Knowledge about the earth and its various forms of life is expanding so rapidly that it can hardly be catalogued. But the world as a whole is not experiencing a comparable expansion of knowledge about God and his plan for his children. To obtain that kind of knowledge, we must understand and follow the ways God has prescribed to know the things of God. We come to know God and the truths of his gospel by study and reason and also (and always, for this kind of knowledge) by faith and revelation.

Reason and revelation are methods of learning that are available to seekers of every type of knowledge. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has always encouraged its members to pursue and excel in all fields of learning, acquiring knowledge by study and reason as well as by faith and revelation. President Harold B. Lee expressed that counsel in these words: "The educational system of the Church has been established to the end that all pure knowledge must be gained by our people, handed down to our posterity, and given to all men. We charge our teachers to give constant stimulation to budding young scientists and scholars in all fields and to urge them to push farther and farther into the realms of the unknown."1

Seekers of secular knowledge who have paid the price in personal effort are often illuminated or magnified by what some call intuition and others recognize as inspiration or revelation. I believe that many great discoveries and achievements in science and the arts I have resulted from such Godgiven illumination.

Unfortunately, some of the practitioners of study and reason are contemptuous of or hostile toward religion and revelation, maintaining that truth (an only be found and learning can only occur through the methods with which they are familiar. They cannot conceive of the existence of a system of learning that assumes the existence of God and the reality of communications from his Spirit. The only ultimate authority they can conceive is reason, and the word of this god is rationality, as they define it. Such persons cannot accept the existence of a God beyond themselves and their own powers of reasoning. Brigham Young remarked that attitude when he exclaimed: "How difficult it is to teach the natural man, who comprehends nothing more than that which he sees with the natural eye!2

The Book of Mormon describes that attitude among a people who depended solely "upon their own strength and upon their own wisdom" and upon what they could "witness with [their] own eyes." (Hel. 16:15,20.) Upon the basis of reason, these persons rejected the prophecies, saying, "It is not reasonable that such a being as a Christ shall come." (Vs. 18.) Applying that same attitude a prominent professor dismissed the Book of Mormon with the assertion, "You don't get books from angels. It is just that simple."
Those who seek gospel knowledge only by study and reason are particularly susceptible to the self-sufficiency and self-importance that sometimes characterize academic pursuits. As the apostle Paul observed in his day, "Knowledge puffeth up." He cautioned the learned: "Take heed lest by any means this liberty [knowledge] of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.... And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" (1 Cor. 8:1, 9, 11.)

The apostle Peter foresaw that attitude in our time: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Pet. 3:3-4.)

A Book of Mormon prophet described the origin and consequences of this attitude: "O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish." (2 Ne. 9:28.)

The fulfillment of these prophecies is evident in our day.

**Some History of Reason vs. Revelation**

Many writers have analyzed what Professor Hugh Nibley calls "the age-old struggle between hard-headed realism and holy tradition." He contrasts what he calls the sopbic, "the operations of the unaided human mind," with the mantic, the "prophetic or inspired, oracular, coming from the other world." He dates the rise of the sopbic from the beginning of the sixth century B.C. and credits St. Augustine with "complet[ing] the process of de-Manticizing antique culture."3

Within a century after Christ, the confrontation with Greek philosophy brought some compromises in doctrine and practice that one scholar has characterized as "denying the principle of revelation and turning instead to human intellect. 4 Dr. Nibley quotes Leclerq's conclusion: "From the fifth century on, the church became an 'intellectual entity' and ever since one sees in 'the church a thing of reason un etre de raison.'" 5

Goethe argued that "the deepest, the only theme of human history, compared to which all others are of subordinate importance, is the conflict of skepticism with faith. 6

For some, that conflict was resolved during the "great medieval debate" that Richard M. Weaver has called "the crucial event in the history of Western culture." This debate included a contest over whether universal truths have a real existence. Weaver explains: "The issue ultimately involved is whether there is a source of truth higher than, and independent of, man; and the answer to the question is decisive for one's view of the nature and destiny of humankind. The practical result of nominalist philosophy is to banish the reality which is perceived by the intellect [I would say, "by revelation"] and to
posit as reality [only] that which is perceived by the senses. With this change in the affirmation of what is real, the whole orientation of culture takes a turn, and we are on the road to modern empiricism." 7

In an address to a college audience, Bruce L. Christensen, president of the Public Broadcasting Service, described the consequences of this philosophy: "In other words, there was no absolute good. There was no absolute evil, or for that matter, no absolute anything. All absolutes were merely a convenience of thinking -they existed in name only (nominally) but not in reality.

"The first principle of nominalism was that there is no source of truth higher than, or independent of, man. The practical result was to deny that knowledge may be gained by any means other than that which can be perceived through man's reasoned use of his senses. Revelation was no longer an acceptable means of acquiring truth." 8

The Nobel Prize-winning Russian novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn expressed the same idea:

"The mistake [in Western thinking] must be at the root, at the very basis of human thinking in the past centuries. I refer to the prevailing Western view of the world which was first born during the Renaissance and found its political expression from the period of the Enlightenment. It became the basis for government and social science and could be defined as rationalistic humanism or humanistic autonomy: the proclaimed and enforced autonomy of man from any higher force above him.... This new way of thinking, which had imposed on us its guidance, did not admit the existence of intrinsic evil in man nor did it see any higher task than the attainment of happiness on earth. It based modern Western civilization on the dangerous trend to worship man and his material needs.... We have placed too much hope in political and social reforms, only to find out that we were being deprived of our most precious possession: our spiritual life."9

Despite the apparent conflict between reason and revelation, the rational and the religious views of the world are not the opposites of one another. The view of religion (at least the religion that is undiluted by apostasy) includes the methods of reason and the truths determined by them. in contrast, the rational view excludes what is supernatural. This exclusion was accomplished by merging religion and philosophy. Hugh Nibley explains that the perceived necessity for this merger was "'to overcome the objections of reason to revelation'- that is St. Augustine's famous reconciliation of classical and Christian learning." He continues by describing the effects of this merger: "But how can you call it reconciliation when it is always the church that gives way? It is always reason that has to be satisfied and revelation that must be manipulated in order to give that satisfaction; this is no compromise, but complete surrender."10

Professor H. Curtis Wright affirms the effects of a long interaction between religion and rational science: "The overall tendency of their interaction is always one-sided - toward the naturalizing of religion, not toward the supernaturalizing of science or scholarship."11 What is here called the "naturalizing of religion" has the effect of denying the existence
of any truths or values that cannot be demonstrated by the methods of the so-called
natural or scientific order. The ultimate and exclusive reliance upon reason that results
from this denial is at the root of many public debates. These include the current
controversy over teaching values in public schools and the earlier but continuing concern
over whether universities can simply be involved in disseminating knowledge or whether
they must share responsibility for the probable use of that knowledge (atomic weapons,
for example).

The source of the ancient conflict between (1) reason or intellect and (2) faith or
revelation is the professor's rejection of revelation, not the prophet's rejection of reason.
The reality of and widespread understanding of religious experience should prevent its
rejection by reasonable men, but its nature makes it difficult to accept within the
categories propounded by the practitioners of reason. Professor Obert C. Tanner explains:
"Here is a fact, yet one which defies intellectual analysis. It is a strange thing that an
experience so decisive as to influence a person's total life and commitment should yet be
described as ineffable, unutterable, indescribable, and unexpressible. It is no wonder that
universities ... are unable to deal with more than fringe religion-the ideas about religion,
not the personal and private experience of religion. It is no wonder that churches and free
universities are respectful but reserved toward each other." 12

In a recent talk at Brigham Young University, Elder Boyd K. Packer gave this perceptive
characterization of reason and revelation in a university environment:

"There are two opposing convictions in the university environment. On the one hand,
'seeing is believing'; on the other, 'believing is seeing.' Both are true! Each in its place.
The combining of the two individually or institutionally is the challenge of life....

"Each of us must accommodate the mixture of reason and revelation in our lives. The
gospel not only pen-nits but requires it. An individual who concentrates on either side
solely and alone will lose both balance and perspective. History confirms that the
university environment always favors reason, with the workings of the Spirit made to feel
uncomfortable. I know of no examples to the contrary."

Elder Packer then pleaded for "the fusion of reason and revelation [which] will produce a
man and a woman of imperishable worth."13

**Reason Alone?**

When persons attempt to understand or undertake to criticize the gospel of Jesus Christ or
the doctrines or practices of his church by the method of reason alone, the outcome is
predetermined. No one can find God or understand his doctrines or ordinances without
using the means he has prescribed for receiving the truths of his gospel. That is why
gospel truths have been corrupted and gospel ordinances have been lost when their
meaning has been left to the interpretation and their application has been left to the
sponsorship of scholars who reject the revelations and lack the authority of God.
I believe this is why the Lord has often called his spokesmen - hi! prophets - from among the unlettered, those who are unspoiled by the reasoning of men and therefore receptive to the revelations of God. President Spencer W. Kimball explained: "The Lord seems never to have placed a premium on ignorance and yet he has, in many cases, found his better-trained people unresponsive to the spiritual, and has had to use spiritual giants with less training to carry on his work." 14

The apostle Paul explained this to the Corinthian Saints. He told them he was not going to preach the gospel "with wisdom of words," because "the preaching of the cross" was "foolishness" to the sophisticated. (1 Cor. 1:17-18.) But the sophisticated would come to naught, for, it was written, the Lord "will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." (1 Cor. 1:19.) In contrast, those who placed their faith in what Paul dryly called "the foolishness of preaching" would be saved. (1 Cor. 1:21) He explained:

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not man, mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." (1 Cor. 1:25-29; also see 1 Con 3:18-20.)

Those who rely exclusively on study and reason reject or remain doubtful of all absolutes that cannot be established through the five senses, including good and evil and the existence and omniscience of God. They also reject all other methods of acquiring knowledge, including revelation. They tend to be self-sufficient, self-important, and enamored of their own opinions. Reason is their god and intellectualism is their creed. They dwell in that "large and spacious building" seen in a prophet's vision of the "wisdom" and "pride of the world." (1 Ne. 11:35-36.) It may be said of them as Stephen said of the children of Israel who made a calf in the days of Aaron: they "rejoiced in the works of their own hands." (Acts 7:41.) This worldly worship of self and self-sufficiency is surely condemned by the eternal command, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Ex. 20:3.)

Exclusive reliance on learning by study and reason has affected more than secular subjects. It has also affected Christian theology. Baptist educator Dr. Ben C. Fisher wrote:

"For more than a hundred years, modern theology has been marching to an increasingly secular cadence. The traditional supernatural view of man has been superseded by a completely rational outlook on his behavior and his place and activities in the world.... The Christ-centered gospel with its simple but uncompromising ethical demands was diluted until the very name of Christ itself, except in some oblique fashion, disappeared from the center of theological thought and writings.... Recovery of the authority of the
Scriptures does not require repudiation of scholarship, but it does require the reaffirmation of the primacy of revelation.  

Those who reject revelation and approach God and a study of his gospel solely by the methods of research, deliberation, and scholarly debate are like the leaders who persecuted Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. In responding to their attack, the Savior taught this lesson about the ways of God and the ways of the world: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" John 5:43-44.

Jesus taught the same lesson to Peter. When the Savior told his followers that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer many things and be killed and raised again, the chief apostle declared that these things must not happen. Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matt. 16:23.)

In each of these instances the Savior proclaimed the importance of the things of God above the things of man. On another occasion he applied that principle to teach his professional critics the preeminence of the prophetic over the scholarly. Jesus was confronted by a group who had hypocritically built monuments to the prophets whom their predecessors had murdered, while personally rejecting the living prophets God was sending to them. In what I understand to be a condemnation of their rejection of the fullness of gospel understanding possible through revelation, the Savior pronounced woe upon these worldly professionals: "For ye have taken away the key of knowledge, the fullness of the scriptures; ye enter not in yourselves into the kingdom; and those who were entering in, ye hindered." JST Luke 11:47-49, 53.

Jesus also taught the preeminence of the ways of God over the ways of men by warning against the self-serving motives of those scholars who proclaim from their own learning: "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." John 7:18. This same theme recurred when Jesus explained why some converted rulers would not confess him lest they be put out of the synagogue: "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:43.)

The modern manifestation of self-serving scholarship was prophesied by Nephi: "The Gentiles ... have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor." (2 Ne. 26:20.)

Nephi's prophecy surely includes those who use the academy as their church, who pay their "religious" devotions in libraries and laboratories, and who have a natural explanation for all the miracles of God. As he explained:
"It shall come to pass in that day that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord.... shall contend one with another; and their priests shall contend one with another, and they shall teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance.

"And they deny the power of God, the Holy One of Israel; and they say unto the people: Hearken unto us, and hear ye our precept; for behold there is no God today, for the Lord and the Redeemer hath done his work, and he hath given his power unto men; behold, hearken ye unto my precept; if they shall say there is a miracle wrought by the hand of the Lord, believe it not; for this day he is not a God of miracles; he hath done his work." (2 Ne. 28:3-6.)

Nephi declares that as a result of this error, "in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men." (2 Ne. 28:14.)

Such teachings are typical of the directness and value of the Book of Mormon. Written by inspiration, it is an unfailing antidote for the doctrinal confusion and behavioral excesses of our day. Nephi explained the reason for this quality when he described the purpose for his writing what became the first part of the Book of Mormon: "Wherefore, the things which are pleasing unto the world I do not write, but the things which are pleasing unto God and unto those who are not of the world." (1 Ne. 6:5.)

The warning against trusting in the ways of man to learn the things of God was repeated in modern times: "Deny not the spirit of revelation, nor the spirit of prophecy, for wo unto him that denieth these things." (D&C 11:25; also see 1 Thes. 5:19-20.) Elder Bruce R. McConkie voiced the principle and gave illustrations: "A special standard of judgment is needed to prove anything in the spiritual realm. No scientific research, no intellectual inquiry, no investigative processes known to mortal man can prove that God is a personal being, that all men will be raised in immortality, and that repentant souls are born of the Spirit.... Spiritual verities can be proven only by spiritual means." 16

The things of God cannot be learned solely by study and reason. Despite their essential and beneficial uses, the methods of study and reason are insufficient as ways of approaching God and understanding the doctrines of his gospel. We cannot come to know the things of God while rejecting or failing to use the indispensable method God has prescribed to learn these things. The things of God must be learned in his own way, through faith in God and revelation from the Holy Ghost.

Over the years, persons of scholarly inclination have published journals and organized lectures and symposia to study the history of the Church, reason about the principles of the gospel, and share insights in the application of gospel principles to contemporary problems. I have sometimes been asked, "What is wrong with such efforts?" In my personal opinion, so long as they are private and personal and do not imply Church sponsorship or approval, there is nothing wrong with such efforts, provided those who participate understand and observe the limits of study and reason in such an undertaking. Unfortunately, many do not.
The problem I have observed in such activities is that for some participants, these efforts are not a prelude to or supplementary of faith and revelation, but are (or come to be) substitutes for them. That is not the Lord's way.

The danger and the principle, as I see it, can be expressed by likening revelation (which is vital to gospel knowledge and the continuation of spiritual life) to oxygen. For purposes of this analogy, we may liken reasoning to methane. In proper balance and under proper control, methane provides illumination and fuel for useful tasks. But if methane comes to dominate the atmosphere, it drives out oxygen. Those present in a room being infiltrated with methane can lose their lives for lack of oxygen, and this can happen without warning to the victims.

Like the methane in this analogy, reasoned discussions about the gospel can be useful, but they cannot sustain spiritual life by themselves. Moreover, they have a tendency, if not watched and controlled carefully, to become so dominant in the atmosphere that they can destroy spiritual life.

In short, my concern with those who patronize the journals and the lectures and the symposia is not that they will have too much discussion or too much reason, but that they will have too little revelation because they will have (or come to have) too little prayer, too little study of the scriptures, too little humility, and too little faith. And, as Elder Neal A. Maxwell has observed, "Without real faith and its attendant submissiveness, people sooner or later find one thing or another to stumble over." 17

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should observe a respectful distinction between the way they seek to acquire and understand (1) knowledge that is sacred and (2) knowledge that is secular. Scholarship, lectures, symposia, and the clash of opposing views in adversary debate are acceptable means to acquire much knowledge and understanding, but they are not suited to acquiring and understanding the most sacred knowledge, the knowledge of God and the mysteries of his gospel. Gospel truths and testimony are received from the Holy Ghost through prayerful seeking, through faith, through scripture study, through righteous living, through listening to inspired communications and counsel, through serious conversations with persons of faith, and through reverent personal study and quiet contemplation.

**Relationships Between Reason and Revelation**

Persons who pursue sacred learning through study and reason and also through faith and revelation will always have the problem of defining the relationship between these two methods. This subject has intrigued people of reason and people of faith from the earliest times. I will discuss three of the many possible models of this relationship as applied to obtaining knowledge of the things of God.

1. **Coequal Partners**
After I had given a talk on the importance of revelation in learning the gospel, a friend wrote me his analysis of the relationship between reason and revelation (which he called "Spirit"). He suggested that they are coequal partners, each providing a check upon the other. I quote his letter by permission.

"These two can or should act to both complement one another and be a check and balance to each other. True propositions of one are subject to examination and scrutiny by the other. Either one relied upon exclusively leads to destructive excess. Historically, relying too much on the Spirit to the exclusion of reason has often led to fanaticism, intolerance, bloodshed, and, in general, other manifestations of extreme subjectivism. Similarly, too much reliance on reason or intellect has often destroyed faith and led to a sterile cynicism....

"Does your thesis imply that the sort of check and balance between the Spirit and reason I have spoken of is misconceived? Can't the Spirit and reason work as co-equal partners, or at least can't they be made to work harmoniously together, and in fact should we not strive for such? And when they do not or seem not to harmonize (for me they usually do), are we not justified in withholding judgment? in not declaring one right and one wrong? in patiently waiting for or striving to find clearer explanations?"18

I wrote in response:

"While I believe that everyone will use reason and the Spirit (and, obviously, that some use reason better than others, and some hear [feel] the Spirit better than others), I do not believe that they are "co-equal partners" so that where they do not "harmonize," we are "justified in withholding judgment." The reason I do not believe this is that I know of no way to prove by reason some of the fundamental realities - the existence of God, and the efficacy of the Atonement, for example. Therefore, unless we are willing to give primacy to the Spirit (in the exercise of faith, which is the first principle of the gospel), we will be forever agnostic.

"I have had many experiences in my life where reason has led me to one conclusion, but the Spirit and faith have pointed the other way. In my judgment, the extent to which a person can hear [feel] the Spirit, and has the faith to follow it on the subjects I treated in my talk, is one of the best indicators of faith and spirituality. That obviously leaves plenty of room for reason to operate, but it does not give reason co-equal partnership in the areas of knowing God, learning His commandments, and understanding the doctrine of the kingdom."19

If I am correct in my conviction that reason and revelation are not coequal partners, then is one always dominant over the other? Some have proposed that reason is always dominant, so that we relinquish faith in whatever cannot be proven by reason. Others have urged that what is called revelation must always prevail, reason to the contrary notwithstanding. Personally, I cannot feel comfortable with either of these extremes. There must be a better, truer, explanation of the relationship between reason and revelation.
2. Division of Sovereignty

In another approach, reason is urged as the most likely way to acquire knowledge on some subjects and revelation as the most likely way on other subjects. This proposal draws a boundary line through the world of knowledge. On the one side it grants primacy to reason, and on the other side it grants primacy to revelation. This approach has been used by both religionists and philosophers, though they are not necessarily in agreement on where the boundary line should be drawn.

Philosopher Mortimer J. Adler employed this technique in a recent article. In the context of his reference to religion as "a pure act of faith, incapable of being supported or challenged by rational analysis or empirical knowledge of the world," he concluded: "In the whole range of our currently accepted scientific understanding of the world, I find nothing that introduces a single new difficulty into our thinking about God, or presents an intellectual obstacle to our affirming God's existence. In short,... nothing that I can learn from science has any bearing on the thinking that I must do when I address myself to the question whether God, as thus conceived, exists or not. "20

Adler's faith-based definition of religion permits him to give generous tribute to religion, while rejecting as mere "superstitions" some religious beliefs and practices that run counter to what he considers scientifically proven facts. His analysis provides a penetrating challenge for those whose religious position is principally based on inheritance or cultural affinities. He explains:

"With regard to the apparent increase of secularism or irreligion in our Western society, I suggest that the men and women who have given up religion because of the impact on their minds of modern science and philosophy were never truly religious in the first place, but only superstitious. The prevalence and predominance of science in our culture has cured a great many of the superstitious beliefs that constituted their false religiosity.... The increase of secularism and irreligion in our society does not reflect a decrease in the number of persons who are truly religious, but a decrease in the number of those who are falsely religious; that is, merely superstitious." 21

Many religious people also distinguish between the domain of faith and the domain of science, but some would surely disagree with where and how Adler draws the line between the two. For example, Robert J. Matthews, former dean of Religious Instruction at Brigham Young University, draws a sharp distinction "between what we call natural, or secular, truth and spiritual truth." He explains:

"Jacob stoutly denounces trusting in the wisdom and the learning of the world, especially if these prevent a person from coming to a knowledge and acceptance of the gospel, or distract those who already have the gospel. A frequent topic in the Book of Mormon is the antagonism between the learning of the world and the things of God (see, for example, 2 Nephi 26-29; Jacob 4:14).... Hence the Book of Mormon draws a wide distinction between the secular and the spiritual." 22
Despite his recognition of a distinction between secular and spiritual domains, Professor Matthews surely would not agree with where philosopher Adler draws the line between them. Adler starts with what he believes science has proven, and he cedes sovereignty to religion only as to the territory that remains. Adler insists:

"The truths of religion must be compatible with the truths of science and the truths of philosophy. As scientific knowledge advances, and as philosophical analysis improves, religion is progressively purified of the superstitions that accidentally attach themselves to it as parasites. That being so, it is easier in fact to be more truly religious today than ever before, precisely because of the advances that have been made in science and philosophy. That is to say, it is easier for those who will make the effort to think clearly in and about religion, not for those whose addiction to religion is nothing more than a slavish adherence to inherited superstition. Throughout the whole of the past, only a small number of men were ever truly religious. The vast majority who gave their epochs and their societies the appearance of being religious were primarily and essentially superstitious."23

In contrast, Professor Matthews allocates primacy in terms of subject matter: "Different truths are comprehended by the mind of man in different ways. We perceive most truths that we deal with in mortality through our natural senses, but certain truths necessary to the redemption of our souls we perceive only by revelation through the Holy Ghost. We comprehend these truths not by intellectual activity alone but through spiritual discernment." 24

Like Professor Matthews, I of course also reject Adler's suggestion that every religious belief or practice that runs counter to what he calls "the truths of science" is a superstition that must be surrendered. The world of religion clearly has its superstitions, but, just as clearly, the world of science has its invalid theories and its erroneous proofs. just as superstition can masquerade as religious truth, so can scientific theories and erroneous proofs masquerade as scientific fact. As one Latter-day Saint commentator has noted:

"Science is wonderful -as far as it goes. But scientific theories come and go, almost always marked by wrangling between factions. This is the very nature of scientific theorizing, an inescapable part. It seems to me critical that we keep this limitation firmly in mind, lest science become something that could 'deceive even the very elect.' Commenting on those students at BYU who lost, or abandon, their testimonies because of the neat 'ascent of man' schematic of twenty years ago (now in complete disarray, as the Leakey-Johanson debate shows), Nibley laments, 'It is sad to think how many of those telling points that turned some of our best students away from the gospel have turned out to be dead wrong!" 25

Many of the casualties that occur along the contested boundary line between science and religion result from one or another contestant trying to occupy and control terrain beyond the borders of his own experience - religionists who pronounce on science or scientists who pronounce on religion. In my view, both kinds of extraterritoriality are unseemly.
I remember vividly the resentment I felt when a prominent actor, invited to Brigham Young University to share insights about the arts, lectured his BYU audience on the air pollution being caused by the university's coal-fired heating plant. I feel the same way whenever anyone uses prominence acquired in one field of learning or accomplishment to magnify the volume or prominence of his pronouncements in another field.

All experts are tempted to claim expertise beyond their territory, like the legal scholar someone described as an expert on British law when he was in the United States and an expert on United States law when he was in Britain. Whoever presumes to use an expertise acquired in one field as a basis for authoritative pronouncements in another implies a unity of principles between fields that is easily assumed but rarely demonstrated.

The approach of distinguishing between secular and spiritual learning is a familiar one. It is the basis for my frequent references to revelation's being essential to learning about the things of God. It is, of course, clear that the categories are not mutually exclusive (revelation being possible for secular learning, and reason being essential for spiritual learning). Still, it is true that we comprehend secular truths predominantly by study and reason and spiritual truths finally only by revelation.

3. Sequential

Another relationship between reason and revelation in the acquisition of sacred knowledge has been described by modern revelation. That relationship is sequential. Study and reason come first. Revelation comes second.

We see this in Oliver Cowdery's attempt to translate ancient records. After he failed, the Lord told him this was because he "took no thought," but only asked God. He should have studied it out in his mind and then asked if it was right. Only after he applied himself to study and reason would the Lord affirm or deny the correctness of the proposed translation. And only on receiving that revelation could the text be written, because, the Lord said, "you cannot write that which is sacred save it be given you from me." (D&C 9:7-9.)

This revelation teaches that in the acquisition of knowledge about the things of God, reason is not an alternative to revelation. Study and reason can find the truth on many of these subjects, but only revelation can confirm it. Study and reason are a means to an end, and the end is revelation from God.

This sequential relationship is somewhat comparable to a science-based procedure I learned as a young man. I worked as an engineer in a small broadcasting station. I was licensed to operate the radio transmitter. I learned that the startup sequence for the final stage of the amplifiers was critical. First, we applied the power to the filaments of the vacuum tubes. These filaments, similar to the coil in an incandescent light bulb, reached their operating temperature and condition in about thirty seconds. Only then could we safely turn the switch for the high voltage supply that put the transmitter's amplified
signal "on the air." Each step was essential, and each had to occur in the proper sequence. Otherwise, there would be no radio signal, and the vacuum tubes could even suffer serious damage.

This radio analogy can be applied to the receiving mechanism provided to each of us by our Creator. First we warm up the mechanism with study and reason. Then we apply for the power of revelation in order to obtain the desired communication.

**Reason and Revelation in Sequence**

In the sequential relationship between reason and revelation, it is important that reason have what we can call "the first word" and that revelation have "the last word."

In this sequence, reason can "study it out" and formulate a proposed solution. In addition, as we seek confirmation or other guidance from revelation, reason can serve as a threshold check to screen out revelation that is counterfeit and to provide a tentative authentication of revelation that is genuine. This is necessary because, just as there is reasoning that is faulty, so also there is revelation that is spurious.

In an important teaching about spiritual gifts, the early members of the restored church were cautioned to beware lest they be deceived. (D&C 46:8.) The Lord identified the sources of deception: "That ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils." (D&C 46:7.)

Elder Boyd K. Packer explains: "Not all inspiration comes from God (see D&C 46:7). The evil one has the power to tap into those channels of revelation and send conflicting signals which can mislead and confuse us. There are promptings from evil sources which are so carefully counterfeited as to deceive even the very elect (see Matthew 24:24)."

As a result, we need reason to authenticate revelation. Then, once it is authenticated, true revelation can be communicated through its various forms and perform its various functions.

By this means and in this sequence, reason screens revelation and revelation confirms or overrules reason. As concerns sacred knowledge, it is just as important for reason to have the first word as it is for revelation to have the last word. I believe this is one meaning of the Lord's command for his people to "seek learning, even by study and also by faith." (D&C 88:118.)

**Reason Authenticates Revelation**

There are at least three tests that reason can apply as a threshold check on the authenticity of revelation. True revelation will pass all three of these tests, and spurious revelation (whose source is "of men" or "of devils") will fail at least one of them.
1. *True revelation will edify the recipient.* It must therefore be in words that are coherent or in a feeling whose message can be understood by one who is spiritually receptive.

The apostle Paul taught this principle to those who were comparing the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy. "Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts," he instructed them, "seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.... Let all things be done unto edifying." (1 Cor. 14:12, 26.)

In a modern revelation given to instruct the Saints how to distinguish between the Lord's revelations and those given by the "false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world" (D&C 50:2), the Lord declared: "That which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness" (vs. 23). Similarly, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that members should "not speak in tongues except there be an interpreter present." Babblings and other incoherent communications cannot be revelations from God.

The test of edification as a way of screening out spurious and deceptive revelations from Satan was reaffirmed in a succeeding revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith. This revelation also specifies the related tests of prayerfulness, contrite spirit, meek language, compliance with gospel ordinances, and refraining from being physically "overcome":

"And again, I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations - wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances."

"He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances. And again, he that trembleth under my power shall be made strong, and shall bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom, according to the revelations and truths which I have given you. And again, he that is overcome and bringeth not forth fruits, even according to this pattern, is not of me." (D&C 52:14-18.)

To apply these tests to evaluate and authenticate revelation or inspiration, the recipient must obviously use the techniques of study and reason.

2. *The content of a true revelation must be consistent with the position and responsibilities of the person who receives it.* The Lord taught this principle to the infant church in a revelation that explained to Oliver Cowdery that no one was appointed to receive commandments and revelations for the entire church except the Prophet Joseph Smith, "for all things must be done in order." Revelations being received by a member, Hiram Page, were the deceptions of Satan, "for, behold, these things have not been appointed unto him." (D&C 28:13, 12.)

A few months later, another revelation reaffirmed to the elders of the Church that "commandments and revelations" for the Church would be received only by the prophet the Lord had appointed, and that "none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him." Those selected by the Lord to exercise this gift would "come in at the gate and be ordained as I have told you before" - thus excluding the possibility of secret
callings or appointments to receive revelation. "And this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments; and this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me." (D&C 43:2-7.)

According to these principles, revelations for a ward come to the bishop; for the family, to its head; for the person, to him or her directly. A neighbor does not receive revelations for a neighbor, and one who has not been publicly called and set apart according to the government and procedures of the Church does not receive revelations to command or guide the Church or any group of its members. One of the surest evidences of false revelations (those based on mortal authorship or devilish intervention) is that their content, judged according to reason, is communicated through channels other than those the Lord has prescribed for that subject.

3. True revelation must be consistent with the principles of the gospel as revealed in the scriptures and the teachings of the prophets. The Lord will not give revelations that will contradict the principles of the gospel. His house is a house of order.

Revelations may add to the body of existing gospel knowledge ("line upon line, precept upon precept" - D&C 98:12), guide leaders in the duties of their callings, or assist individual members in applying gospel principles to particular circumstances. Personally or through his designated spokesman, the Lord may change the ordinances and practices of his church. The Savior personally revoked the law of offerings and sacrifices by the shedding of blood (3 Ne. 15:3-9), and commanded his people to offer the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (3 Ne. 9:19-20; D&C 59:8). Peter received a revelation informing him that the gospel should now be preached to the gentiles. (Acts 10.) Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were directed to introduce and practice the principle of plural marriage, and Wilford Woodruff was directed to withdraw it. But the Lord will not give individual members revelations that will contradict the doctrines of his church or the instructions given through his leaders. President Spencer W. Kimball said, "If one does receive revelations, which one may expect if he is worthy, they will always be in total alignment with the program of the Church; they will never be counter." 28

**Limits on Reason's Evaluations**

While reason can appropriately evaluate some aspects of revelation, its function should be limited to the threshold determination of the genuineness or authenticity (source) of a revelation. If the test of reason goes beyond this, it can become a check upon the acceptability of God's commands. Thus, when the apostle Paul taught the Athenians about the Resurrection, some mocked him, apparently because they believed that the conclusions of reason were not to be challenged. (Acts 17:32.) In that view, which is common among those who are skilled at study and reason, philosophy holds mastery over prophecy, reason over revelation.
Just as we must put limits to the use of reason as a check on revelation, we should also recognize the inherent limitations on the use of reason to evaluate the behavior of persons acting in response to revelation. As Elder Boyd K. Packer has observed, "There is no such thing as an accurate, objective history of the Church without consideration of the spiritual powers that attend this work." If we try to evaluate faith-motivated behavior solely in rational terms, we distort reality. Some writings in Mormon history make that mistake.

President Gordon B. Hinckley commented on this kind of distortion in answering criticism that the Church is opposed to reason and rational thought in the writing of its history. "They have failed to realize that religion is as much concerned with the heart as it is with the intellect," he observed. "Those who criticize us have lost sight of the glory and wonder of this work. In their cultivated faultfinding, they do not see the majesty of the great enrolling of this cause. They have lost sight of the spark that was kindled in Palmyra and which is now lighting fires of faith across the earth in many lands and in many languages. Wearing the spectacles of humanism, they fail to realize that spiritual emotions, with recognition of the influence of the Holy Spirit, had as much to do with the actions of our forebears as did the processes of the mind."

In short, what Church leaders have opposed in the writing of Church history is not the use of reason but the omission of revelation.

**Revelation Outranks Reason**

Just as reason has the first word in matters of sacred knowledge, so revelation has the last word. We cannot know the things of God without the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2:11.) As President Harold B. Lee said, "The revelations of God are the standards by which we measure all learning, and if anything squares not with the revelations, then we may be certain that it is not truth." I believe this is what the Book of Mormon prophet meant when he said, "To be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God." (2 Ne. 9:29.)

Those who apply themselves to study and reason about sacred things, but then omit or reject the outcome of the sovereign second step of revelation, can be like the priests whom the prophet Abinadi denounced for "perverting the ways of the Lord" because they had not "applied [their] hearts to understanding." (Mosiah 12:26-27.) Speaking of such persons, the Lord said, "They perceive not the light and ... turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men." (D&C 45:29.)

**Conclusion**

We are commanded to seek learning by study, the way of reason, and by faith, the way that relies on revelation. Both are pleasing to God. He uses both ways to reveal light and
knowledge to his children. But when it comes to a knowledge of God and the principles of his gospel, we must give primacy to revelation because that is the Lord's way.

Latter-day Saints are fond of quoting the Prophet Joseph Smith's statement, "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge."32 This is sometimes used to suggest that the pursuit of knowledge is, by itself, a saving activity, and that all men must learn all things in order to be saved. That was not what the Prophet said. In context, it is clear that his statement referred to a particular kind of knowledge, gained in a particular way.

In the last part of the sentence quoted above, the Prophet explains that without knowledge, a man "will be brought into captivity" by some evil spirit with "more knowledge, and consequently more power." The next sentence concludes the thought: "Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God."33 This statement identifies the kind of knowledge that saves and the ultimate method we must follow to obtain it.

Study and reason also have an important role in learning the things of God. Seekers begin by studying the word of God and the teachings of his servants and by trying to understand them by the techniques of reason. Reason can authenticate revelation and inspiration by measuring them against the threshold tests of edification, position, and consistency with gospel principles. But reason has no role in evaluating the content of revelation in order to accept or reject it according to some supposed standard of reasonableness. Revelation has the final word.

Unfortunately, some who are adept at acquiring knowledge by reason reject the method of revelation. As men learned that they could acquire knowledge by reason, such as by observation and experimentation, some fell into the logical fallacy of concluding that knowledge could be acquired only by this means. Their intellectual descendants persist to this day, rejecting the reality of whatever they cannot measure by their methods.

In contrast, the Lord has declared that "no man knoweth of [God's] ways save it be revealed unto him." Jacob 4:8.) And he has outlined the requirements for learning by revelation: having faith, being humble, seeking by prayer, keeping the commandments, repenting of sins, doing good works, and reading the scriptures. Those who are able to learn by this method may qualify for what could be called the ultimate revelation.

In modern revelation God has promised that "the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed.... from the foundation of the world" (the fulness of the gospel) are to be "given by the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, that knoweth all things." (D&C 35:18-19). That is the ultimate revelation. It will come by the Holy Spirit, not by scholarly study or by mortal reasoning. When it comes, it will reveal to those who fear God and serve him "all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of [God's] kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come." (D&C 76:7.) "Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things." (D&C 101:32.) In that day, as foreseen by Isaiah, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." (Isa. 11:9; 2 Ne. 21:9; also see D&C 84:98.)
Those who receive this revelation are described: "Their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught. For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will - yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man." (D&C 76:9-10.)

After they received the great revelation on the three degrees of glory, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon wrote these inspired words: "Great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him." (D&C 76:114-16.)

In an inspired utterance, the Prophet Joseph Smith described the Lord's "pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints." (D&C 121 33 - ) Such is the fruit of revelation, the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Such is the heritage of the faithful who "seek learning, even by study and also by faith." (D&C 88:118.)

NOTES


12. Obert C. Tanner, One Man's Search (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1989), 151.


21. Ibid., 112.

22. Robert J. Matthews, A Bible! A Bible! (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 165, 162.


24. Matthews, A Bible! A Bible!. 162.


32. Smith, Teachings, 217.

33. Ibid. Also see D&C 130:19.