

# Foreword

LAMAN, LEMUEL, SAM, and Nephi all heard the same teachings from their father. All of them received a bounty of information. Yet they did not have an equal understanding of the truth. Nephi and presumably Sam became truth's champions, while Laman and Lemuel knew nothing of it. It would seem that information, even accurate information, is not the same as the truth. 1986

Certainly, to the ancients, including the prophets of the scriptures, the various words that we today translate with the English word *truth* had a much richer meaning than mere "accurate information," which is approximately what that word means to most people in our culture. Our word *true* is derived from a word that, in earlier times, meant "faith" or "covenant." *Troth* is a related term. *Truth* signified "being true," the Oxford English Dictionary tells us, i.e., constant, steadfast, and faithful to a cause, person, or principle. The Hebrew word translated *truth* in the King James translation of the Old Testament had a similar connotation.

Put that information together with some of the scriptural passages about truth. In various ways, the Lord said that he himself is the truth. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). The truth is an individual, a living soul. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). What is the connection between this principle and the ancient conception of truth? Of all the Father's children, Jehovah is the one who is completely true in this sense, and it is to the Father that he is true. In a manner or by a process I do not understand, he "ascended up on high" by virtue of his faithfulness, "as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that

he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ” (D&C 88:6–7).

So the truth is more than, or different from, the words the Lord and his prophets have spoken. These words, it seems, are given to us to bear witness of the truth, but many hearing this witness do not accept it and remain as ignorant of the truth as before. “For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37). The truth to which the Lord and his prophets bear witness with their words is the Lord himself. And those who are of him are those who hear and receive this witness.

How do we come to receive this witness and thereby know the truth? The beginning of the quest, it seems to me, is to be receptive and responsive to the truth, which “shineth,” rather than be resistant. These are our only options. “And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings” (D&C 88:11). We can resist this light or receive it gratefully. Though it is provided freely, we ourselves determine to what degree we will be enlivened and enlightened by it.

The image of a laser beam is a helpful analogy. Ordinary light consists of energy that is radiated in random frequencies and phases. The pulses of energy carried by this light bump into and interfere with one another, like roller derby skaters knocking each other out of the race. The radiation quickly dissipates; it takes a lot of energy at the source to illuminate even a small space because so much of it is canceled out by the way it interferes with itself in transmission. But it is possible to “amplify” light by radiating it in frequencies and phases that are highly coordinated. When this happens, the pulses of energy being transmitted do not bump into and negate each other. The result is a beam of such intensity that even a few watts can be used to light a spot many miles away, or slice metal cleanly, or perform precision surgery. Light radiated in this manner—light whose pulses are in harmony with each other rather than in discord—is called a laser.

Using the metaphor of the laser, we might say that when we receive the light of truth, when we are in tune with it, as it were, there is nothing in us that diffuses or obliterates it. Instead we resonate with it. To the degree that we do, our eye will be single to the

glory of God. Our whole bodies will be filled with light. We will be yielding ourselves to his law, his power, and his love. Instead of merely receiving information (what a paltry conception this is!), we will, quite literally, be *informed*: we will in other words be taking on the *form* of the truth, coming under the formative influence of the Being who is its source, changing so that we are more like him, more “of the truth.”

This means that learning the truth is a moral endeavor. It is a process of becoming truer, more faithful, and more responsive. Just as the light radiates from the Lord as it “proceedeth forth . . . to fill the immensity of space” (D&C 88:12), so, I think, do we irradiate our situations with this same light to the extent that we are resonating with it. I have sometimes pictured the cosmos as a vast field of light punctuated here and there by points of varying degrees of darkness, which are the resistant souls, and by points of concentrated brightness, which are the resonant ones. The latter are like television relay stations situated on mountain tops; they give to signals originating elsewhere a fresh “boost” that carries them effectively to further regions. Insofar as an individual is faithful, he is a substation of the Lord’s radiance; the light of love shines on all around him.

Now when we resist the light rather than receive it, we continue to need it, but because of the state of our hearts, it works in and through us more like an ordinary incandescent bulb than a laser. We consume more power than we convey. We lose focus and concentration. The light of our understandings is conflicted, diffused, and finally dissipated. “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness” (Matthew 6:23).

In this context, we can reflect again on our contemporary conception of the truth as mere information. This conception is not only false, it is dangerous. It leads us to suppose that we can pass bits of the truth conveniently to one another, as if they were coins. We are encouraged to regard the mind as a kind of purse in which we can collect and even hoard these coins. We believe we can buy, sell, and barter for them; we treat them as if they have exchange value. As far as we are concerned, evil people can get hold of them, as well as good people. Sinister men can control the world by acquiring these truths and withholding them from others. All of this is false. The idea that truth is information is, ultimately, a menacing economic metaphor.

Just how menacing this idea is can be seen in our approach to education. Because we have taken the economic metaphor seriously, we have come to think that learning is completely independent of morality. We have made it competitive rather than cooperative. We have turned our universities into vocational schools. Certain kinds of training have become not just occupationally, but socially, advantageous. We have made the most successful information mongers among us into snobs. Learning, so called, has become a divisive social instrument that reinforces class distinctions. It is not possible to calculate the devastating effects of these disasters.

Teaching is not a form of commerce. It is more like the radiance or influence of a resonant soul as it is felt by other souls. The teacher of the truth does not convey to the student valuable bits of anything, but by his presence and commitment, he points away from himself to something higher than himself, to which the student can have independent access. "And also trust no one to be your teacher . . . , except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments" (Mosiah 23:14).

What sort of individual would such a teacher be? He would, I think, be a profoundly simple one. He would harbor within his heart no conflicting aims capable of canceling each other out. In public and private, he would cherish just one concern, which we might variously describe as a desire to do what is right, to keep his word, to complete his tasks. (The Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard formulated a slogan with this principle in mind when he read from the book of James, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" [James 4:8]. The slogan was, "Purity of heart is to will one thing.") I doubt whether the prospect of compromising himself for personal advantage would ever occur to such a teacher; it would not appeal to him. The one use to which he would be willing to put his tongue would be to speak the truth plainly.

I have written this introduction to Arthur King's spoken words in an indirect fashion, by discussing obedience, radiance, and teaching. If I were to write of Arthur directly, he would disapprove. He knows that the Lord has instructed us to call no man good. When we praise a person, we seek to make a hero of him. Heroes populate a different sort of world from the one that Arthur

has been searching for all his life. They are people to whom we have accorded an exalted status because in the half-light of our own inner conflicts and insecurities, they appear larger than they are. Even if Arthur has succeeded in living the kind of life he has desired to live and been the kind of teacher I have been describing, it would be wrong to admire or praise him for it—as wrong as it is to applaud in church. That kind of life, Arthur would be quick to say, is our simple duty, nothing more. If we serve the Lord all our days, we are still unprofitable servants.

Without violating his very proper concerns in these matters, I have tried to introduce the author of these talks. I have done so by writing, if not of him, of what he loves, and if not of his life, then of the life he has sought to lead. I have tried, in short, to follow him in diverting attention away from him and toward the Lord.

What I have said also sets the background for making the one point that is essential to this introduction, namely, that if these talks of Arthur's are taken to be informational, they will be completely misread. It would be wrong to suppose Arthur to be saying, when he comments about a subject, "This is the way things are." It does not matter whether we agree with what he says (certainly it would be of no concern to him); what matters is that in this text we observe this educated individual devoting his thinking to the Lord. What matters is that we see a man using his mind reverently and that as a consequence we will want to go and do likewise.

This has been the pattern with Arthur's students, of whom I have known many over the past fifteen years. He teaches them to write, but none of them writes like him or like each other. That is as it should be. A substation of Christ's radiance does not simply illuminate the darkness so that others can find their way. He inspires others to resonate with that radiance. Thus, if we read this book aright, we will honor the Lord in our response to it, as its author, and its editors, have honored him by preparing it.



I have chosen the thoughts that follow to introduce you to Arthur King's most unusual turn of mind, which you will find at once reverent and radical, gentle and challenging, sympathetic and alert. I cannot say I learned all of these thoughts from him or

that they exactly represent his views. But I can say I learned them with him, in long, animated discussions about many subjects over perhaps twenty years. He does not enter a conversation or a lecture prepared or even willing to say anything he has thought before. For him, to speak, to discover, and to create are synonymous. “How can I know what I think,” he has asked on repeated occasions, “until I see what I say?” What I offer here has grown out of those discussions and my subsequent meditation upon them.

Whether Arthur offers his observations in conversation or in talks—and this book consists of talks given to students and to general Latter-day Saint audiences—they are not what you might think would issue from a man as profoundly educated as he. They do not flow like preformulated phrases from any accumulated reservoir within. Instead, they are responses—responses to you, if it is to you that he is speaking.

How this works in conversation amazes me. He exalts whatever you may have said by collaborating with it to arrive at a new understanding of the topic. He uses it to move both of you forward together. No one who knows him could call this merely a gracious manner. He perceives better than you the potential for insight or wisdom in what you have said and makes it the occasion for yet another fresh observation. And he then appreciates to the same degree whatever use you are able to make of what he says. Soon you get the hang of this collaborative work and start to take his remarks seriously in the way that he has taken yours—not by deferring to them, but by letting them rearrange your complacent opinions, causing you to consider matters from fresh angles and to discover as you speak what you never quite thought before.

You are not learning material here. You are learning to be; you are letting yourself be changed in “the inner man”; you are becoming yourself at your most engaged and responsive and disciplined. This happens because the teaching you are receiving—this is something that for me has been somewhat difficult to grasp—is an act of love. (Often hearing him take the conversation we are having to a new level of insight, I have been moved to say within myself, “This cuts against me, and I am glad to hear it.”) In two decades, Arthur and I have never left a conversation without both having changed our minds—and yet the asymmetry of the collaboration has never escaped me: he ever my teacher, I ever his student.

Or his son. Of the highest relevance here is the fact that I and about fifty others like me have come in our adult lives to regard this simple, unpretentious man, who had no children of his own that survived infancy, as our father. His way with us has been a father's way, fostering our development in our own individual directions. For as long as I have known him, he has pondered the urgency and difficulty of the responsibilities of this parental calling, and that, I think, is why all he says in this book bears importantly upon every parent's task of preparing the next generation for a fullness of life. Who but a true father can instill in children, as Arthur has, the highest standards without resorting to any of the judgmental ploys or superiority of manner that often elicit resistance in the young and drive them obstinately to choose another way?

We cannot hide our inner condition. By our faces, our gestures, and our speech, we reveal ourselves. If our hearts are pure, we can speak with the tongue of angels. Otherwise, we conduct ourselves self-consciously, the way people do who have something to conceal. Said Joseph Smith, "It is in vain to try to hide a bad spirit from the eyes of them who are spiritual for it will shewe itself in speaking and in writing as well as all our other conduct."<sup>1</sup> As we respond to what life presents to us, so we are.

This principle, that everything is manifest, has not been widely believed. Many of us actually think we can cover ourselves with artful displays of graciousness, confidence, or piety. If more of us realized that this cannot be done, there would be less pretense and posturing.

But few of us do realize it. We are misled by the frequency with which others seem to be taken in by our efforts to manipulate or impress. We do not see that when they are taken in, it is because they allow themselves to be. They have a vested interest in accepting and believing in what is not quite right. All Korihor could see in Alma, for example, was a man with motives like his own—personal gain and self-aggrandizement. In Alma's face, he could see only a reflection of himself. On the other hand, when others have no such vested interest, we cannot dupe them for long. Instead of perceiving us as we project ourselves, they see us struggling insecurely to project ourselves that way. In Korihor's countenance, Alma could read Korihor's soul. That others may fail to see us for what we are has less to do with our skill as posturers or hypocrites

than with their lack of discernment. They would see the manifestation we constantly make of ourselves if they had eyes to see—if they were righteous enough to be self-forgetful. Again from Joseph Smith: “It is also useless to mak[e] great pretensions when the heart is not right before God, for God looks at the heart, and where the heart is not right the Lord will expose it to the view of his faithful saints.”<sup>2</sup>

One significant mode of self-revelation is language, spoken and written. The words we choose to express ourselves, together with the tone and rhythm and structure of our speech, convey to those with ears to hear the intent of our hearts. To the degree that we are self-forgetful and free of guile, our speech will be simple and straightforward and consequently beautiful and powerful—which is not to say showy or forceful or in any way cosmetic; we will not have contrived our speech to impress or to coerce or to hide. And to the degree that we seek to promote or conceal ourselves or to control others, we will craft our speech in convoluted ways. We will inhibit the manifestation to others of who we really are in favor of a contrived image we naively suppose will win more favor. We will corrupt the natural beauty of speech and weaken its effects.

We do not achieve any of this self-revelation by taking thought; we do not cast about in our minds for the words and the constructions that will best disclose us to others. Instead we simply speak, and the words and constructions that come to our minds reveal everything about our inward state—every anxiety, affectation, or manipulative intention, and all our humility, sorrow, or joy. In the details of our speech, we reveal that we have found suitable and appealing certain kinds of expression, either complicated or simple, tawdry or clean, agitated or calm. We are spontaneously drawn to language that best fits our interests at the moment. To the pure heart, our speech perfectly betrays our taste and our judgment. We can never hide ourselves under a cover of words.

Might it not be possible, by careful attention to the particulars of written or spoken language, to grow more and more discerning—to develop a discipline or art for understanding others through their speech? Yes. In simple terms, that is what Arthur Henry King has done. Some very important scholars have said that his treatise on Ben Jonson and the language of Elizabethan England, which appeared in 1941, created a new scholarly discipline.



At the very least, it consolidated this new discipline out of elements available in the tradition in which Arthur was rigorously trained, and thereby set a new kind of example in textual studies. Employing all the tools of philological and rhetorical analysis developed in the Western tradition, he collects with extraordinary precision every imaginable detail of the tone and structure of a text, until a rich understanding emerges of the speaker's (or author's) intentions and of the complexities of the speaker's relationships with everyone relevant to his act of speech. Arthur arrives at a critical understanding of the text through the intricate accumulation of facts that stand there, on the page, for all to see.

But that understanding, Arthur contends, cannot be completely stated in words. The meaning and truth of a text cannot be "boiled down" and restated any more than the fullness of another human being, which has been received in an intimate friendship over a long period of time, can be expressed in a carefully worded report. The understanding gained from Arthur's fruitful way of reading is what happens in and to the reader; it cannot be distilled in a paraphrase and passed on. Reading is more like conversion than it is like acquisition. It's the sort of thing we cannot be given but must undergo in consequence of diligent effort we ourselves have made (which incidentally is an important principle for those of us who aspire to teach the scriptures helpfully).

Here is another surprising wrinkle. When I called what Arthur has developed "a scholarly discipline," you might have thought I meant a technology of some kind, a skill that anyone with sufficient aptitude and training would be able to obtain and use. If you did, I misled you. The quality and degree of understanding that comes of this discipline depends on purity of intention, which is to say, on the openness and humility and self-forgetfulness of the soul who uses it. However technically equipped, a scholar will be able to discover in the rhetorical and philological and historical details he notices only what he is morally and spiritually prepared to accept; any personal agenda—any professional insecurity or arrogance, any shame or self-justification before others or God—will skew his interpretation. He will not see in the author or speaker what is there to be seen because there will not be enough love in him to accept that author or speaker without judgment and rejection.

This I think is why highly educated souls can be divided about the language of righteous people, especially the language of the prophets. Occasionally I hear an educated person say that this or that prophet does not speak or write particularly well and add, condescendingly and presumably by way of consolation, that prophets should be measured by what they say and not how they say it. Supposedly the prophets could express their message better if they were better educated. To those expressing this opinion, Arthur would say that the prophets' manner of speaking—the tone and rhythm and word choice and construction of their speech—is essential to their message. For in such aspects of their speech, we encounter these divinely anointed souls as they are being touched by the Holy Spirit, and we equally receive the Holy Spirit as mediated through them. We encounter in a prophet's words a living presence as surely as we would face-to-face. An individual soul is revealed to us; love is manifest. Whether we receive it is ours to determine. Everyone who has discovered the scriptures' living, nourishing substance understands what I am talking about.

So it is both true and not true that Arthur's unexcelled proficiency in textual analysis enabled him to recognize the authenticity of Joseph Smith when he first read Joseph's story. "[Joseph Smith] spoke to me, as soon as I read his testimony, as a great writer," Arthur has written, "transparently sincere and matter-of-fact. . . . Because Joseph Smith talked about his experiences in the way he did, I was able to believe him; and having that belief, I could then go on to say, 'This man tells the truth; therefore, I ought to believe other things he tells me, even though I haven't got the same evidence of those.'"<sup>3</sup> Any sensitive, righteous soul would have sensed the unusual straightforwardness and candor of the Prophet's words, but it took Arthur's technical skill to see why the Prophet could not have written as he did had he been perpetrating a deception. Conversely, if Arthur had lacked the humility and freedom from guile for which his honorary children respect him, the Prophet's own guilelessness would never have been so apparent to Arthur, in spite of his prodigious ability to read incisively. Reading of the profoundest kind is an act of true morality, which in turn grows out of faith.

Because profound reading requires faith and humility, the scholarly discipline Arthur created has little chance of broad

acceptance in a secular and increasingly vulgar culture. On Arthur's own principles, his colleagues were not quite right who suggested that we would be able to go further in criticism of texts when we had others well enough educated to do the kind of fundamental and thorough-going work that Arthur has done. Education alone is not enough. Those so educated must also have attained to something of Arthur's desire for righteousness and generosity. In the study of matters human, scholarly work cannot be separated from the scholar's present spiritual condition. Concerning this inseparability, Arthur himself would be the first to add that the relationship between the scholar's work and spirit means that no individual can claim to have achieved a correct and complete analysis of any text; in other words, for the same reason that we cannot say that we are good, we cannot say that any of our interpretations is definitive. We are at best underlaborers to God, hoping that our efforts will yield something good.

This book strikes me as one small part of the good that Arthur has desired to come of his life's work. He means it as a call to arm the next generation—not with weapons like suspicion or wiliness or seductive appeal or any other so-called competitive advantage in this world, but with the armor of God spoken of in Ephesians. He thinks constantly of girding the children about with truth, fitting their feet with the shoes of gospel preparation for a long life's journey, and fashioning for them the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith. Since a righteous heart is able to discern both good and evil, it enjoys a natural protection from deception and seduction.

Arthur insists that the right place for arming the children is in the home. The work is to be done by parents and grandparents and siblings. As President Boyd K. Packer has taught, "Lest parents and children be 'tossed to and fro,' and misled by 'cunning craftiness' of men who 'lie in wait to deceive' (Eph. 4:14), our Father's plan requires that, like the generation of life itself, the shield of faith is to be made and fitted in the family. No two can be exactly alike. Each must be handcrafted to individual specifications. . . . The shield of faith is not manufactured on an assembly line, only handmade in a cottage industry."<sup>4</sup>

Children will want to love what their parents love. They can be introduced to intimate subjects in an atmosphere of trust and

reverence, starkly different from the whispered or raucous settings that make these subjects seem forbidden and vulgar. They can learn about the horrors and temptations to be met with in the world while sitting in the safety of a parent's lap. They can be surrounded by objects and implements that are both true—in that they do not present themselves to be other than they are—and beautiful. (Arthur is very particular about this and gives a number of examples.) They can hear and learn to read the scriptures from their earliest years so that the language of these books becomes for them like a native tongue. Furthermore, they can orient themselves in life by the template of understanding given in the scriptures and not according to the confused principles of self-indulgence and self-promotion that structure life as seen in movies, on television, in posted advertisements that scream for our attention, and in the written materials available everywhere. Children can grow up in the presence of the best music and good art. Everything in a proper education has to do with the development of taste and good moral judgment. A home must be formative as well as nurturing. When the time comes, as it will, for the children to enter the world on their own, they must be equipped both to look at evil and feel revulsion and to look at good and feel delight.

“Touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing,” Moroni writes, and “lay hold upon every good thing” (Moro. 10:30; 7:19.) Even early in his life, Arthur might have taken these to be his watchwords, had he known of them. He has gone about this world (throughout his academic and administrative career in various universities and the educational systems of the British Commonwealth, he has resided in England, Sweden, Germany, Persia, Pakistan, and the United States, and he has traveled extensively in most other places on earth) searching persistently for everything beautiful, good, and true—whatever has one of these qualities has them all—and decisively turning away from anything less. And while turning away, he has said to himself, “That is not what I am seeking for. That is not it at all.” This is one of the many ways he has sought all his life to live what the Prophet Joseph called “the admonition of Paul”—to embrace everything “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy” (A of F 1:13) and eschew the rest.

The intensity and thoughtfulness of this search may partly explain why, as Arthur tells us in the story of his conversion, the

definiteness and goodness of the doctrine of the Church struck him so forcefully. That intensity may also account for the entirely appropriate anxiety he feels and expresses in this book: the next generation must be armed against the treacheries that lie in wait for them. Our children can become so armed by having developed within them the same moral alertness that Arthur has striven to maintain in himself—the same antipathy to all that may be vulgar, sentimental, or inhumane and the same sense of homecoming in the presence of everything beautiful, good, and true.

—C. Terry Warner

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, January 11, 1833, quoted in Dean C. Jessee, comp. and ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 264.

<sup>2</sup>Smith to Phelps, January 11, 1833, quoted in Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 264.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur Henry King, *The Abundance of the Heart* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 25–26.

<sup>4</sup>Boyd K. Packer, “The Shield of Faith,” *Ensign* 25 (May 1995): 8, 9.