

Elder Robert E. Wells

“This man knows the Shepherd”

I once heard President Hugh B. Brown relate this inspiring story: Sometime ago a great actor in the city of New York gave a wonderful performance in a large theatre, at the close of which there were rounds of applause. He was called back again and again. Finally someone called to him, “Would you do for us the Twenty-third Psalm?”

“Why, yes. I know the Twenty-third Psalm.”

He recited it as an actor would, perfectly, with nothing left to be desired as far as a performance was concerned. When he was finished, again there was thunderous applause. Then the actor came to the front of the stage and said: “Ladies and gentlemen, there is an old man sitting here on the front row whom I happen to know. I am going to ask him without any notice if he will come and repeat the Twenty-third Psalm.”

The elderly gentleman, of course, was frightened. Trembling, he came to the stage. Fearfully he looked out over the vast audience. Then, as though he were at home only with one, he closed his eyes against the audience, bowed his head, and talked to God, and said:

“The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

“He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

Then changing to address the Savior directly and intimately:

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

When the old man finished, there was no applause, but there was not a dry eye in that house. The actor came to the front of the stage. He, too, was wiping his eyes. And he said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I know the *words* of the Twenty-third Psalm, but this man *knows the Shepherd*.” (Adapted from Hugh B. Brown, *The Quest*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1961, pp. 335-36.)

Scriptures and prayer

President Benson has given us a key so that we might become as one who knows the Shepherd. He has told us: “To learn of Christ necessitates the study of the scriptures and the [study of the] testimonies of those who know him. We come to know him through prayer and the inspiration and revelation that God has promised to those who keep his commandments.” (*God, Family, Country: Our Three Great Loyalties*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1974, p. 156.)

Sister Mellor

There is a silver-haired Argentine sister who knows the Shepherd. She has given a long life of service to the Lord, his Church, and her fellowmen.

The first time Sister Mellor attended a Mormon church service, she was brought by the missionaries. They felt that she was the most sophisticated, cultured, and best-educated investigator they had ever met. They held a few meetings in her lovely home, and when they invited

her to accompany them to a Sunday Church meeting, she readily agreed. The service was being held in an old building. The members attending were of somewhat humble circumstances compared to the new investigator.

The service did not go well by the standards of the two missionaries hoping to impress their guest. The branch leaders had just been recently called, and they were still learning their duties. There was some confusion at the pulpit. There was an interruption at the sacrament table at the most sacred moment. The sermons seemed to be less interesting than those desired by the eager missionaries. The reverence was threatened from time to time by children moving or crying. There was no organ to provide deep, religious sounds. The missionaries agonizingly thought of the negative impressions their elegant investigator must be receiving. They knew she normally worshiped in a very fashionable cathedral where everything would have been highly professional and the congregation would have been of the highest stratum of local society.

On the way home, one of the missionaries began to reflect his embarrassment. He explained: "Please excuse our present building. Some day we will build a lovely new chapel here." Then he added: "Please excuse our new leaders. We have a lay priesthood, so we take turns conducting, and the new leaders are still learning how to conduct services." He was just about to give another excuse when Sister Herta Mellor turned to him and said somewhat sternly: "Elder, don't you apologize! It must have been like this at the time of Christ!"

With her spiritual eyes and her knowledge of the Shepherd acquired through studying the holy scriptures, she saw through centuries of tradition. She saw past cathedrals and organs. She saw back through the

corridors of time to the Shepherd meeting with his humble fishermen-Apostles, with some sinners, and even with leper outcasts. She saw the early Saints meeting in a small, rented, upstairs room. She saw children, with the Savior smiling at them lovingly. Because she knew the Shepherd, she could say with profound and deep insight, "It must have been like this at the time of Christ."

She exemplifies to me the admonition which many have followed: "Fill your mind with thoughts of Christ, your heart with love of Christ, and your life with service to Christ." Today there stands a lovely chapel, presided over by a well-trained lay bishopric, where Sister Mellor first attended church about thirty years ago.

Joseph Smith knew the Shepherd

There is one man above all other men that I feel truly knew the Shepherd. He was the first living prophet on the earth after many centuries. He wrote an account of the first time he saw the Savior in vision: "I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. . . . 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!*" (JS—H, 1:16-17.)

The young prophet continues describing this unprecedented and heaven-opening event: "My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the [churches] was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the [churches] was

right—and which I should join. I was answered that I must join none of them.” (JS—H, 1:18-19.)

For a period of ten years Joseph, the Prophet, was taught by resurrected beings, by ancient prophets who returned, and by angels from beyond the veil. Then, 150 years ago, he was instructed by the Savior to formally organize His Church: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Subsequently, the Prophet had other mighty visions of the Master, the resurrected Redeemer. Listen to his description of one such manifestation:

“The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened.

“We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

“His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, . . . saying:

“I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.” (D&C 110:1-4.) The Prophet who wrote that description knew the Shepherd.

The Prophet Joseph Smith met a martyr’s death. He died for his testi-

mony, sealing his witness with his blood. We pay tribute to him as the first prophet of this dispensation and the most important prophet of all dispensations of time. He “has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived” (D&C 135:3). We honor Joseph Smith this 150th anniversary year of the founding of the Church as a prophet who knew the Shepherd intimately.

Strive to know the Savior

We should each ask, “Am I loving enough, am I studying enough, am I serving enough to *know* the Shepherd? May we all come to know the Savior, through obeying his commandments, that when we meet him face to face, we each can say, “I know thee; thou art my Shepherd.” This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, our loving Shepherd, amen.

President Marion G. Romney

Elder Robert E. Wells, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, has just spoken to us. Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy, will now address us.

Following Elder Maxwell, we shall hear from Elder Mark E. Petersen, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

Fellowshipping and friendship

Brothers and sisters, we must be more ready than we now are to receive the hundreds of thousands of individuals “of every kind” who are gathered into the gospel net from nearly every culture and circumstance (see Matt. 13:47).

A few of these have said to their behavioral Babylons, “We bid thee farewell,” having learned the hard way that without the Decalogue there is decadence.

Other newcomers have ceased trying to live “without God in the world,” a condition “contrary to the nature of happiness” (Alma 41:11).