

Acknowledge Your Unworthiness Before God at All Times

“And that you may more fully keep yourself unspotted from the world, you shall go to the house of prayer and offer up your sacraments upon my holy day. For verily, this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay your devotions unto the Most High. Nevertheless, your vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times, but remember that on this, the Lord’s day, you shall offer your oblations and your sacraments unto the Most High, *confessing your sins unto your brethren and before the Lord*. And on this day, you shall do none other thing...”¹

Throughout the scriptures, confession appears in conjunction with repentance, baptism, and the Atonement, yet has not been explored sufficiently in recent times. We tend to approach this topic with a picture of a catholic priest and indulgences in our minds, but confession in the scriptures has a central role in both individual and communal worship. In this paper we lay out the need for confession, we attempt to define it using the scriptures, and propose that we as a people experiment on this word within our fellowship groups and conferences. Confession can humble us and, when received in charity, can help keep us unspotted from the world.

In the Answer to Prayer for Covenant, the Lord explains that He will labor with us as a people, not *because* of us, but for the sake of the covenants He made to the fathers.² He explains that one of the weaknesses yet causing us to stumble is pride. What is the root of this pride? What can we do to eradicate it from among us?

As a people, we have received a lot of knowledge and wisdom from heaven in rapid succession. “We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies. And if any man thinks that he knows anything, he doesn’t yet know as he ought to know. But if any man loves God, the same is known of him”.³ Rather than puff us up, “[Gospel knowledge] is meant to remake [us] into a humble servant, to change [our] heart.”⁴ The result of greater knowledge *should* be that our hearts are knit together in love, like David and Jonathan, who became bosom brothers despite strong political obstacles.⁵ However, in our limited experience, receiving greater light, without living in accordance with previous light, tends to make us more likely to condemn, compel and contend with others, destroying the peace that ought to rule among the people of God. We have to ask ourselves - has this heavenly information had its intended effect⁶ on our hearts? If not, why? What can we do now to both rid us of this pride **and** knit our hearts together?

We propose that the principle of confession is one key way for us to increase our humility and draw our hearts together. The scriptures inform us that undertaking to “cover our sins” only serves to gratify our pride

¹ T&C 46:3; *All citations are taken from the Restoration Edition of the scriptures found at scriptures.info.*

²T&C 157:19: *For the sake of the promises to the fathers will I labor with you as a people, and not because of you, for you have not yet become what you must be to live together in peace.*” (See par. 64 for His discussion of pride.)

³ 1 Corinthians 1:31

⁴ *The Second Comforter*, (hereafter *TSC*) pg. 16

⁵ Those bound by a covenant always act in love: 1 Samuel 8:19; Mosiah 9:9; Colossians 1:6; T&C 157:51

⁶ “Being led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, submissive, meek, patient, full of love, all long-suffering [...] having the love of God always in your hearts (Alma 10:4)

and our vain ambition, and ‘seeking deep to hide our counsels’ from the Lord is related to our being “puffed up in our hearts”.⁷ If this is true, then the inverse will also be true. Done correctly, confessing--or acknowledging and uncovering--our sins can both humble and serve to knit hearts together in love. Confession is a very sensitive subject. It goes against our nature to display our weaknesses. Our hope is that by unfolding the subject of confession as it is laid out in scripture, we can make the concept something much easier to grapple with.

Multiplicity in Language

In the English language, we are often required to use many words to describe a single idea.⁸ Because the Lord speaks to us according to our language, we are commanded to “search the scriptures” to find out the deeper meaning and interconnectedness of the words used in scripture.⁹ Consider Teachings & Commandments 82:18:

And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of Eternal life, for you shall live by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God. For the word of the Lord is Truth, and whatever is Truth is Light, and whatever is Light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

We see here the Lord attempting to define what He means by the “words of Eternal life” or “word[s] that proceed forth from the mouth of God.” In order to more fully convey the idea to us, he gives us some synonyms - truth, light, spirit. We gain an even fuller treatment on the idea in T&C 93:11, which informs us that light and truth can also be understood as intelligence, or the glory of God.

Consider also the word “knowledge”. Often in the scriptures, in order to have an actual knowledge of something, we are required to both “hear” and “see” that thing. We often encounter the phrase “see, hear and know”. We also read that seeing and hearing are required to be able to “testify” or “bear record” of a thing, making “seeing and hearing,” “knowledge,” “bearing record,” and “testimony” potential synonyms.¹⁰

The catechism for the Lectures on Faith 2:56¹¹ is another good example, making the word “manifestation” synonymous with a face to face encounter with Christ. The nature of multiplicity of language is not to say that every instance of “manifest” or “manifestation” in the scriptures it is referring to a face to face visit with the Lord, but it opens up the idea for investigation.

⁷ T&C 139:5-6; 2 Nephi 12:1

⁸ The issue of plural meanings is naturally apparent in the Greek and Hebrew texts, where each letter combination can produce multiple English meanings. The inspired writers of the scriptures often employ multiplicity of language to convey great meaning to the careful reader. One well-known instance is the Greek word “logos,” which has more than thirty possible meanings in English. Interestingly, this word seems to be related to the Lord’s expounding of the meaning of “every word which proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.” Another instance that enabled us to see the greater views of scripture unlocked by the key of multiplicity is the Hebrew word *kedem*, which can mean both “from the east” or “from ancient times”. Please see the Appendix for a fuller discussion on *kedem*.

⁹ Isaiah 20:2; 2 Nephi 13:1; 3 Nephi 4:11; Ether 5:8

¹⁰ Acts 2:6; Luke 14:2; 1 Nephi 1:5; 1 Nephi 3:5; 2 Nephi 8:2; Mosiah 11:27; Helaman 2:26; 3 Nephi 5:5; 3 Nephi 8:5; Ether 1:14; JSH 15:7, 19; T&C 36:8; T&C 69:29; T&C 74:4; T&C 93:1 and more.

¹¹ LoF 2:207

One scriptural instance of the word confession comes as a consequence of *not* doing two things which, at first glance, appear distinct, but in reality may be synonymous. In Mormon 2:7 we are told that we ought to “humble [ourselves] before [the Lord], lest he shall come out in justice against [us]”. In T&C 4:5-6 we are told to “confess [our] sins, lest [we] suffer these punishments of which [the Lord has] spoken.” Thus we see that humbling ourselves and confessing our sins are two ways to explain a single idea.¹²

The tool of chiasmus can also be used to see this multiplicity of language. In T&C 48, the first paragraph reads:

Behold and hearken unto the voice of him who has all power, who is from everlasting to everlasting, even Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Behold, thus says the Lord unto you, O you elders of my church who are assembled upon this spot, **whose sins are now forgiven you. For I the Lord forgive sins and am merciful unto those who confess their sins with humble hearts.**

And the last paragraph reads:

And now, verily I say unto you, and what I say unto one I say unto all, Be of good cheer little children, for I am in your midst and I have not forsaken you, and inasmuch as **you have humbled yourselves before me, the blessings of the Kingdom are yours.** Gird up your loins, and be watchful, and be sober, looking forth for the coming of the Son of Man, for he comes in an hour you think not. Pray always, that you enter not into temptation, that you may abide the day of his coming, whether in life or in death. Even so, Amen.

The role of confession in repentance is also clarified by the usage of multiplicity in the New Testament. Matthew explains of John the Baptist that “many were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”¹³ And in Christ’s sermon in the next chapter, He explains “blessed are they who believe on your words and come down into the depth of humility and be baptized in my name, for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.”¹⁴ In our day the Lord further expounds the role of confession in the context of repentance. He says, “By this you may know if a man repents of his sins, behold, he will confess them and forsake them.”¹⁵

It is no surprise then, knowing what we now know, that the Greek word “tapeinoó” can mean “to make low”, “to humble” or “to confess and deplore one’s spiritual littleness and unworthiness.”¹⁶ It appears that confessing our sins is a powerful mechanism by which we can repent and humble ourselves.

¹² See also JSH 17:6; Alma 16:24-27; Proverbs 4:82; John 1:3; T&C 4:6, 45:15, 48:1, 51:3; 152:3; 161:15

¹³ Matthew 2:2

¹⁴ Matthew 3:5

¹⁵ T&C 45:9

¹⁶ Strong’s Concordance, G5013

Be Humble or Be Humbled¹⁷

Very frequently in the scriptures, we come across the phrase “humble yourselves, lest” judgment come.¹⁸ Knowing the Lord is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger [and] abundant in goodness”, this admonition should be taken more as wise advice from a kind and experienced parent rather than a bully with a stick.¹⁹ We know that at some point, every knee shall bend and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Christ.²⁰ We can choose to acknowledge our sins and come to God in humility, or we can wait for sad experiences to humble us. Either way will lead to our being humbled, but only One Way leads to joy.

Alma draws a fine distinction between those who were compelled to be humble and those who would choose humility. The account is so useful to the discussion here that it will be quoted at length:

Now as Alma was teaching and speaking unto the people upon the hill Onidah, there came a great multitude unto him, who were those of whom we have been speaking, who were **poor in heart** because of their poverty as to the things of the world. And they came unto Alma, and the one who was the most foremost among them said unto him, Behold, what shall these my brethren do? For **they are despised of all men** because of their poverty, yea, and more especially by our priests. For they have cast us out of our synagogues, which we have labored abundantly to build with our own hands; and they have cast us out because of this, our exceeding poverty, that we have no place to **worship** our God. And now behold, **what shall we do?**

And now when Alma heard this, he turned him about, his face immediately towards him. And he beheld with great joy, for he beheld that **their afflictions had truly humbled them** and that they were in a preparation to hear the word. Therefore, he did say no more to the other multitude, but he stretched forth his hand and cried unto those whom he beheld, who were truly penitent, and said unto them, I behold that ye are lowly in heart, and if so, blessed are ye. Behold, thy brother **has said**, What shall we do? For we are cast out of our synagogues, that we cannot worship our God. Behold, I say unto you, do ye suppose that ye cannot worship God, save it be in your synagogues only? And moreover, I would ask, do ye suppose that ye must not worship God only once in a week? I say unto you, it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, **that ye may be humble and that ye may learn wisdom**; for it is necessary that ye should learn wisdom. For it is because that ye are cast out — that ye are despised of your brethren because of your exceeding poverty — that ye are brought to a lowliness of heart; for ye are necessarily brought to be humble. And now, because ye are compelled to be humble, blessed are ye; for a man sometimes, if he is compelled to be

¹⁷ This discussion is not intended to cause sadness, but only give proper perspective. Though it seems counter-intuitive in in a society that prizes praise and flattery, considering oneself as nothing--lower than the dust--allows the Lord to elevate us. See Matthew 10:26; Luke 9:5; 10:7; T&C 124:2; TSC ch. 11, as well as others.

¹⁸ While this is often used to convey negative judgment (T&C 4: 5: *I command you again by my Almighty power that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments,*” Mor. 2:7; T&C 152:3; Alma 16:38), the humble are promised to have the “veil rent” (T&C 56:3), receive Him (Mark 5:13; T&C 48:9) and be exalted (1 Pet. 1:20; Jac. 1:16).

¹⁹ LoF 3:14

²⁰ We learn in T&C 69:25-28 that inhabitants of both the Celestial and Telestial worlds will bow in humble reverence.

humble, seeketh repentance. And now surely, whosoever repenteth shall find mercy, and he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

And now, as I said unto you that because ye were compelled to be humble, ye were blessed, do ye not suppose that **they are more blessed who truly humble themselves because of the word?** Yea, he that truly humbleth himself, and repenteth of his sins, and endureth to the end, the same shall be **blessed**, yea, **much more blessed than they who art compelled to be humble** because of their exceeding poverty. Therefore, **blessed are they who humble themselves without being compelled to be humble**; or rather, in other words, blessed is he that believeth in the word of God and is baptized without stubbornness of heart, yea, without being brought to know the word, or even compelled to know, before they will believe. Yea, there are many who do say, If thou will show unto us a sign from Heaven, then we shall know of a surety; then we shall believe. Now I ask, is this faith?²¹

The importance of choosing humility is also made manifest in considering the actions of those who made it to the tree of life in Nephi's vision. While innumerable hosts are mentioned, Nephi only highlights three groups. First mentioned are those who commence in the path, but when the mists of darkness come are lost and fall away. Second are those who persevere through the darkness to the tree of life, partake but, **because of the mocking of others**, fall away into forbidden paths and are lost. It is the third group alone who came to the tree, "fell down" and partook.²² Which group humbled themselves? What caused the second group to fall away?

Alma's discourse above transitions immediately from humility to planting a seed of faith in the soil of our hearts. Mixing our metaphors, partaking of the fruit can be likened to experimenting with seeds by planting them in our heart to see if they enlarge our soul, enlighten our understanding, and taste delicious.²³ As with the fruit of the tree, the effect of good seeds (those grown in and by the Light) are instinctually shared with others.²⁴ There are, however, many seeds which thrive in the darkness. It is in our nature to hide the fruit of these seeds, to cover them, both from God and from man, as did Adam using the allegorical fig leaf.²⁵

The Lord ties *covering* our sins to pride and ambition.²⁶ Job had the right idea when he asked "if [he] covered [his] transgressions as Adam, by hiding [his] iniquity in [his] bosom, did [he] **fear** a great multitude, or did **the contempt** of families terrify [him] that [he] kept silence and went not out of the door?"²⁷ The desire to

²¹ Alma 16:23-25; see also 2 Chronicles 4:14, 16; T&C 156:10

²² 1 Nephi 2:12; see also 10-11 for earlier groups. This example is reminiscent of the "Build a House" parable, where many come to the high place and walk away due to a lack of wood, while those who fall down to work the ground find suitable building material.

²³ Alma 16:28-29: "*Now, if ye give place that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a **good seed** — if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the spirit of the Lord — behold, it will begin to swell within your breasts. And when you feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves, It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding; yea, and it beginneth to be delicious to me....O then, is not this real? I say unto you, yea, because it is light; and whatsoever is **light is good**, because it is discernible; therefore, ye must know that it is good.*"

²⁴ 1 Nephi 2: 9

²⁵ Genesis 2:16-17

²⁶ T&C 139:5

²⁷ Job 10:26

conceal our sins and weaknesses from our brethren comes from fear of other's opinions. Well did the Psalmist say, "*He that covers his sins shall not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy.*"²⁸ As naturally as covering our sins leads to pride, uncovering our sins sheds light on our heart, dispelling darkness. That which thrives in the darkness cannot abide the light.

The Lord always gives us the choice to repent on our own before being persuaded by tragedy. Confessing our sins allows the Lord to cover us; it is a sign that we are ready to move past them and not fear the paralyzing shame that causes us to withdraw.²⁹ While our efforts to temporarily cover our actions will only lead to seeking for the mountains and rocks to cover us,³⁰ the Lord's covering is permanent.³¹

Confession: A Two-Fold Event

Confession is a two-fold event that gives the confessor proper perspective, leaving no room for pride. As this differs greatly from the picture in our heads about confessing to a priest or bishop, we will allow the scriptures to better inform us. Careful study suggests the first part of confession occurs when a person or persons confess their weakness before God. For instance, Alma admonishes his son:

Do not pray as the Zoramites do, for ye have seen that they pray to be heard of men and to be praised for their wisdom. Do not say, O God, I thank thee that we are better than our brethren, but rather say, O Lord, forgive my unworthiness and remember my brethren in mercy; yea, **acknowledge your unworthiness before God at all times.** (Alma 18:4)

The second part occurs when they confess the greatness, mercy, strength, etc. of God. The Psalmist writes:

But I am poor and sorrowful. Let your salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God with a song and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs. The humble shall see this and be glad and your heart shall live that seek God. For the Lord hears the poor and despises not his prisoners. Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and everything that moves therein. For God will save Zion and will build the cities of Judah that they may dwell there and have it in possession. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it, and they that love his name shall dwell therein. (Psalm 69:5-7)

²⁸ See Proverbs 4:82. Alma 9:4 also show this pattern: *For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless, and our thoughts will also condemn us, and in this awful state we shall not dare look up to our God. And we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us, to hide us from his presence.*

²⁹ Matt. 2:2

³⁰ Luke 13:19; T&C 160:3; Isaiah 9:7; Hosea 2:25

³¹ *Atonement* is one of several common renditions of כפרת *kaphoreth*, itself derived from כפר *kaphar*, meaning to cover over, to make propitiation ([Strong's](#)). The Hebrew meaning of *kaphar* can mean to cover or recover, cover again, to repair a hole, cure a sickness, mend a rift, to make good a torn or broken covering. As a noun, what is translated atonement, expiation or purgation means **integument** [or covering layer] made good. [The opposite, incidentally, is *defilement*.] Atonement does not mean covering a sin so as to hide it from the sight of God; it means making good an outer layer--like that of fruit--which has rotted or been pierced.; Gen. 5:12; 1 John 1:3

We also see this pattern in Nephi's psalm and Isaiah's heavenly ascent.³² Confession puts in stark contrast our lowly state with God's exalted position, and often causes the confessors to fall to the ground, crying to the Lord for mercy.³³ It is an outward sign of the realization that we are lower than the dust, unworthy before the God of all creation. Denver Snuffer's first written work followed this same pattern: he began each chapter by confessing a personal failure, then explaining how to do things the correct way, showing the contrast between his own failures and the strength of the correct Way.

While confession is always done before God³⁴, it is not always done before Him alone. Confession can also be appropriate between individuals and in a group setting. The most general and straight-forward guidance we have on the matter comes from T&C 27:6 which reads:

And if your brother offend you, you shall take him between him and you alone, and if he confess, you shall be reconciled. And if he confess not, you shall take another with you and then if he confess not, you shall deliver him up unto the church, not to the members, but to the elders. And it shall be done in a meeting and that not before the world. And if your brother offend many, he shall be chastened before many. And if anyone offend openly, he shall be rebuked openly that he may be ashamed. And if he confess not, he shall be delivered up unto the law. If any shall offend in secret, he shall be rebuked in secret that he may have opportunity to confess in secret to him whom he has offended and to God that the brethren may not speak reproachfully of him. And thus shall you conduct in all things.

While not all the language here applies to a body without hierarchical rank, the ideas can be applied in our fellowships and conferences. The core idea appears to be that a confession is made to those who were affected by the sin. Confessed privately if committed privately, and confessed publicly if committed publicly.

However, confession goes beyond grievances among members of the body. The Lord commands us in T&C 46:3 that confession should be part of our group worship: “[R]emember that on this, the Lord’s day, you shall offer your oblations and your sacraments unto the Most High, confessing your sins unto your brethren and before the Lord. And on this day, you shall do none other thing...” Jacob confirms this, telling us to “confess [our] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that [we] may be healed.”³⁵

Digging deeper into group confession, Nehemiah's account is particularly relevant.³⁶ Seventy years after being destroyed by Babylon, a remnant of scattered Israel chose to leave Babylon in order to rebuild Jerusalem and, in particular, the temple. After first rediscovering their scriptures, returning to the ways of

³² Nephi: 2 Nephi 3:7-8; Isaiah: 2 Nephi 9:2

³³ Genesis 1:2 1 Nephi 2:12; Mosiah 2:1; Mosiah 11:26-7; Alma 12:17, 20; Alma 17:4, 5; 3 Nephi 5:4; Ether 1:12; Revelation of John 2:5; Revelation of John 9:5; The Master's House Parable (they went to the high place, then 'fell down' to the ground to unearth the Lord's prepared building materials).

³⁴ Alma 18:4

³⁵ Jacob 1:24 (NT); Moroni also appears to reference this behavior in 6:2 “the church did meet together oft ... to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls...[and] to preach, or exort, or to pray, or to supplicate...”

³⁶ Mosiah 2:1; While it is beyond the scope of this paper, a third method of confession is a servant's confession to the Lord on behalf of his people, as it appears in the Prayer for Covenant (T&C 156); see also Daniel's cry to the Lord for his people in Dan. 9:1-4 and Ezra 2:15-16

their fathers, establishing correct priesthood lineages and taking care of the poor among them, we see an entire group of people coming together in fasting and prayer to read the scriptures and confess their sins and the sins of their fathers:

Now in the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting and with sackcloth and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day, and another fourth part they **confessed and worshipped** the Lord their God. (Nehemiah 2:34)

This is similar to what we find with King Benjamin's people in the second chapter of Mosiah:

“And now it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold, they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them; and **they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying, O have mercy and apply the atoning blood of Christ, that we may receive forgiveness of our sins and our hearts may be purified!** For we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who created Heaven and Earth and all things, who shall come down among the children of men.” (Mosiah 2:1)³⁷

However, the best illustration of this principle may be its antithesis--the example of the Zoramites. We are told that whoever desired to worship must go forth and **stand up** on the top of the holy stand and cry out:

We believe that thou has elected us to be thy holy children...And thou hast elected us that we shall be saved, whilst all around us are elected to be cast, by thy wrath, down to hell...And we also thank thee that thou has elected us, that we may not be led away after the foolish traditions of our brethren... And again we thank thee, O God, that we are a chosen and a holy people. Amen. (Alma 16:18)

In response, Alma cries out:

O how long, O Lord, wilt thou suffer that thy servants shall dwell here below in the flesh to behold such gross wickedness among the children of men? Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths while they are puffed up, even to greatness. (Alma 16:20)

An excellent piece of advice on nearly all we have covered thusfar comes from Joseph Smith on 2 July 1839:

³⁷ This practice of confessing both our own nothingness and God's greatness is still present in many reformed Christian churches and often serves as the sobering moment of the meeting; the congregation will read a scripture confessing their weakness and the minister will respond with a scripture encapsulating God's greatness.

We ought to be willing to repent of and confess all of our own sins and keep nothing back, and let the Twelve be humble and not be exalted and beware of pride and not seek to excel one above another, but act for each other's good and honorably make mention of each other's name in our prayers before the Lord and before our fellow men, and not backbite and devour our brother. Why will not man learn Wisdom by precept and example at this late age of the world and not be obliged to learn everything we know by sad experience? Must the new ones that are chosen to fill the places of those that are fallen of the quorum of the Twelve begin to exalt themselves until they get so high that they will tumble over and have a great fall? And go wallowing through the mud, mire, and darkness Judas-like to the buffetings of Satan as several of the Twelve have done? Or will they learn wisdom and be wise? (O God give them wisdom, and keep them humble I pray)³⁸

Confession is an integral part of group worship. Like the twelve in Joseph's day, we too have been greatly blessed with knowledge, but contention, envy, and strife still plague us. Done properly, this practice not only keeps us humble, but it allows us to bear one another's burdens (for what greater burdens do we carry than our sins and weaknesses), knitting our hearts together in love and unity.³⁹

How Do We Respond to Others' Confessions?

Well, charitably. We know that charity covers a multitude of sins.⁴⁰ If someone makes themselves vulnerable --literally naked--before us, our instinct *should* be to throw a cloak of charity over them. Galatians 1:23 lays the matter out quite well, stating:

If a man should be overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness — considering yourself, lest you also should be tempted. Bear one another's **burdens**, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

While this passage doesn't overtly state this was a confession, it implies that one person knows the faults which have overtaken another. We are told to restore them in the spirit of meekness. We are not to think ourselves better than our sister or brother who has been overcome in their fight against sin, but to bear their burden with them, encouraging them on. "And above all things, **clothe** yourselves with the **bond of charity**, as with a **mantle**, which is the bond of perfectness and peace" (T&C 86:30). It appears that confession and charity allows the Lord to throw a cloak of charity on our sins as we do so to our brothers and sisters.

This passage is reminiscent of Christ's sermon (3 Nephi 6:2; Matthew 3:40) where he states:

³⁸ Spelling and punctuation corrected for readability.

³⁹ Mosiah 9:7-9

⁴⁰ Proverbs 2:12; We are aware that Joseph Smith changed this passage in 1 Peter to "preventeth a multitude of sins", but think, based on comments he made this date, that both can be used correctly; however he frequently quoted the original (*Words of Joseph Smith*, 80, 166, 234)

Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

We can not both think ourselves better than our brothers and sisters and restore them to faith. Rather, we are required to follow the example our master gave and forgive all people.⁴¹ This is not optional, for to be saved we must be like the Saved being. We should only meekly attempt to restore.

Conclusion

Seen clearly for what it is, confession intertwines with many other aspects of the Gospel like a reed in a woven basket. While it is offered here as one part of the solution, there are many other reeds that make up the whole. We concede that obedience to anything the Lord asks of us as individuals shows humility and should be thought of as the overarching way in which we humble ourselves before Him. But we also believe that the counsel and commands of the Lord include confessing our sins to Him, and to one another, that we may grow in meekness and humility, bear one another's burdens, knit our hearts together in unity and love, and be healed from the weakness and burdens that afflict us.

This paper does not deliver a comprehensive look at the subject of confession. There are many other areas which can be expanded by careful study and prayer. For example, confession ultimately happens at the altar, indicating it may be part of temple worship.⁴² It also appears to be a part of the doctrine of Christ.⁴³

It is important to point out here that this is not like the traditional Christian practice of confession. The act of admitting you're wrong and doing thirty hail Marys will not bring healing or unity. The labor must be done thereafter to "watch and pray continually, that you may not be tempted above that which you can bear" (Alma 10:4). The practice can, however, give us a support group, and potentially a family, to help us heal through love and encouragement.

This practice requires all of us, as individuals, to examine our hearts and our lives to determine what things are not in alignment with the will of God. Recognizing and forsaking these things, confessing them to the Lord and, in the appropriate way, our brothers and sisters, and taking advantage of the atonement of Christ, can further sanctify this body of believers. We propose that, similar to the tithing experiment that occurred in the various fellowship groups after Denver's 10th Lecture, we should also experiment with this principle individually, in our families, and in our fellowships.

Because of personal experience, we are able to bear testimony that implementing confession in our close relationships helps us forsake and leave behind our sins. While we don't claim to be humble, the act of

⁴¹T&C 51:3; T&C 157:58; John 6:10-11; We strongly recommend reviewing that account as well as the thirteenth chapter of *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord through the Veil*, "Charity, Love, Intercession".

⁴² 2 Nephi 9:2; Alma 12:1; the entire book of Nehemiah is relevant, but especially 2:37, 40-41

⁴³ Matt 2:2; 2 Ne. 13:2; Alma 10:4; Helaman 5:18; T&C 45:9; Leviticus 13:15

confessing has indeed humbled us.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the responding outpouring of love from family and friends has strengthened, healed and uplifted us. We have learned by happy and sad experience that this is not a silver bullet, but it can be powerful tool. Finally, the scriptures are not the only place we see this wisdom behind this practice. Scientists like Brene Brown have found that shining a light on shame and embracing vulnerability is healing relationships across the world.

As with any principle offered for instruction, it is important that any person only follow these principles as directed by the Spirit. If the Spirit does not testify of the truth of these things, they should not be accepted. Please prayerfully study the references and footnotes in this paper and see what the Lord can reveal to all who seek Him in humility.

⁴⁴ Without humility, even the presence of a temple accepted by God is not enough to ensure that we will be the people God retains to do the work of the covenants: *“I think it’s **one thing to prepare** financially to have the structure, **it’s another thing for God to fill it with His glory so that His name can be uplifted there in grateful remembrance of the work that He has undertaken, as He explains Himself to us. And it’s still another thing altogether to have people who are contrite and broken- hearted and grateful** and come to willingly receive what God can dispense to us in His house. Those are very different things. And we think if the first two are accomplished, then the third one necessarily follows. But I think we can go to God’s house and damn ourselves by the hardness of our heart and the pride of our spirit. And I think the Answer to the Covenant sort of warns us about that and about how we can come, and we can do everything that we think will satisfy Him, but if we are not of the right mind, of the right spirit, of the right heart, we can still offend Him—even if we’re doing what He asked us to do. We have to do it in the right spirit. And that’s the biggest challenge of all.”* ([Temple Podcast #6](#), see pg. 7-9 of that transcript; also: TSC pg. 9-17)

Appendix: A Study on the Usefulness of Multiplicity in Language

The following study brought us to understand that the idea of multiplicity also applied to confession.

In the Answer to prayer for Covenant, we were told that we may obtain benefit by the careful study of other non-canonical texts.⁴⁵ In one such text called *The First Book of Adam and Eve*, after Eve and Adam transgress and are cast out, the Lord sends Michael, Gabriel and Raphael to the garden to bring Adam "rods of gold", incense and myrrh to comfort him.⁴⁶

Trying to understand how "rods of gold" along with frankincense and myrrh can be useful to Adam and Eve is a difficult task. The oils are commonly used to anoint, but what of the "rods of gold"? If we think about what things look like rods of gold, cinnamon sticks could qualify as well as the oil derived from the root of spikenard,⁴⁷ which could be combined to create a mixture for anointing.

The magi who came to give the young Christ "gold, frankincense and myrrh" came from the "east". The word for "east" in Hebrew is "*kedem*". There is a multiplicity to words in Hebrew and Greek that don't always translate well into English. In order to really get the translation across, we need to use multiple words. Kedem can also be translated in English as "from ancient times" or just "ancient times". It could be translated as "the wise men came from the east" OR "the wise men came from ancient times". It could be understood that they brought things from ancient times.

Right before Christ goes out to be slain, Mary anoints him with a beautiful box of oil called "spikenard."⁴⁸ Jesus is anointed with it to "establish [him] before [he] lays down [his] life". This sacred anointing oil was given to Christ's mother by the magi at his birth.⁴⁹

To summarize all of this, we might say that Michael, Raphael and Gabriel brought cinnamon/spikenard root/oil, frankincense and myrrh to Adam from the garden to be kept for 5,500 years, delivered to the Lord's mother at his birth, then poured on the Lord by Mary (his wife) before his great sacrifice, to "establish" him beforehand so he could be resurrected, bringing eternal life to mankind.⁵⁰

Figure 1



⁴⁵ T&C 157:47

⁴⁶The First Book of Adam and Eve 29:3-6; 31:1

⁴⁷ Id. - The roots of spikenard are a golden color and the oil an amber. See Figure 1->

⁴⁸ Mark 7:1; John 7:9; The Testimony of St. John 8:13

⁴⁹ Id. 8:3; It is interesting to here note that while some things passed down from the Garden were destroyed (See T&C glossary of terms, Coat of Many Colors), God ensured these gifts made it all the way to the birth of the Redeemer of Mankind. This is also a powerful testimony of the power of God and reminiscent of the gold plates of Mormon, and other records we know exist and have not yet come forth, which are being protected by the hand of God.

⁵⁰ All of this is confirmed by overt statements in the pseudepigraphal text *Testament of Adam*. The third chapter and sixth paragraph reads: *And my father Adam died [...] And we sealed the testament and we put it in the cave of treasures with the offerings Adam had taken out of Paradise, gold and myrrh and frankincense. And the sons of kings, the magi, will come and get them, and hey will take them to the son of God, to Bethlehem of Judea, to the cave.* See also 1 Adam and Eve 31:2; 2 Adam and Eve 13:18