

# *The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Mormon*

by

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The first challenge in writing an article about the Holy Spirit is the question of where to start. Where does an eternal circle begin? One might start with the ancient past, or the promising future, or the complex present. Happily, the Book of Mormon provides a spiritual gold mine with a brief but sublime portrait of the Holy Spirit. Readers can see the personhood of God's Spirit, beginning at 1N 3: 38 (LDS 1N 11: 1).

The background is simply that Lehi the father has enjoyed numerous visions, and his son is pondering the age-old question of "Why can't I have what others have?" The answer Nephi receives, based on his faith, is one of the most profound and informative experiences in the entire Book of Mormon.

Nephi is "caught" or lifted away by the Spirit of the Lord. The trip itself is not explained. Perhaps it passed in the blink of an eye. In any event, Nephi finds himself on a majestically high mountain. The location suggests the content of the vision: height, in all its purity and splendor.

There is no immediate description of the "Spirit of the Lord." The more workable approach is to tabulate all that the Spirit does: a) takes Nephi to an unusual location, b) asks questions, c) praises God and d) narrates a vision. These are personal actions. If the Spirit were a cloud of cosmic feeling, He would not be likely to accomplish all of this so smoothly.

Nephi makes it clear that he sees a divine being "in the form of a man" (1N 3: 30, LDS 11: 11). The Spirit is given masculine pronouns here, just as the Comforter Jesus introduces in John 14 is "He," not "it." The evidence seems persuasive that the Holy Spirit is fully a person, as virtually every reference to Him in the New Testament verifies. The Holy Spirit may not have a "body of flesh and bones," but as a "personage of Spirit" (LDS Doctrine and Covenants 130: 22) can still appear, smile, discuss and embrace.

This article is about the Holy Spirit and His ministry, but two paragraphs can be dedicated to the complexity of Father-Son-Spirit. It is sad to see so many Protestant websites and writings try to emphasize every possible difference between "traditional" Christian views and "Mormon" views of the Godhead, as if one side knows everything about God and the other side is hopelessly at sea. These fussy presentations are both uncharitable and inaccurate. Both sides agree that Jesus now has a resurrected body, one that can sit next to the Father in heaven or visit

believers on earth. The Father's body or lack of one is where the pretense of "our side knows everything" develops a thousand cracks in the facade. There are far more scriptures speaking of the Father's very real body than there are scriptures about the Father being invisible or "a spirit," which is generally read as "only a spirit and nothing but a spirit," words that are simply not in the Biblical text. An omnipotent being could surely be invisible at times and visible when that is desired. No human being knows every detail about the body of the Father. Terms like "body of flesh and bone" would still allow the Father to go anywhere instantly and pass through concrete walls. There is room for an element of mystery in the divine existence. Similarly for the Holy Spirit, there is no ten-page definition of what a body "of Spirit" can or cannot do. Nephi's experience presents a Spirit of the Lord who can appear in a very convincing body with a very convincing voice.

The term "Trinity" is from the Greek *Trinitas* and simply means "three" or "the state of being threefold." It does not demand a group of three isotimic (equal) beings. Therefore, there should not be such a huge upset in referring to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as a Trinity or Triad or council of three beings who are God. Similarly, the term Godhead (*Theotes* in Greek as it appears in Colossians 2:9) is excellent New Testament language that nobody needs to run away from. In short, one can study the ministry of the Holy Spirit without endless quibbling about traditional understandings of the Trinity, a term this article will use sparingly.

Being a "personage of Spirit" does not mean the Holy Spirit is impersonal. In fact, any dictionary will inform the reader that a "personage" is a "person." As will soon be apparent in this study, much of what the Holy Spirit does is highly personal in the Book of Mormon, as well as in the New Testament.

In the Old World, it required many decades for the early fathers to agree on how best to discuss the Holy Spirit. Athanasius seemed to realize that his vocal defense of Jesus as fully God meant that the Holy Spirit would need a defense of the same nature. The Cappadocian fathers were more detailed in their reasoning that each member of the Godhead is fully God. By the time of the first Council of Constantinople in 381 A. D., those present were willing to acknowledge the Holy Spirit by saying "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life Giver, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is together worshiped and together glorified, who spoke through the prophets." One does not have to agree with every last syllable of this creed to grasp the essential respect it accords the Spirit and His personhood.

One of the reasons why many Christians drift toward thinking of the Holy Spirit as impersonal and an "it" is the frequent reference in scripture to the Spirit's being "poured out" or "dwelling in" a person. These two works of ministry do not seem personal. However, in the prayer that Jesus offers to His Father in the gospel of John, Jesus speaks of His wish to be supportive of His apostles, "... I in them ..." (John 17: 23). So, once again the question is raised, how literally must the language of scripture be taken? If the answer is "very literally indeed," then one must ask how Jesus the Son with His body "of flesh and bones" could literally dwell inside the apostles

here on earth. If there is some leeway, some generosity of thought here, one can think of Jesus being “in the midst of” or being readily available to a believer, which would mean He is *in* that person's private zone, but not of necessity floating around inside a person's body.

The difficulty one would have with picturing Jesus as literally “in” the apostles is the same difficulty one has in picturing the Holy Spirit “in” or “inside” several million believers. Yes, the language must mean something: there is a close relationship meant. But the exact details are not explained, and some will see things one way (very literally) while others will see things more metaphorically. Either way, Jesus remains a person and the Holy Spirit remains a person.

It is an interesting fact that the Holy Spirit is referenced with masculine pronouns throughout the Quran.

There are two significant passages in the Book of Mormon, in addition to the “presence of the Spirit” passage cited above, which argue for the full personhood of the Holy Spirit. At 2N 1: 123 (LDS 2N 4: 20), Lehi urges his sons to be faithful (to the great Mediator, meaning Christ) and choose eternal life, “according to the will of His Holy Spirit.” How can the Holy Spirit have a will unless He is fully a person? A divine tape recorder or a mist of spiritual feeling would not have a “will.” Similarly, in his sermon at Alma 5: 23 (LDS 7: 13), Alma states flatly, “The Spirit knows all things.” That is a rather sweeping statement. A divine tape recorder would not “know” everything, nor would a mist of spiritual feeling. A living being would “know” things, and a divine person alone would be in a position to “know all things.” The theology of the Book of Mormon supports the personhood of the Holy Spirit.

In a similar vein, there are numerous times in scripture when the Holy Spirit does not appear bodily, but “the voice of the Spirit” is heard, or “the hand of God” is referenced. Many commentators see the hand of God (*yod* in Hebrew) as a clear reference to the Spirit of God. The lesson here would seem to be that there are varieties of ways in which God's Spirit appears or speaks or touches human beings.

Many a scripture mentions a person or group being “filled with the Spirit” with little or no detail on how precisely one is filled, or what is left of one's agency if every inch of one's being is “filled” with another being. In the New Testament more than one term is used to denote filling by the Spirit. Luke speaks often of being filled by the Spirit, but uses the same verb to speak of being filled with emotion, fear, amazement and jealousy. As an alternative to having the Spirit live inside millions of believers twenty-four hours a day (and still get His other duties performed), one might want to consider “filled” meaning “blessed.” God's divine energy can be everywhere and in everyone, blessings can linger, but surely the Holy Spirit needs to be free to go where He wishes.

A related concern is the large number of names that seem to identify the Holy Spirit. Many a reader will already be asking, “What is all of this talk of the Holy Spirit? Our denomination speaks more readily of the Holy Ghost.” Some readers will already know that as the King James Bible was being put together (the early 1600s), the Greek term *pneuma* could be translated as “ghost” or “spirit” or “breath.” Whether “Holy Ghost” or

“Holy Spirit” was the outcome in various passages, the underlying noun was always *pneuma* in the Greek. As the decades rolled by, the English term “ghost” began to lose its meaning as a living being or the soul of a person. In these two senses, “spirit” won out. Still, in the 1830s the term “Holy Ghost” was in use for Biblical discussion. Both terms appear in the Book of Mormon text. As the years have gone by and new Bible translations have appeared, the older term “Holy Ghost” is almost always changed to “Holy Spirit.” The New King James translation is extremely faithful to the older King James text, but “Holy Ghost” has been replaced throughout with “Holy Spirit.” The Holy Ghost is the Holy Spirit, but the older term continues to lose ground.

Regarding names, the formula “Spirit of” plus a noun (as in “Spirit of Truth”) is a typical way that the Holy Spirit is named, often with an eye toward a particular type of ministry. One obvious exception is the term “Comforter,” found in the Book of Mormon only at Moroni 8: 29 (LDS 8: 26). This frequently reminds one of John's term “another Comforter,” found at John 14: 16. Since there is little reason to conclude that Mormon would be thinking of John's Greek term, *parakletos*, one might be better advised to consider the Hebraic term *gibbor*, as at Psalm 19: 5, where that word is used in describing a “strong man.” In the Greek, a *parakletos*, called to the side of a defendant in court, is there to strengthen and support that defendant (believer). Also see “The Holy Spirit as Comforter,” below.

Because Isaiah 11: 2 is quoted in Second Nephi, the Book of Mormon has the Isaian list of six names of endowment, or descriptions of how the “Spirit of the Lord” will rest on and minister to “the Branch,” meaning Christ. All six of these titles of ministry are significant, and need to be listed here as names for the Spirit: the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, the Spirit of Might (or Strength), the Spirit of Knowledge and the Spirit of Reverence (“fear of the Lord” in King James wording). As these names are meaningful, and some will appear in the discussion of Spirit ministries presented below, it makes sense to consider each of the six separately and briefly. Bear in mind that Isaiah 11:2 is found at 2N 9: 117 (LDS 2N 21: 2).

**SPIRIT OF WISDOM.** In this context, wisdom refers to the ability of distinguishing differences. Wisdom relates to a mental choice of which of two things would be the better to have, or avoid. In this article there is no reference to the “wisdom” material in the Old Testament.

**SPIRIT OF UNDERSTANDING.** Here, understanding relates to seeing and comprehending specific things, and specific courses of action. This is like wisdom, but narrower in scope. If wisdom is the pond, understanding is the carefully managed outflow. The Book of Mormon presents a triangular relationship of understanding, faith and expanding the human mind.

**SPIRIT OF COUNSEL.** Some commentators see this role as connected to the development of excellent strategies. When the Holy Spirit is doing the counseling, He is in essence performing the task of being a divine Adviser.

**SPIRIT OF STRENGTH,** or in King James terminology, “might.” The thought here is not so much being physically strong as being strong in heart, a quality the Spirit will readily share with believers. This name has to do

with standing by a moral judgment, and can be related to Psalm 51: 10 – “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right (steadfast) spirit within me.” The Holy Spirit is ready to strengthen and bolster the believer's good decisions.

**SPIRIT OF KNOWLEDGE.** This name is less about how much one knows – how many facts are in one's head or books in one's library – as in the priorities of knowing. The first challenge is to *know* God. The believer cannot search God's mind, but the Holy Spirit can, and willingly shares this divine wisdom with the believer. As Paul says in 1Cor 2: 10, “God has revealed (mysterious things) to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.” There is also a need to know God's created order, which helps one to teach, a resulting gift. Consider this verse from Mosiah, with emphasis added. Mosiah 9: 59 (LDS 18: 26) says, “The priests were not to depend upon the people for their support, but for their labor they were to receive the *grace* of God, that they might wax strong in the *Spirit*, having the **knowledge** of God, that they might **teach** with power and authority from God.” One good attribute strengthens the next.

**SPIRIT OF REVERENCE.** This name has to do with honoring God, which expands to various ways of worshiping Him. A number of poems that reverence God are found in the Book of Mormon. One can see a distinct role for the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Reverence in Jarom's account of the faithful of his era having “communion with the Holy Spirit.” (Jarom 1: 9, LDS 1: 4)

Beyond simply reviewing a list of names for the Spirit, this article will look at eight aspects of ministry that can be grouped under eight of these functional or ministerial duties. The downside of such a list is what it omits. There will be many who object, saying, “Why not speak more about the Spirit of Christ?” or “Couldn't you stretch things a bit and elaborate on how the Spirit could easily be termed the Spirit of Hope?” Of course one could go on and on, as the field is heavy with fruit, but there are space limitations. Perhaps the best advice would be this: start with what is here, and consider adding to it with one's own book, if one is so led.

## The Spirit of Regeneration

The tradition of many centuries has encouraged students of the Spirit, or pneumatologists, to expect a minimum of two roles for the Holy Spirit. He must take the lead in regeneration, and His part in sanctification merits a careful examination. That being the case, this article will look at both subjects, which are indeed special labors of the Spirit.

A study of regeneration should start with a definition of the term and (in this case) two key scriptures from the New Testament before the doctrine is considered in the Book of Mormon. Regeneration (or being born again) can be defined as a halt to one's moral drifting, combined with rethinking life's purpose and deliberately moving toward new and saintlier goals. In Titus Chapter 3 one finds a clear explanation of regeneration (*palingenesia* in the Greek), with some helpful context:

... according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit ...

The language is simpler in the gospel of John.

John 3: 5

Jesus answered ... unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Thus there is a needful event in the life of the Christian (if not others as well) that can be termed regeneration, being made new (“renewing”), born of the Spirit, or (often in the Book of Mormon) a change of heart. This born-again event sounds highly important, yet it is not much discussed in either the New Testament or the Book of Mormon. Also, since this event sounds a good deal like baptism, there has been a tendency to merge the two. Most Christian scholars would separate regeneration from baptism, but allow that the experience of being “born of the Spirit” may occur before one seeks baptism, at that very time, or after being baptized.

The word “regeneration” is not found in the Book of Mormon, but the concept is clearly there, most often in conjunction with Alma the Second and what he experiences and teaches. To have genuine clarity, it will be necessary to review the life of this man and his own understanding, based in part on what he was taught during a near-death experience.

Alma the Second grew up in a loving home with a father who headed the church of his day, a church of anticipation that looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. As Alma the First taught baptism and emphasized it, there is little doubt but that he urged his children to be baptized in their earlier years. Yet the record in Mosiah states of Alma the Second and his peers, “They would not be baptized, neither would they join the church” (Mos 11: 108, LDS 26: 4). Worse than that, this rising generation with hardened hearts “deceived many with their flattering words.” The younger Alma continued in his rebellion until he was confronted by an angel. So powerful are the words of the confronting angel that Alma falls into a state of unconsciousness. By putting together Alma's various descriptions of what was happening with his spirit, it is apparent that the modern term “near-death experience” would fit. At a minimum Alma chooses to leave the dark abyss where he initially finds himself, which he can do solely because of the *mercy* of Christ (Alma 17: 9-18, LDS 36: 11 - 20). The implication is that Alma spoke with the Holy Spirit and learned things he should have learned on his own, years earlier. But however Alma learned these new things, he quickly shares them when his spirit and body come together and he can rise to speak to those around him. Take note of his first few words: “I have repented of my sins and have been redeemed of the Lord ... I am born of the Spirit” (Mos 11: 186, LDS 27: 24).

Alma the Second makes it clear that *everyone* needs this rebirth: all persons must be “born of God, *changed* (a term Alma will use repeatedly) from their carnal and fallen state ... being redeemed of God, becoming His sons and daughters, and thus they become new creatures” (Mos 11: 188, LDS 27: 26). Those words certainly did mark a change, coming from a

deceptive word-magician and a disgrace to his family. But the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Second Chances, and Alma's confession that he had been “born of God” shows the reader that being born again *can* happen before baptism.

The Holy Spirit champions this rebirth. The terms “Spirit” and “born again” also come together at Alma 5: 24, LDS 7: 14.

In his future sermons Alma will often refer to a “change of heart,” and such an experience is implied over and over.

There is another way to express this: major changes in human lives (for the better) are more the product of the Holy Spirit than they are the result of self-improvement programs. Yes, some people pull themselves up by a rope: they may be failing to notice that their rope *is* the Holy Spirit (Ignatius to the Ephesians 2: 11-12).

In both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, there is a strong emphasis on the vital nature of regeneration, but little detail on specifics and a tendency to merge this concept into the familiar faith-repentance-baptism pattern. It may be easier for many to emphasize Alma's “change of heart” approach and remember that the Spirit of Regeneration is ready to aid the believer with significant personal changes.

Also not addressed is this highly important question: can non-Christians experience regeneration? Can a faithful follower of Islam see a new light within his own religious pathway? Can a modern-day secularist have a change of heart and devote his/her life to helping the poor? Would such a change or moral renewing happen with or without the Spirit's blessing? Many are the mysteries of God.

### The Spirit of Sanctification

The noun sanctification refers to a setting apart for a special purpose, and may also refer to purity or making one (at some point in life) pure, even as Christ is pure. As a Christian doctrine, sanctification is associated with the Holy Spirit on the basis of such scriptures as 1Peter 1: 2 and Romans 15: 16, where the Spirit is clearly pictured as the agent of sanctification. However, there is often deep misunderstanding as to what is meant by the verb “sanctify” and the noun “sanctification.” Far too many people associate sanctification with perfection and some type of prideful claim to holiness. Sanctification does *not* mean working as hard as one can, doing everything right and committing no errors, so that (many arduous years later) one may finally be given a room in heaven. This is not what is taught in either the New Testament or the Book of Mormon.

There is widespread agreement that sanctification (or being pure, as the Book of Mormon often puts it) can best be considered as having three elements, each of which is blessed by the Spirit. First, there is initial or positional sanctification, in which one is set apart from a sinful past. This could easily equate with deciding to join a church. When Alma the Second speaks of those “brought into this church” (the context suggests “recently”) “having been sanctified by the Holy Spirit,” the meaning seems to be their initial response to the call for repentance (Alma 3: 95, LDS 5: 54).

Second, there is progressive sanctification, which refers to living one's life as one accepts God's ongoing grace, relies on faith and tries to live a

decent life. The scriptures are quite plain in saying that no one expects total and complete sinlessness. At James 3:2 one reads, “in many things we offend all,” which the Living Bible offers as “we all make many mistakes.” John says it well with these words: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (First John 1: 8). How often does the Book of Mormon call those already converted to repent anew and move toward purity. Notice the auxiliary *may* indicating ongoing possibility in this phrasing: “Come to Me and be baptized in My name, that you *may be* sanctified by the reception of the Holy Spirit” (3N 12: 33, LDS 27: 20). The faithful, gold-standard Christian is usually not a one-day creation. This second step of purity is a clear-eyed recognition that believers are a work in progress.

Third, there is ultimate sanctification, which most commentators see as a purifying that belongs to the next world. This is the hope of Zion, that through the blessing of the Holy Spirit there will be a people who see eye to eye and have no contention among them. Mormon knew that sin and failure were all around him, yet he could write to his son an affirmation of this unyielding hope, “that when He will appear, we will be like Him ... that we may have this hope, that we may be purified, even as He *is pure*.”

Sanctification at every turn is a gift from the Holy Spirit, each step taken in gratitude, and should never be an excuse for intolerance, or firewood for critically blaming others who have not followed every rule.

Because so many people twist this doctrine into a works theology, one verse in particular must be explored. Thousands have stumbled if not fallen when they have heard these words: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (word for word from King James, with the exception of turning “which” to “who”). The Book of Mormon record of Jesus' speech is not much different: “... therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven, is perfect” (3N 5: 92, LDS 12: 48). This follows the 1830 text, other than “which” being there in place of “who”).

So, are these words about perfection (readable as “completely pure” or “sanctified”) an invitation to work, work, work, defeat every sin, repent five times a day and work some more? Hopefully they are not, and here are four approaches that offer slightly different comprehensions of this famous instruction to believers. First, in the New Testament the word for “perfect” as used here is *teleios*, and it refers to completing something. Hence, another reading here would be, “Seek to be completely good in a determined way.”

Second, the gospel of Luke offers a parallel to the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, and this very portion of the sermon is given in Luke. Curiously, the word *teleios* is dropped. As Luke presents the passage, the words are “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6: 36). So, for Luke, the call is for mercy, not perfection as the modern reader understands perfection. This is compatible with the first approach, as being “completely good” would surely make one “merciful.”

Third, the Book of Mormon student must always consider that Nephite is a form of Hebrew, and in all likelihood Jesus referenced the Hebrew scriptures rather than discussing any Greek terms. His words in Third Nephi



seem to reflect Deuteronomy 18: 13 with its “Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.” Here the term *tamim*, standing behind the English “perfect,” can be understood in different ways. Commentator F. C. Grant suggests this alternative: “You are to be honest, sincere, complete and whole in your integrity with the Lord your God.” Thus, “have sincere integrity” would be another way to express the term “perfect.”

Fourth, one can stand back a little and look at the entire sermon. What is a prominent subtheme of what Jesus is saying? To be sure, the word “faith” does not come along until 3N 6: 8 (LDS 13: 30), some thirty verses after the key text, but isn't the entire sermon really about faith? Why would one follow all of these precepts – watch one's language, avoid any form of lust, turn the other cheek, give the man who sues you more than he wants – unless one has *faith* in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (3N 5:33 – 38, LDS 11: 32 – 36)? Therefore, at the point that one is asked to be perfect or complete, and one asks “Be complete in what?” there is a logical response. One should be completely (perfectly) faithful to God, who is always faithful to His followers. Seen in this way, the Sermon on the Mount is a faith or grace theology.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Sanctification. He does not simply demand that believers become pure and spotless instantly, but instead labors with His creation, supporting, edifying and pointing human beings to a land of grace where the saints above are praying for the repentant ones below.

### The Spirit of Revelation

The terms “revelation” and “prophecy” are related, and often used together in the Book of Mormon. Briefly, a revelation is a disclosure of something not known, with (in a religious context) the source being God. More often than not, revelation deals with the present and the past, and may bring positive or negative information. Prophecy, to be associated with the Holy Spirit, has to do with delivering an inspired message or warning. Prophecy is typically about the future, but it can include a warning of an imminent danger (present time). Because of space limitations, this section will focus on the title or name “Spirit of Revelation,” found at least nine times in the Book of Mormon and at best once in the Bible. However, even without the name, few religious commentators would deny that the Holy Spirit is often involved in revealing things.

Early in the Book of Mormon, one sees the Holy Spirit manifesting or revealing information to his chosen vessels. Consider 1N1: 49 (LDS 2: 17) and its wording: “I spoke to Sam, telling him the things which the Lord had manifested to me by His Holy Spirit.” Is there any real difficulty in referring to this as the Holy Spirit working as the Spirit of Revelation?

Most editions of the Book of Mormon have stayed with smaller case letters with such terms as “the spirit of revelation” and “the spirit of prophecy.” This choice has led some detail-oriented folk to say, “Oh that lower case means we are definitely not talking about the Spirit, who gets a capital S.” Perhaps so, but if the spirit of revelation is something quite apart from the Holy Spirit, what then is it? Can such a “spirit” easily be described? Is the spirit of revelation a half-personal, half-energetic field of

divine essence, much like a lightning bolt thrown by Zeus? Why not try this approach: such terms as the Spirit of Revelation identify the Holy Spirit as He works with and blesses His servants in specific ways. The word “succinct” comes to mind.

In one of his early sermons, known to some as his Arms of Mercy Sermon (Alma 3: 3-108, LDS 5: 3 – 62), Alma the Second makes a number of bold statements, including his affirmation that the Messiah will come. Alma defends his words by saying, “I do know of myself that they are true, for the Lord has made them manifest to me by His Holy Spirit, and this is the Spirit of Revelation who is in me” or “with me,” as one might prefer to render the preposition. Has Alma not made the case that the Holy Spirit = the Spirit of Revelation?

Admittedly the term “Spirit of Revelation” is not far afield from the “Spirit of Prophecy,” and they are often put together in the Book of Mormon text, with neither term needing to be first. At times the second “Spirit of” is dropped, again suggesting closeness.

It is the nature of God to reveal Himself, and there are very few limitations on how He does so. The believer is well advised to honor the Holy Spirit as Revealer, and come to an understanding of His great love for each individual.

### The Spirit of Prophecy

In the section above the case has been made that many if not most of the spirit + noun terms relating to the Holy Spirit ought to be written as Spirit of Truth (for example), as they seem to be names or naming descriptors. They seem to describe the Holy Spirit, as opposed to describing some misty cloud of something that is not far away from the Spirit.

In Second Samuel, Chapter twenty-three, David is quoted as saying, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue” (King James translation). Modern Language translation has “spoke through me,” which seems to offer a clearer picture. Many of the prepositions can be translated a little this way or a little that way, but the point is clear: the original thought comes from the Spirit of the Lord, and the prophet or speaker of the moment is trying to relay that word. Wilf Hildebrandt in his book, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, sums this up rather well: “... the Spirit of God has a unique role in the leadership of the prophets. Through the Spirit, prophets are called, inspired, transported, motivated, and used by the (Spirit) to accomplish their difficult tasks within the nation.” Hildebrandt's words concerning ancient Israel are valid for the Book of Mormon experience. The true prophet serves the Holy Spirit.

Three passages from the Book of Mormon should underscore how the prophetic ministry is always tied to the work and goals of the Spirit, whether that is spelled out each and every time, or it is not. The first clarifying scripture is from Second Nephi 11: 5 (LDS, 25: 4) where Nephi comments in general, “... the words of Isaiah are not plain unto you, nevertheless they are plain unto all that are filled with the Spirit of Prophecy.” Here one has the familiar theme of understanding things, and the verse could easily be rendered “they (Isaiah's words) are plain to all who are *blessed by* the

Spirit of Prophecy,” or simply “blessed by the Holy Spirit.” The point seems to be that the Holy Spirit understands Isaiah and can readily share the older prophet's meaning if that is the Spirit's wish.

At the end of Alma's Chapter Four (LDS 6: 8), Mormon introduces Alma's sermon to the people of Gideon by saying that Alma spoke “... according to the Spirit of Prophecy who was with him ...” If anyone should doubt that Alma has prepared this sermon in consultation with the Holy Spirit, that concern is addressed early in the sermon (Alma 5: 17, LDS 7: 9) as Alma says, “... the Spirit has said this much to me, saying 'Repent, repent and prepare the way of the Lord.’” Rather than a complex explanation that the “spirit of prophecy” (impersonal) and the “Holy Spirit” (a person) were both there, one can more easily reduce this to the Holy Spirit's involvement (with reference to Hildebrandt's inspiring, motivating, etc.) by noting that the Spirit of Prophecy *is* the Holy Spirit.

Third, in the letter Alma writes to his son Helaman, Alma emphasizes the importance of following the commandments of God. His words are, “... I tell you by the Spirit of Prophecy ...” Is Alma not in fact referring to the Spirit of God as the divine source of Alma's words? This seems to be settled in the next letter, to the middle son, Shiblon, wherein Alma explains his source of authority. At Alma 18: 6 (LDS, 38: 6), the prophetic leader tells Shiblon, “Now my son, I would not have you think that I know these things of myself; it is the Spirit of God who is in me” (or “with me”) who “makes these things known ...”

The point being made in this section is simply this: there is no need and no gain to insist that between the Holy Spirit and His prophet there is an impersonal “spirit of prophecy” that does indirectly what the Spirit of God can do directly. What one sees over and over is the Holy Spirit at work, and there is no benefit in creating an impersonal something to block the way. If “in me” is translated “with me” and capital letters are added, there is no barrier left. The Spirit of Prophecy *is* the Holy Spirit. He is with His prophets, He is with humanity, and He is especially with those who love Him and seek His friendship.

### The Spirit as Witness

The Holy Spirit reveals, He inspires His prophets, and He serves as witness to some of the most profound experiences in human history. When Jesus finally appears in the Americas, He tells His audience, “Thus will the Father bear record of Me, and the Holy Spirit will bear record to him (the believer) of the Father and Me; for the Father and I and the Holy Spirit are one” (3N 5: 38, LDS 11: 36). If anyone doubts that to “bear record” is to be a witness, consider the words of Jesus a few verses later: “Blessed are the gentiles, because of their belief in Me and in the Holy Spirit, who witnesses to them of Me and the Father” (3N 7: 30, LDS 16: 6). All of this is utterly compatible with what the Holy Spirit inspired Nephi to write some six hundred years earlier: “... you have received the Holy Spirit, who witnesses of the Father and the Son, to the fulfilling of the promise which He has made, that if you enter by the way, you will receive” (2N 13: 26, LDS 31: 18, slightly modernized wording from the Modern English Version).

Give some thought to the implications of the Holy Spirit as Witness (another ministerial role) to both the Son and the Father. Divine things – good and wonderful things – slowly become a part of what humanity knows. The same is true in terms of witnessing evil – the Spirit makes certain that hard lessons are not forgotten.

Horrible things happen here on the earth, with the perpetrators usually wanting their foul deeds to remain dark and hidden. But there always seem to be witnesses. The truth comes out, because human witnesses speak and the divine Witness, the Spirit, sees and knows everything. It can fairly be said that God's courtroom never seems to lack the surprise witness who saw everything. Abinadi should have perished quietly in the flames, but Alma was there to tell the world what happened.

These last three roles of the Spirit – Spirit of Revelation, Spirit of Prophecy and Witness – are deeply involved in the creation of scripture. What has been revealed of God has often been written down, what has been proclaimed by the prophets has often been placed into human words, and what the Spirit shares with humanity can become “holy writ.” Thus the Holy Spirit, certain chosen writers and many books can all be witnesses, the one corroborating the many, and the many clarifying the one.

When it comes to the human writing of scripture, the Holy Spirit is not so much a dictator of phrasing as He is a coordinator of magnanimous content. He can facilitate a symphony of words, harmonized into precise and demanding wordage, only to reconduct His work with new variations on an eternal theme.

What mere mortal can keep up with all that the Spirit has to say?

In this regard, He is the Observer, Recorder and Ultrawitness *par excellence*. Dry words like dry bones are just lying there doing nothing, until the Spirit comes along and gives them life.

### The Spirit of Faith

The name “Spirit of Faith” comes to the reader from Second Corinthians 4: 13, wherein Paul mentions faith as strengthening believers so that they might give voice to their convictions. Faith has at least three key roles: it is a fruit of the Spirit, it is a spiritual gift, and it is vital to salvation. Over and over the Book of Mormon emphasizes grace from God, the decision to hold on in faith believing, and the reward awaiting the believer. Faith does not appear out of thin air – it is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

Much could be written about faith, but the space limitations of this article work against any grand tour. The emphasis here will be on Alma the Second's sermon that discusses faith, known to many as his Desire to Believe Sermon which begins at Alma 16: 129 (LDS 32: 9). In it Alma mentions three things that have a triangular relationship: faith, understanding (which can be related to the Spirit of Understanding, mentioned above in Isaiah's list of endowments) and expanding one's mind spiritually. This pattern is worth some consideration.

What one encounters in this portion of Alma is a very unsophisticated audience (the working poor among the Zoramites) giving its attention to a highly sophisticated speaker. Many a minister has reviewed this sermon

hastily and reported to the congregation, “This is a great sermon. It's easy to understand, and it compares gaining faith to planting a seed.” That summary is wrong on two counts. The sermon is complex and not easily understood in its true depth. Also, the seed Alma the Second speaks of is used to represent the word or true teaching of his church (as opposed to Zoramite teaching); the seed does not stand for faith.

Two items of background are helpful. First, the Zoramites are Nephite dissenters who have abandoned the law of Moses. The Zoramite priests teach against the coming of a Messiah, against daily prayer and apparently against any study of scripture. Reading between the lines, it seems that all the Zoramites with money dress up and go to synagogue once a week (not on a Saturday or Sunday) where they offer a rote prayer and take pride in being the only ones that God will save. All non-Zoramites are headed for perdition.

Second, Alma is almost sickened by all of this. Just after his prayerful response, one sees an early interaction of the Holy Spirit and faith. According to Alma 16: 117 (LDS, 31: 36), Alma “clapped his hands upon” or touched those who would be ministering with him. The strength that the Spirit gives these ministers is granted because Alma “prayed in *faith*” (Alma 16: 120, LDS 31: 38). Thus one can see the Spirit of Faith or, if one prefers, the Spirit who grants His blessing in response to faith.

Finally, two things are not spelled out in Alma's sermon that would almost have to be the case. The Zoramite poor have next to nothing and in all likelihood would not own scriptures of their own. One can almost picture some written scripture material being handed out as Alma speaks. Those who could not read or write would be able to meet for study with those who could. Also, Alma is saying that those listening should get their priorities straight, implying that spiritual prosperity will in due time lead to the physical prosperity they so much need. Amulek in his follow-up address comes closer to saying that than does Alma.

In fairness to Alma, this sermon was unexpected and called for the adaptation of a sermon meant for another group. The text presents the sudden arrival of a group of very poor Zoramites who have been banned from their own places of meeting – they can't afford the right clothing. Sensing that this impoverished group will respond to his message, Alma takes an already prepared sermon and makes it fit the Zoramite poor. This article cannot cover all aspects of a brilliant sermon, but will look at the faith teaching therein.

Alma has two main themes: one) the Zoramite poor should study the true word of God (compared to planting and growing a seed), and two) faith is the driving force that can give them the willingness to make this study, and fertilize the ground (each person's heart) where the good seed must grow. The two themes are not in competition, but ultimately faith gets more attention – a faith eagerly helped along by the Holy Spirit, Alma implies (Alma 16: 153, LDS 32: 28). Alma knows that studying the true word or teaching of the church will go nowhere – fall apart at the start – unless faith is there. But how does one promote faith to an audience that knows nothing about it? Just “exercise a *particle* of faith,” Alma urges. He must have seen dozens of glum faces. “Even if you can no more than *desire* to believe,” he

adds (Alma 16: 151, LDS 32: 27). This *is* going to work, not because Alma is such a convincing speaker, but because the Spirit of Faith loves these people, and stands ready to ignite that desire. The Spirit of Faith is the Spirit of First Desire, and He knows how to get things going.

It is the word accompanied by faith that enlightens the “understanding” (Alma 16: 154, LDS 32: 28), which increases “faith” (next verse) leading to minds that “begin to expand” (16: 161, LDS 32: 34). Thus, faith increases one's understanding (to which faith is closely related) and then expands the spiritual mind. The gracefully enlarged mind within the believer can then believe more and understand more – this is a wonderful circle that spirals heavenward. Nor does Alma stand in isolation when he teaches these things. In the Colossian letter beginning with 1: 4, there is “*faith* in Christ Jesus,” then the writer's prayer that the readers “might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and *spiritual understanding*” (Verse 9). This leads to “*increasing* in the *knowledge* of God” (Verse 10), which compares easily to Alma's mind that begins “to expand.”

The Spirit of Faith, here in Alma as in so many other places in the Book of Mormon, entices fledgling believers toward God's goodness and grace.

### The Spirit of Truth

Jesus *is* truth, and the apostles in John's gospel are assured that Jesus will send them the “Spirit of Truth,” who will “testify of Me” (John 15: 26). Virtually every reference to the Spirit of Truth in the New Testament comes from John, with the partial exception of Peter's reference to “obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1 Peter 1: 22). It is wise to take a moment and explore the Greek words behind “truth” and “true.” The adjective *alethes* not only means “true” but is also structured as an antonym for another term, *lanthano*, meaning “to escape notice.” Thus, the Spirit of Truth is both expressing what is real and honest, as well as making sure any number of things do not escape notice. The Spirit of Truth puts a spotlight on certain significant concepts and realities.

Of course truth is frequently mentioned in the Book of Mormon, always with the suggestion that truth is an essential part of who God is. The brother of Jared perceptively states, “I know You speak the truth, as You are a God of truth and cannot lie” (Ether 1: 75, LDS 3: 12).

The terms “Spirit” and “truth” first come together in the teaching of Jacob, son of Lehi, and his words are instructive. “... the Spirit speaks the truth, and does not lie. He speaks of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be, which things are manifested to us plainly for the salvation of our souls” (Jacob 3: 19-20, LDS 4: 13). Here the terms “Spirit ... the truth,” “really” and “manifested to us plainly” are connected. One might call this a Hebraic use of extended synonym.

The phrase “Spirit of Truth” does come into the text during the exchange between Alma the Second and Korihor. In that passage, near the middle of the book of Alma, the trial of Korihor includes a debate between Alma (now a religious leader and attending as a friend of the court) and the faithless Korihor. Alma can sense that Korihor is not an innocent who was taught the wrong things, but is instead willingly deceived and an

opportunistic liar (not the last one that the world would see). At a poignant moment, Alma tells his opponent, “I am grieved because of the hardness of your heart . . . that you will still resist the Spirit of the Truth” (Wording from 1830 text, located at Alma 16: 57, LDS 30: 46). Except for the unnecessary “the,” this is the one clear use of “Spirit of Truth” in the Book of Mormon. Alma is saying in so many words, “The truth is there if you will quit pushing it away.” The world has known many Korihors, people with their own selfish agendas and eager willingness to live in falsehood, rather than taking the advice from Proverbs 23: 23 to “buy the truth and sell it not.”

Over the many years of Christian tradition in the Old World, theories were developed about the Spirit of Truth aiding the believer in gaining confidence in and testimony of the truthfulness of scripture. Beginning with Augustine and continuing into the early Reformation era, an approach was spelled out in which the internal testimony of the Spirit (within the believer) reassured those who heard saving scripture that they were in the presence of truth. Because so much of the theological writing in the first millennium and a half was in Latin, this theory about the Spirit of Truth's work was often discussed in its Latin terminology, *testimonium Spiritus sancti internum*. This phrasing may be unfamiliar to most Restoration historians and readers, but it is clearly found at Moroni 10: 5 (LDS, same verse) wherein Moroni says that for those asking “with a sincere heart” and “having faith in Christ,” “He will manifest the *truth* of it to you by the power of the Holy Spirit.” This is exactly what was meant by earlier scholars who wrote of the *testimonium Spiritus*, although they were of course thinking about the Bible.

In ever so many ways one can perceive the Spirit of Truth as representing the Christ of Truth, the Spirit of Christ who heals with truth, and the Spirit of things as they really are. He entices all human beings to live in His world of truth, rather than a fantasy realm of poor ideas that will lead its inhabitants down the road to nowhere.

### The Holy Spirit as Comforter

One must acknowledge that there are other meaningful descriptions of the Holy Spirit to be found in the Book of Mormon, and one brief article cannot cover every possible gem that might be discovered and polished. It should be noted that both the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit are dealt with in separate articles in this book. However, *this* article needs to address what Mormon has to say about the “Comforter,” and what the term may be held to mean.

Earlier reference was made to John's gospel and the Greek term behind Comforter, which is *parakletos*. In its Roman setting the term referred to a person on trial, whose situation could be improved if an influential friend came to the side of the one in difficulty. This provides some leeway in interpretation, and various translations have chosen (for the *parakletos*) Comforter, Advocate, Defender, Champion or Helper. Clearly the underlying idea, as one can see with the “fort” part of the English word, is to give strength to the one in need. Thus, the term can be readily related to the Spirit of Strength in Isaiah's list of ministerial titles.

In his chain of virtues that Mormon lists at Moroni 8: 29 (LDS 8: 25-26) one must look carefully at where Mormon places the term Comforter. “Because of meekness and lowliness of heart” there comes the visitation of the Holy Spirit, “which Comforter” (and here the capitalized name is an appositive for “Holy Spirit” – Holy Ghost in the 1830 text) fills with “hope and perfect love” with this love (Mormon does not repeat “hope,” possibly with its area of blessing carried along with “love”) enduring “with diligence by prayer.” It would seem to be a reasonable summation to say that the visitation of the Holy Spirit fills or gives the believer hope and love which are strengthened and helped to endure by “prayer.” It is perfectly logical that the Holy Spirit would provide love and other fruits of the Spirit. But what *strengthens* those inward fruits? The answer seems to be: prayer. Thus it can be suggested that the Comforter, who *is* the Spirit of Strength, can and does reinforce His good labors through *prayer*.

The title “Spirit of Prayer” is never actually used in the Book of Mormon or in the Bible, yet time and again the Holy Spirit is closely associated with prayer. This aspect of the Comforter bringing strength needs to be explored. In the New Testament one has Romans 8: 26 with the Spirit helping the believer with prayer. A related passage, less quoted but very applicable, is Ephesians 6: 18: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

In the Book of Mormon, such terms as “mighty prayer” used at various places may imply the Spirit of Strength assisting with a human prayer. But effectively to the point is 2N 14: 11 (LDS 32: 8), where Nephi has something profound to say about prayer. The subject in the background is the inclination to stop praying, for any number of reasons. Nephi counsels, “If you would hearken to the Spirit who teaches a man to pray, you would know that you *must* pray.” Nephi then reinforces the thought by stating its negative counterpoint: “the evil spirit” teaches a man not to pray.

Many Christian writers have associated the Holy Spirit with prayer, including Greek Orthodox Bishop Innocent Veniaminov, who wrote, “The Holy Spirit teaches prayer. No one, until he receives the Holy Spirit, can pray in a manner that touches God the Father with its truth.”

In a similar vein and perhaps more poetically, the French Dominican writer William Peraldus wrote, “Prayer is a dove – the wings of the Holy Spirit – bringing the olive branch of prayer-enveloped peace.”

These few pages hardly do justice to the Holy Spirit and His ministry as they are found in the Book of Mormon. Suffice it to say that the Book of Mormon's contribution in this area is anything but impoverished. Any believer is well advised to learn more of the Holy Spirit and seek His enlightening friendship. As Saint Basil of Caesarea wrote so many years ago, “The Holy Spirit raises our hearts to heaven, guides the steps of the weak, and brings to purity those who are making progress.” May the Holy Spirit grant His blessing on all who are earnestly seeking Him.



