

## Chapter 12

### The Holy Spirit and the Gifts

#### The Lectures on Faith

On pages 139-40, the authors make a fuss about the Lectures on Faith that appeared in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. However, a number of things should be kept in mind. First and foremost, the Lectures on Faith were never canonised nor presented as divine revelation by Joseph Smith or any other early member of the Church. Furthermore, much evidence exists, such as word-print analysis and what seems to be public denials by Joseph Smith to the effect that he denied authorship of Lecture 5, the one cited, in part by the authors on pages 139-40, of the Lectures on Faith (*History of the Church* 6:474). Indeed, authorship of the Lectures on Faith seems to be, not Joseph Smith, but Sidney Rigdon.<sup>1</sup>

Even taking the view that Joseph Smith was the author of the Lectures on Faith, Joseph Smith came from a traditional Protestant environment in which there was firm belief in the trinity of the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, which teaches that there are three persons in one god and that they are all made of the same substance. These beliefs are only slightly modified in the Lectures on Faith, prepared in 1834 for the School of the Prophets and published in the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835 (originally, the lectures *were* the “doctrine” while the “covenants” were the revelations received by Joseph Smith). As for Lecture 5 that contains some declarations on the nature of the Holy Spirit, Joseph had already seen the Father and the Son during their visit in 1820, so he was aware that there were two “personages.” He knew from the Bible (Luke 24) that the Son had a body of flesh and bones. But he evidently continued to believe – in the absence of revealed information to the contrary – that the Father was a spirit only and that the Holy Ghost was merely the “mind” which united the Father and the Son. All this was to change when new information was received. On April 2, 1843, Joseph declared that “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as a man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a **personage** of spirit (D&C 130:22, emphasis added). With this statement, we see that the LDS Church teaches that the Holy Spirit is indeed a personage.

#### The Holy Spirit as God

The authors have a hard time coping with how Mormons can view the Holy Ghost as God, notwithstanding his not being embodied or having went through mortality (pp.140-

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<sup>1</sup> Noel B. Reynolds, “The authorship debate concerning *Lectures on Faith*: Exhumation and reburial,” in *The disciple as scholar: essays on Latter-day Saint history and doctrine in honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000), 355-82

41). Notwithstanding, LDS theology clearly states that Jesus was God prior to mortality, and in the King Follett Discourse, the Prophet, speaking on the Father's mortality, clearly said that the Father's mortality was the same as the Son's, indicating that, was with Christ, the Father was God prior to, and even during, mortality.<sup>2</sup> When one realises that there is a qualitative difference between members of the Godhead and us, any problem is logical quashed.

Further, on page 141, the authors claim that Mormon leaders have, indirectly, criticised Mormon theology in their criticisms of the Orthodox concept of God being without parts or passions (p. 141). However, this is a straw-man. Orthodoxy states that God is immaterial, while in Mormon theology, spirit is not considered immaterial (e.g., D&C 93:33-34). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit does have anthropomorphic shape, contra Orthodox Christianity, as was in the case of the pre-mortal Jesus (Ether 3).

## **Miscellaneous arguments against the Mormon position**

<Lack of canonised revelation since Joseph Smith> (p. 142-43)

A revelation need not be canonised for it to be a revelation, or for the Lord to be in commune with his modern prophet, let alone His followers. Furthermore, section 5 of the Doctrine and Covenants makes it clear that the Lord would make his will known through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Indeed, a number of other official declarations and proclamations have been issued by the First Presidency and/or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles since 1844 without being added to the official canon. The most recent of these is "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" (1995). At no time has the restored Church been left without divine guidance, which continues to our day.

[After quoting 1 Corinthians 14:26-31] Many Mormons can testify of promptings they have received from the Holy Spirit in their personal lives, but no one would presume to stand up in a church meeting and prophesy (p. 143)

The authors labour under the presumption that "prophesy" means to predict future events. However, this is erroneous. While not necessarily precluding prediction of events to come, prophesy refers to being inspired by the Spirit of God to speak and/or act in a certain way, speaking from a deep knowledge of God, preaching fidelity to the covenant, opposing a mere external observance of the Law, delivering God's word to the people, and so forth.<sup>3</sup> This is all consistent with the Latter-day Saint model.

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<sup>2</sup> Marvin Hill, *The essential Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 1995), 235

<sup>3</sup> "Prophets" in Gerlad O'Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, *A concise dictionary of theology*, revised and updated edition, (London: T&T Clark 2000), 214