

KNOWING, DOING, & BEING: VITAL DIMENSIONS IN THE MORMON RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

A RESPONSE

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Arthur Bassett's paper on knowing, doing, and being is impressive to me. I share his sentiments, and I find it extremely difficult to take issue with him (which I like to do if possible).

Christ ought to be—he really isn't, but ought to be—the center of the Latter-day Saint religion. I believe that and I wish it were true. I think we're prone to emphasize the distinctive features of Mormonism, the things that distinguish us from other Christians, instead of utilizing core features of the restored gospel such as the priesthood and the Holy Ghost that could make us more effective disciples of Christ. I hope Arthur will submit this manuscript to the *Ensign* and I hope they will publish it; I'd like the whole Church to

read it. I agree that to know Christ it has to be done in at least three dimensions: knowing cerebrally or academically about Christ, doing the things that Christ did, and being Christians in our feelings, in our hearts, in our relations with people. I had to read this several times to find anything to criticize, and then I feel like I am nit-picking. But I am going to mention three or four little things that I came across.

He says that the gospel is the bond that binds together all the teachings of the prophets from Adam to the present. I'm not sure that all the prophets of the Old Testament understood the gospel of Jesus Christ. As I read the Old Testament, if I read it in its own context and not read back into it, I just don't find that understanding of the gospel, of the mission of Christ, in all of the prophets of the Old Testament. They may have understood it, but they did not express it.

Another thing he talked about is our quest for the celestial kingdom and for exaltation. I wish he had elaborated the meaning of these concepts. I'm afraid that those of us who seek the celestial kingdom and exaltation as a reward or as a gift are not going to find it. I am sure that with more time he would have described the celestial kingdom in terms of doing and being, rather than as some sort of place or as something given to us—something gained.

He says that no lesson or sermon in the Church that is not anchored firmly in the concreteness of the life of the Master ought to be taught. At the same time we're supposed to understand all the problems of mankind and be respectful of other religions and their points of view. So I doubt that every lesson can be centered concretely around Christ. But I do wish we could have courses of study centered in Christ. I don't know why we don't in the Sunday School and the priesthood classes have a year devoted to Christ, His character, His teachings. I find references to Him pretty sketchy. (Pardon me, that's a bias).

In his elaborations on doing, Arthur spent considerable time on the pioneer heritage and the pioneer way of doing things in the Church and didn't discuss as directly our Christian obligation which is to seek out the downtrodden and to render service where we can, both within and outside the Church setting. I wish he'd had time to elaborate opportunities, ways, and means of expressing the Christian life and rendering service to the downtrodden.

I certainly like his conclusion about making room for the grace of Christ. In that connection, one thing we as Mormons seldom think of or talk about is building a relationship with Christ. That's part of doing and being. We talk about Christ as doctrine; we talk about His activities, but how often do we think of our relationship to Him, our feeling for Him, our sense of His presence. I find Protestants talk more in that framework than we do.

I think it was a great paper. It was well organized and written very simply and clearly without jargon, and I am very sincere in saying I hope it is published for the Saints everywhere.

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