah on 6 October 1999. I finished my first electronic chapter in my Isaiah study on 12 March 2000; and the last on 7 May 2017. My next steps, beginning with 7 May 2017, are to edit each chapter and then compile these into book form. It is my hope to revise this book from time to time, as I gain additional insights.

This book reflects my own understanding and does not represent the views of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Having said that, if there is anything that seems contrary to the teachings of the Church, I hope you will point these out to me so I can make the necessary corrections.

There is quite a bit of repetition in these pages. This is in part because similar topics rise from time to time. I have even thought of someday producing an electronic version with special links to these repetitive topics. I have also included parts of my journal entries as well as testimonies along the way. You will also notice that some of the topics that were prominent at the time I was writing find themselves into these pages.

This book is written directly to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have an interest in the Prophet Isaiah. It is hoped that both members, as well as our friends from other faiths, may find some value in these pages. I have a deep and abiding testimony of our Heavenly Father; His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; the Prophet Joseph Smith; and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the living prophets.

Great effort required

The first thing I learned was that this labor would be demanding. Like Oliver Cowdery, I had supposed that all I had to do was ask. When Oliver could not

carry out the work of translation, the Lord said, “Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me” (D&C 9:7).

Elder B. H. Roberts taught that “It requires striving—intellectual and spiritual—to comprehend the things of God—even the revealed things of God. In no department of human endeavor is the aphorism ‘no excellence without labor’—more in force than in acquiring knowledge of the things of God. The Lord has placed no premium upon idleness or indifference here . . . the truth here contended for—achievement in divine things, progress in the knowledge of them, comes only with hard striving, earnest endeavor, determined seeking.”¹

For the first several chapters of Isaiah, I kept telling myself. “I will *never* understand this chapter.” Yet eventually I would get an understanding of sorts. I eventually changed my notion to: “This chapter is just as hard as the ones I have completed, yet with work and God’s help I will, in time, come to an understanding.”

Towards the end of the project I was surprised when on occasion I received guidance from the Lord *before* I had put in the effort to understand.

This effort would take over two decades of joyous enterprise. Not to finish or complete, for I can see how I could profitably spend the rest of my days cherishing the words of Isaiah and continually revising what I have written.

At first it was taking me seven months to complete a chapter and post it on the Internet. This was when I was limited to about two or so hours of study per day. I have become more efficient and now that I am retired, have more time to devote to the work.

Scripture study is much like entering a room and finding that there are adjoining doors and windows that offer additional insights. And those new rooms have yet more doors and windows, and so on.

“For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little” (ISAIAH 28:10).

It seems that almost every time I reread a scripture I find additional meaning and inspiration. I particularly love reading and rereading the same passage over and over throughout several weeks. The scriptures seem to form one eternal round.

As I got ready to post each chapter on the Internet in PDF format, I included two dates. The *first posted* date as well as a *last revised* date. I have accurate first posted dates for some of the chapters but for others, approximations. Some of these posting dates are wrong. These dates are sometimes important as I was working on these chapters during 11 September 2001 or some other important event that often had some relation to

what was happening in the world around me and what I was reading in Isaiah.²

The last revised date is particularly important because it sends the message that I plan to keep correcting, adding and changing what I have written as I continue to learn. While these dates have been removed from the book, the idea that I am going to be continually learning and revising has not disappeared.

Some of my notes from the handwritten journal have worked themselves into the main text; most have not.

Because so few people, relatively speaking, are interested in Isaiah, I found that writing was a little like talking to myself when nobody else might want to listen.

Prayerful analysis has been the key to this study, especially as I am exposed to so very many perspectives.

Scripture and Teachings of the Brethren

Gladly, we have both other Scriptures and the teachings of the Brethren on many of Isaiah’s writings. There are several sources I have used to find these. At first I made special use of the LDS Library, getting each new edition until the last one in the series, the *LDS Library 2009*. I was very sad the software was discontinued.

I have kept my old Windows XP computer just so I could use this library as well as a program where I can “fly over the Holy Land,” the *Holy Land Satellite Atlas and CD* (produced by Rohr Productions).

More recently, I have made constant use of the *LDS Scripture Citation Index*. In this way I can see what has been said in the *Journal of Discourses* as well as in the General Conferences, on every verse in Isaiah. It is a wonderful resource—so much so that I also use it in my daily study of the Book of Mormon. It also includes the Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, but unfortunately at this time the Index makes no

¹ Elder Brigham Henry Roberts, *The Seventy’s Course in Theology* (1907-1912). Fifth year, p. iv.

² I put aside my Isaiah project for about 30 months (around 2004–2006) to translate the prophetic books into Spanish as a help to the translation committee of the Church, for the LDS Reina Valera 2009. I think the only contribution that was mine, at the end, was the pronunciation guide I provided for the Sister who read the Hebrew alphabet included in Psalm 119. This translation exercise was of great learning value to me and I am grateful for the opportunity. ¶ **IMPORTANT NOTE:** The Spanish LDS version, Reina Valera 2009, did not set out to give the literal meaning of the Hebrew Bible, but rather, to generally follow the text of the 1909 Reina Valera with as few changes as possible. While the LDS edition is a remarkable and beautiful translation, especially given the speed with which it was accomplished, Church members should *not* think that it is better than the KJV or that it automatically renders better translations than the Reina Valera 1960 in every instance. The greatest contribution of the LDS edition, in my mind, was to have the priceless JST notes and LDS chapter headings. Contrary to the KJV, Reina Valera 1960 was copyrighted material and as such could not be used.

differentiation between the Prophet’s use of scriptural expressions and his comments on the scriptures.

The Book of Mormon, the *Inspired Version* or JST, and the explanations of the Brethren constitute the best commentaries on Isaiah.

You will note that I have carefully compared the King James Version (KJV, also known as the Authorized Version or AV) with both the Book of Mormon and the Inspired Version and noted every change in the body of this work, through a color coding system.

There are numerous verses where the Brethren have made no comments on Isaiah. Had this not been the case, this tome probably would not have been needed.

I am also grateful for the LDS *Library* App. I no longer have to worry about margins! Under every word I can add extensive commentaries and testimonies; link verses to other Scriptures; and tag certain types of contents for quick study and comparison. I can also bookmark important scriptures. Finally, all of my work on my phone can be transferred easily to my iPad and vice versa. It took me several years to transfer my notes from the margins of my English and Spanish Scriptures to the electronic version but it has been wonderful to have them handy.

Hebrew Masoretic text (מ)

My next effort was to compare the Hebrew Masoretic text (מ) to the KJV. I was most likely to do this when the text of the KJV seemed difficult to comprehend.

I should quickly note that in my opinion, the KJV is the best translation into English from the Hebrew Masoretic text (מ). There are other translations that from time to time, in my opinion, have a better translation of a particular verse or clause, but these improved translations tend to come from various English versions rather than from the same one.

I have a particular like for translations that are more literal, such as the KJV, NASB, LITV, ASV, HCSB, Rotherham, and I have a special affection for Leeser. Please note that I am speaking of the Hebrew Bible. Some of these same translations are quite unfortunate in terms of how they handle the New Testament.³

The KJV preserves the Messianic testimony of Scripture more than any other version I have encountered, and that is another reason why I love it so much.

³ I particularly recommend Elder J. Reuben Clarke’s book, *Why the King James Version* when considering Biblical versions of the New Testament. And even in the Old Testament, the KJV best preserves the Christ-centered meaning of the scriptures.

Other ancient Scriptures

While we can well assume that the Hebrew was the original text for most of the Jewish Bible, we do not have any extant original signatures of any of these Scriptures. What we have are copies of copies of copies. So it is possible, for instance, that in some instances another *ancient manuscript* will have preserved the original meaning more accurately than the Hebrew Masoretic text (מ).

Beside the Masoretic text (מ) we have a number of important translations of the Old Testament including the Syriac (ܣ), Peshitta (ܫ), Targum (ܛ), LXX (Ϟ), Vulgate (Ϸ), and Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) (Ϙ)—as well as their translations into English or Spanish. I love the contributions of the *Inspired Version* or the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) and have given them the highest priority in this study while recognizing that the KJV is our official Bible.

I spend a considerable amount of time comparing the DSS (Ϙ) to each other as well as to the Masoretic text (מ). One of the great interests for this effort was to see how frequently there are small changes of the type that the Prophet Joseph Smith included in both the Book of Mormon and in the Inspired Version (no, I am not suggesting that these changes frequently agreed with these version, but rather, that these changes were quite typical). With this edition, however, I realized that most readers will not want to read each and every one of the changes I noted, so I have deleted most of them, leaving only a few samples here and there. In ISAIAH 30:19, for instance, I had originally included this note: The Masoretic text (מ) is usually translated as “He will be gracious &c.” while the DSS 1QIsa^a (Ϙ) adds **YHWH**, **יהוה**, or **LORD** so it reads, “The **LORD** will be gracious &c.”

Lexicons

I am grateful for the extensive collection of Hebrew-to-English Lexicons (dictionaries that translate foreign words) that are available to us. These vary in their thoroughness but are a great help in working through and comparing difficult translations.

Commentaries and other books

There are dozens of commentaries—or exegetical works—on Isaiah. Some of them specialize on Isaiah, some on particular portions of Isaiah and others cover larger portions of Scripture and include Isaiah. These include books written by Jewish authors or by Christians of other faiths.

Among the exegetes, or Biblical scholars, we often find excellent insights. I have come to expect these pearls of wisdom from several of them. In some instances observations are mentioned as an aside—or

even *when arguing an opposite perspective*. Even these contrary perspectives are often quite useful.

In ISAIAH 9:1, the KJV speaks of “the way of the sea.” The Prophet Joseph Smith, in the Inspired Version has “the way of the Red Sea.” Most all exegetes think the reference is to the Mediterranean or the Sea of Galilee—and do not even mention the Red Sea—so it is interesting to have someone *mention* the Red Sea even if it is to discard the idea. I am pleased to have found a defense for the Prophet Joseph Smith and for the Book of Mormon in the ancient Targum Jonathan (Ⓢ).

Or, take ISAIAH 52:15. The word רָחַץ is translated as *sprinkle* in the KJV, and even in the Book of Mormon. Almost all exegetes and translators think of the word as *sprinkle*. When a Biblical scholar, seemingly out of nowhere, *rejects the idea* of translating it as *gathering*, as we find it in the Inspired Version, I find this worth noting. I have found additional support for the Prophet’s translation in these two instances.

I found that I am not alone in making such arguments on the usefulness of contrary opinions. For instance, Jenour has, in his notes on ISAIAH 59: “To use the words of Vitringa (although his view of the general meaning of the prophecy is entirely different from that which I have taken),” after which he goes on to make a point.

And of course there are those instances where there seems to be no backing of the Inspired Version or of the Book of Mormon alternate renderings. I have a testimony of both the Book of Moron and the Inspired Version and am not concerned when we cannot find additional confirmation at this time. My testimony is not based on scholarly proofs.

There have been Bible dictionaries and atlases, as well as other books that have also been most useful. Finally, at times LDS scholarly authors have contributed brilliant observations to my study.

Where all these books and resources are found

I began collecting books by frequent visits to used bookstores. Then I was able to use electronic computer programs such as e-Sword. E-Sword makes available numerous translations for easy comparison as well as commentaries. Most of the materials are free but I have also purchased many of their modules.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints produced an excellent program entitled *LDS Scriptures Resource*. For basic scripture look-ups I have used a number of programs, some of which are no longer available. The latest I have settled on for quick searches is WORDSearch. I also use Accordance for work on the Dead Sea Scrolls (Ⓢ) and other ancient languages.

I lean most heavily on *Logos Bible Software* for my day-to-day analysis, even though some of their books have been sloppily reproduced and are filled with

typos. Logos has been a wonderful time saver and I have purchased hundreds of titles from them. These include Lexicons as well as commentaries and Bible versions.

I have found a treasure in the thousands of Biblical books from the *Internet Archive*. Among these books one can find lexicons, commentaries, atlases, dictionaries, ancient language grammars and LDS references. Two other sources of note include the Christian Classics Ethereal Library and Google Books in PDF format.

Transliterations or Hebrew

I have noticed that a great number of works use *transliterations* to represent the letters or characters of the Hebrew language. I have an antipathy for transliterations and use them very sparingly. I have been successful in teaching most people to pronounce Hebrew in less than two hours, and it is so easy to learn the basics of pronunciation, that there is really no need for transliterations. There are now wonderful apps that you can use to learn how to pronounce words in Hebrew, build your vocabulary, and much more. In some instances I have color coded words in Hebrew to the corresponding English words to facilitate understanding.

Specific dates, tree and animal names

This work does not attempt to make out specific dates, nor distinguish between precious stones, species of trees, or names of animals. When I deal with these subjects, no accuracy is implied.

Multiple frames of reference

Some of the prophecies of Isaiah had their fulfillment at the time of Isaiah or soon thereafter; others are intimately related to the restoration of the Gospel; yet others have reference to the Millennium and thereafter. Many of the prophecies are to be fulfilled at various times in history. A focus on one particular timeframe in this work is not intended to deny fulfillment at other times.

The Holy Temple

As we study Isaiah we will note multiple occasions where there are allusions to sacred temple ordinances. As you study Isaiah, keep these things in mind because we will *not* speak about them in this book—unless they are direct quotes from the mouth of the Brethren. President Boyd K. Packer taught: “We do not discuss the temple ordinances outside the temples. It was never intended that knowledge of these temple ceremonies would be limited to a select few who would be obliged to ensure that others never learn of them. It

is quite the opposite, in fact. With great effort we urge every soul to qualify and prepare for the temple experience.”⁴

Unity of Isaiah

Originally, I had planned to write a chapter on the Unity of Isaiah. There has, however, been so much wonderful material written on the unity of this great book that I hardly find it necessary.

The arguments against its unity border on the absurd. For instance, in one chapter assigned to second Isaiah by the critical school, one such author is overwhelmed by the similarities in writing with the first Isaiah. So, he suggests, it must have been an *imitator* of the first Isaiah!

Those from the critical school, by the way, agree very little between each other: each one trying to outdo the next in their bizarre propositions.

I was 42 when I began in earnest to write the first edition of this book, and I am now an old man of almost 63. I do not know how many more years the Lord will grant me to live upon this earth, and I rather spend them studying the scriptures. Perhaps my next book will be on the Prophet Zechariah. I have a great desire to study Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the Minor Prophets yet I realize that I am unlikely to get very far using the careful and methodical approach I have so much enjoyed. So I do not wish to waste my time defending the unity of Isaiah with intellectual arguments.

It reminds me of the great words of Nehemiah, who did not wish to be distracted from building the walls of Jerusalem: “I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:3b).

Not only are there excellent books written on the subject of the unity of Isaiah, but it all boils down to one single point—one admitted by *both sides* of the controversy: *the existence of divine inspiration*. I testify that the Lord speaks to mankind through living prophets, through inspiration, and through the scriptures. I testify that divine inspiration exists and that prophets of old as well as modern-day prophets speak by divine inspiration.⁵

Divine Investiture

A careful reading of the Old Testament seems to indicate that the word *Elohim* is often used as an exalted title for deity as well as a noun meaning God or angels. It is at times also used to speak of pagan gods. Both

⁴ President Boyd K. Packer, “The Holy Temple,” October 2010 General Conference.

⁵ “The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that ‘a prophet [is] a prophet only when he [is] acting as such.’” The Doctrine of Christ, by Elder D. Todd Christofferson, April 2012 General Conference.

titles, *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) and *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי) have been applied to each God the Father and God the Son. In the Old Testament, it needs to be pointed out, *Elohim* is almost always associated with Jehovah or Yahweh (JHVH or YHWH). For instance, in the KJV, we frequently encounter the expression LORD God, which literally, in Hebrew, would be rendered *Jehovah Elohim* (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים). Furthermore, we come across scriptures that say that the “LORD he is God,” (Deuteronomy 4:35), יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים. Or rather, the more literal rendition is “*Jehovah, He the God.*” This last statement is given a double emphasis in 1 Kings 18:39:

יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים יְהוָה הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.

Once again, it becomes clear that when *Elohim* is used as an *exalted title* in the Jewish Holy Scriptures or Old Covenant, and that it *almost always* refers to Jehovah, Jeshua, or the promised Messiah, Jesus the Christ. This does not mean that God the Father is absent from the Old Covenant. As we shall see, he is intimately present.

In Genesis 1:1 we read: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Or rather, “In the beginning *Elohim* created the heaven and the earth.” Analyzing the Hebrew for the expression ‘in the beginning’ (BERESHIT, בְּרֵאשִׁית), the Prophet Joseph Smith taught us that בְּרֵאשִׁית, based on the word ROSH (רֹאשׁ), head, originally was missing the BETH (ב) and meant “The Head One of the Gods.” This is interesting to me because—although I realize Brother Joseph was not speaking of *Elohim* the FATHER here—the expression *Elohim* has been defined precisely as the head God in the Ugaritic tradition (TWOT).

Lest anyone be confused, the word *Elohim* does not appear in our Standard Works in English. It emerges hundreds of times in Hebrew and almost always represents the LORD God, or Jehovah God, the Christ. In General Conference and LDS writings (including the LDS Topical Guide and the writings of the Brethren), when the exalted title *Elohim* is used, it almost always *represents the Father*.

But returning to the topic of Divine Investiture, the Savior makes it clear that none of His words are His own, but rather, He glorifies the Father: “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, *what I should say, and what I should speak*” (John 12:49, emphasis added). We also read: “Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me...” (John 17:7–8a).

The Sweetness of the Unity between the Godhead. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are three

distinct beings who are one in purpose. There is no envy between them. They are of one mind. This truth was powerfully revealed to me by the Holy Spirit on the way home from school, as a young boy of thirteen or so, years before I ever saw, heard of, or handled the Book of Mormon (or any literature published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints).

It is understandable that some—when taking the scriptures out of context—are confused: “Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:8–11).

As LDS we believe that the Savior of mankind, Jehovah, was made in the similitude of Elohim, God the Father. The person who has seen the Son has also seen the Father because of their likeness. But the primary purpose of these verses are not to speak just of the physical similarity between the Father and the Son, but to make it clear that the Father and the Son are one in purpose—despite being different individuals. The next verse makes this plain: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:12–14). In other words, just as the Savior does the works of the Father, we can do the works of the Savior, which in turn are the works the Father would have us do.

So also we have the words of the Savior: “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; Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:21–22, emphasis added).

This is essentially a message of unity of purpose, as we find in D&C 50:43, “And the Father and I are one. I am in the Father and the Father in me; and inasmuch as ye have received me, ye are in me and I in you.” And John 17:11b; 17:21–22 make this point even clearer, beyond any doubt, that the question is one of unity of purpose: “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are,” and “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent

me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” Well is it said that “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (1 John 5:7).

Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “All revelation since the fall has come through Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. In all of the scriptures, where God is mentioned and where he has appeared, it was Jehovah who talked with Abraham, with Noah, Enoch, Moses and all the prophets. He is the God of Israel, the Holy One of Israel; the one who led that nation out of Egyptian bondage, and who gave and fulfilled the Law of Moses. The Father has never dealt with man directly and personally since the fall, and he has never appeared except to introduce and bear record of the Son” (*Doctrines of Salvation* 1:27).

Elder McConkie explains: “*How does God reveal himself?* Though the ways may be infinite, the perfect and crowning way is by direct revelation, by visions, by personal visitations. According to the laws of mediation and intercession which the Father himself ordained, he has chosen to reveal himself through the Son, ordaining that all revelation shall come through the Son, though that holy personage frequently speaks in the Father’s name by *divine investiture of authority*; that is, he speaks in the *first person as though he were the Father*, because the Father has placed his name upon the Son.”⁶

Except for those times when the Father is introducing the Son, then, the words of the Father are pronounced and brought to us by the Son. The Son delights in giving all honor and glory to the Father. For instance, in the Book of Mormon, when referring to words given by Jehovah to Malachi, the Savior reminds us that these words, the words spoken in the Old Covenant by the Holy Prophets, are truly *the words of the Father*—even if delivered by the Son: “And it came to pass that he commanded them that they should write *the words which the Father had given* unto Malachi, which he should tell unto them ... Thus said the Father unto Malachi—Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant ... ” (3 Nephi 24:1, emphasis added).

As disciples of Christ, we pray to the Father, in the name of the Son. We receive an answer through Christ who manifests it unto us by the power of the Holy Ghost. Note the perfect pattern of prayer: “And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in

⁶ McConkie, Elder Bruce R. *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*. The Epistle of Paul to Titus – God has a body of flesh and bones.

Christ, he [I interpret this to mean, He, Christ] will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10:4). The revelations received by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Doctrine and Covenants were given by the Savior (either directly, or through the Holy Ghost).

For example, “listen to the words of Jesus Christ, your Lord and your Redeemer” (D&C 15:1b, also see D&C 6:21; 10:57; 14:9; 16:1; 17:9; 18:47; etc.). Nephi, similarly, explains that the words he has spoken come from the Son: “if ye shall believe in Christ ye will believe in these words, for they are the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 33:10b). We might well say that the Holy Ghost speaks for the Son as the Son speaks for the Father. Each of these represents instances of Divine Investiture.

And so also when a Prophet speaks, he speaks through Divine Investiture. We read: “And, behold, and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto this priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth—And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation. Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants. Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come” (D&C 68:2–6).

It follows, then, that when a Priesthood holder gives a blessing, he speaks the words of Christ as received through the power of the Holy Ghost, through Divine Investiture. So also, when members deliver a talk or give a lesson as moved by the Holy Ghost. This is why it is so vital to teach by the Spirit and bless by the Spirit and live by the Spirit. Each one of these will be justified by the Holy Spirit of Promise when we so act, and be brought to the hearts of the people we teach, serve and bless.

Divine Investiture, then, is like a power of attorney: “Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled. What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, *whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same*. For behold, and lo, the Lord is God, and the Spirit beareth record, and the record is true, and the truth abideth forever and ever. Amen” (D&C 1:37–39, emphasis added).

In Isaiah we hear the Son speaking about His own mission as the mortal Messiah as if it was the Father who was speaking. Thus we have Jehovah speaking in Isaiah 53:6 and 53:10, “and the LORD (Jehovah, יהוה) hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,” and “Yet it pleased the LORD (Jehovah, יהוה) to bruise him.” It is the Lord speaking, but He (Jehovah, Christ) is speaking for the Father in first person about Himself (Christ) in his future Messianic role.

When I am asked to be a *language interpreter* at a meeting, when the speaker says, “I have a testimony,” I do not say, “*He* has a testimony,” but rather, “*I* have a testimony” (not, *él tiene un testimonio* but rather *yo tengo un testimonio*). The Son, as our advocate before the Father, likewise speaks the words of the Father precisely as spoken by the Father.

So it is in the Book of Moses: “And I have a work for thee, Moses, my son; and thou art in the similitude of mine Only Begotten; and mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior, for he is full of grace and truth; but there is no God beside me, and all things are present with me, for I know them all’ (Moses 1:6). Once again, it is the Son who speaks the words of the Father throughout the book of Moses.

There are notable exceptions, where the Father is introducing or bearing witness of the Son. For instance, in the New Covenant, when Christ is upon the earth, we hear the Father glorifying the Son (e.g., Matthew 3:17, John 12:28). In Joseph Smith History–1:17b, Elohim the Eternal Father introduces the Son to the boy Prophet Joseph Smith: “When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!”

The Book of Revelation gives a perfect example of Divine Investiture. In this case, an angel speaks the words of Christ. John distinctly hears the words of the Savior in first person from the angelic messenger who is clothed in great glory (see a similar event in the *Ascension of Isaiah*): “Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Revelation 22:7). John thought himself in the presence of our Redeemer. Scripture tells us that he fell down to worship, but was prevented from doing so: “Then saith he [the angel] unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God” (Revelation 22:9).

It is not possible to understand Isaiah without understanding that the Savior often explicitly speaks to Isaiah as if He were the Father. And even when He does not appear to be speaking for the Father, the Savior is still speaking for the Father. “Jesus ... said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing

of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth ... That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him” (John 5:19b–20a, 23).

In summary, the principle of Divine Investiture is everywhere in our lives as followers and disciples of Jesus Christ. We speak in His name often, as moved upon by the Holy Ghost. In the Hebrew Bible, in almost every instance that the word Elohim is used, it is used as a title of honor for Christ, who “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (Philippians 2:6).⁷

Hosea Principle

In essence, the Hosea Principle is the idea that the Lord is filled with compassion towards us, and after speaking words of reprimand, He is filled with love. See *notes* in *Rain in Due Season*, our second introduction.

How Beautiful upon the Mountains Principle

The Lord frequently shares his *titles of honor* with his servants. For more details, see *notes* under ISAIAH 52:7.

Ezekiel Principle

If a person is warned and repents, then both the one giving warning and the one warned have reason to rejoice. However, if a person is not warned, he who should have warned his brother is also condemned (see Ezekiel 3:16–21).

Biblical Text Evaluation

The field of *Biblical criticism* or is often divided into (1) *lower criticism* or *textual criticism* (we will prefer the latter term) and (2) *higher criticism* or *literary criticism*. In these contexts, the word criticism means *analysis* or *evaluation* (as compared to censure and disapproval).

Textual criticism is the attempt to determine what the *original* Scriptures (also called an *autograph*) may have looked like. No autograph of any portion of the Bible exists today. Instead, we have copies of copies of copies, etc. These copies are corruptions of the original autographs.

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained: “I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors” (*History of the Church* 6:57.),”

The textual critic is interested in comparing ancient manuscripts or textual variants in an effort to improve the text, through such ancient resources as the Masoretic text (Ⲁ), Syriac (Ⲥ), Peshitta (ⲩ), Targum (Ⲯ), LXX (Ⲟ), Vulgate (ⲱ) and Dead Sea Scrolls (DSSB) (Ⲙ). Such records are not composed of a single representative text, but of multiple sources or variants.

The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price are priceless sources of more accurate texts.

If someone wished to come to a better understanding of what the Prophet Joseph Smith meant regarding the flawed transmission of the Biblical text in the quote above, I would recommend *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* by Emanuel Tov (Judah Leon Magnes⁸ Professor of Bible at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem). I also commend *Invitation to the Septuagint* by Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, for a book focused on the LXX (Ⲟ).

Emanuel Tov well says about textual criticism: “This procedure is subjective as subjective can be ... In modern times, scholars are often reluctant to admit the subjective nature of textual evaluation, so that an attempt is often made, conscious or unconscious, to create a level of artificial objectivity by the frequent application of abstract rules” (2nd Edition, p. 310). Elsewhere he notes that “textual traditions have all been influenced by abstract assumptions and prejudices” (2nd Edition, p. 181). Tov speaks extensively about textual corruptions, false conclusions, dogmatic approaches, subjective opinions and the like.

Much scholarship is affected by personal opinion. I do not claim that *Isaiah Testifies of Christ* is free from these. We simply cannot get away from bias in translating or analyzing Scripture, any more than we can in conducting most scholarly work.

In contrast to textual criticism, *higher criticism* deals with the authenticity, inspiration and genuineness of these Biblical texts. Some higher critics, though not of our faith, are faithful believers in God and strong advocates for the divinity of Jesus Christ and the inspiration of Scripture. I have a large collection of such books and love reading them.

There are other higher critics—often wolves in sheep’s clothing—that do not believe that God reveals Himself to humans—not now, not then, not ever. What is worrisome is that their theories are making their way

⁷ Adapted from my blog, *Elohim, Adonai and Divine Investiture*, 24 July 2010. Also see, McConkie, Bruce. *The Promised Messiah*. Deseret Book Company, 1978. Smith, Joseph Fielding. *Doctrines of Salvation*. Talmage, James E. Jesus the Christ. (Including notes from The Father and The Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by The First Presidency and The Twelve, set forth in 1916).

⁸ My great grandmother’s sister (or great grandaunt) on my Jewish side of the family, Beatrice Lowenstein, was the wife of Judah Magnes.

into the homes of Christian families and even into the hearts of some members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

When it comes specifically to Isaiah, I have gained much from books written from multiple perspectives. When comments were made against our beliefs as LDS by any Gentile or Jewish author, I have discarded these.

There is safety in holding on to the Standard Works and the words of our Prophets, Seers, and Revelators—that is *my* bias. Always pay attention to what the Prophet, the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve have to teach us. Never cease to call upon God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, pouring out your questions and letting Him know of your desire to learn. And remember, some things we not know now: “Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things— Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof” (D&C 101:32–33).

I have made every effort to make *Isaiah Testifies of Christ* an uplifting, faith-promoting experience. There is much I have to learn.

Isaiah in the Book of Mormon

In 1903 President Joseph F. Smith received an inquiry as to why there were portions of the Isaiah chapters in the Book of Mormon that were identical to those in the King James Version. The letter came from a Mr. H. Chamberlain, of Spencer, Iowa. Chamberlain noticed that even the words “supplied by the translators” were included in the KJV. (In the *Rain in Due Season* introduction we review the fact that italics in the Authorized Version stand for words or expressions not found in the Hebrew text but that are supplied by the translators to help us understand the Bible. Chamberlain rightly points out that it is unimaginable for two translators of the *same text* to coincide perfectly with each other—and even more improbable when we are dealing with *different* text sources (i.e., the Book of Mormon plates vs. the Masoretic text **מ**). Chamberlain fittingly maintains that the only way that this could be so was if the Prophet Joseph Smith made use of the KJV in translating the Book of Mormon.

President Joseph F. Smith delegated the task of answering Mr. H. Chamberlain’s concerns to Elder B. H. Roberts who agreed with Chamberlain’s concerns and deductions. Elder Roberts responded in part: “while Joseph Smith obtained the facts and ideas from the Nephite characters through the inspiration of God, he was left to express those facts and ideas, in the main, in such language as he could command; and when he found that parts of the Nephite record closely paralleled passages in the Bible, and being conscious that the

language of our English Bible was superior to his own, he adopted it, except for those differences indicated in the Nephite original which here and there make the Book of Mormon passages superior in sense and clearness. Of course, I recognize the fact that this is but a conjecture ...”⁹

Dr. Sidney B. Sperry likewise wrote: “There are 433 verses of Isaiah in the Nephite record. Of these, 234 verses were changed or modified by the Prophet Joseph Smith so that they do not conform with the King James version. Some of the changes made were slight, others were radical. However, 199 verses are word for word the same as the old English version. We therefore freely admit that Joseph Smith used the King James version when he came to the text of Isaiah on the gold plates. As long as the familiar version substantially agreed with the text on the gold plates record he let it pass; when it differed too much, he translated the Nephite version and dictated the necessary changes.”¹⁰

Dr. Sperry elsewhere elucidated: “When Joseph Smith came to these quotations he very wisely followed the King James Version except in points where the record before him differed sufficiently, whereupon he made the appropriate changes to conform to the ancient version. The fact that he made changes is in itself quite remarkable. No real evidence exists that he had at that time been expertly taught about textual criticism and the history of the Bible text. My own experience has been that very few intelligent people in the Church even today recognize fully the implications that follow from the presence of Isaiah texts in the Book of Mormon. Any Bible scholar knows the text followed by the King James Version contained corruptions.”¹¹ Brother Sperry goes on to give numerous examples of how the Prophet Joseph Smith’s translation is supported either by other ancient manuscripts or by more literal translations.

BYU Professor Daniel H. Ludlow also explained: “When Joseph Smith translated the Isaiah references from the small plates of Nephi, he evidently opened his King James Version of the Bible and compared the impression he had received in translating with the words of the King James scholars. If his translation was essentially the same as that of the King James Version, he apparently quoted the verse from the Bible; then his scribe, Oliver Cowdery, copied it down. However, if Joseph Smith’s translation did not agree precisely with that of the King James scholars, he would dictate his

⁹ B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols., 1:269–274.

¹⁰ Dr. Sidney B. Sperry, “The ‘Isaiah Problem’ in the Book of Mormon by Dr. Sidney B. Sperry,” *Improvement Era* 1939–1

¹¹ Sidney B. Sperry, “Evidence of Translation: Comparison with Ancient Versions,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/1 (Spring 1995): 211–14.

own translation to the scribe. This procedure in translation would account for both the 234 verses of Isaiah that were changed or modified by the Prophet Joseph and the 199 verses that were translated word-for-word the same. Although some critics might question this procedure of translation, scholars today frequently use this same procedure in translating the biblical manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls.”¹² And may I suggest that this is the very procedure adopted in most if not all Biblical translations, such as the recently produced LDS Spanish Reina Valera 2009. The same technique was also clearly used by the Authorized Version translators as they compared the text of previous Bibles to the Hebrew.

Contact

I have included my e-mail address in case you wish to engage in conversation on any related topic, suggest corrections or offer other perspectives. I rejoice in being rectified. Over the years I hope to keep making improvements. I would be particularly honored to be able to share my testimony of Jesus Christ, the Book of Mormon or of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, answer any questions or put you in contact with Elders or Sister Missionaries who might visit you in your home. No joy has been greater in my life than that of membership in the Lord’s Church.

Why did the Lord want me to study Isaiah?

I am not entirely certain why the Lord wanted me to study Isaiah and the Prophets. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wondered: “If our eternal salvation depends upon our ability to understand the writings of Isaiah as fully and truly as Nephi understood them—and who shall say such is not the case!—how shall we fare in that great day when with Nephi we shall stand before the pleasing bar of Him who said: ‘Great are the words of Isaiah’ (3 Nephi 23:1)?”¹³

While I am not entirely sure how to interpret Elder McConkie’s quote, I am certain that I needed to engage in this lifelong study of Isaiah and the prophets. Some of the benefits I have derived so far, almost all related to being a defender of the faith, include a:

1. Better appreciation of how the scriptures testify of the divinity of Jesus Christ. And how specific Scripture in the New Testament speaks of Christ as being the very Jehovah mentioned in Isaiah (see ISAIAH 6:9–10; Matthew 13:10–15).

2. Understanding of how Scriptures are sometimes distorted by those who do not believe in the divinity of

Jesus Christ or do not believe in prophecy—as well as by those who have not accepted the restoration of the Gospel in these, the latter days.

3. Ability to stand firm and confident in the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Brethren—and withstand philosophical idolatry.

4. Increase in my love for the Book of Mormon and the rest of Scripture, as well as the teachings of the Brethren. Throughout the years I have discovered “wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures” (D&C 89:19b) in both of these. They have brought me joy untold and a sensing of the thinness of the veil.

5. Coming to an enhanced understanding that the gifts that God has given us need to be developed—they are not poured out on us without effort. As Elder B.H. Robert teaches, “[It] requires striving—intellectual and spiritual—to comprehend the things of God.”

6. Intensifying of my understanding of eternal and spiritual matters so I can better withstand the fiery darts of the adversary.

7. Finding external evidences of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ, as received by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

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¹² Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon*, p.141.

¹³ Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “Ten Keys to Understanding Isaiah,” October 1973 *Ensign*.

