

On Knowing and Caring

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A junior high school student was once having problems learning math. His teacher struggled with him day after day and assigned him extra work to do each evening. The student would always return the next morning with the assignment uncompleted. After this had gone on for some time, the teacher vented his frustration by asking the student in an irritated tone, “What is it with you? Are you really ignorant or just apathetic?”

The student casually shrugged his shoulders and replied, “I don’t know, and I don’t care.”

I am going to talk today about knowing and caring, the relationship between those two concepts, and what that relationship means to us at this university. My starting point is a passage from the New Testament—1 Corinthians 8. In this portion of his epistle to the members of the Church in Corinth, Paul is answering a series of questions apparently put to him by the Saints in an earlier communication. Chapter 8 specifically addresses the propriety of eating meat that has been offered as sacrifice to idols.

A bit of background concerning this practice helps us understand both the nature of the Corinthian inquiry and the true significance of Paul’s response. The sacrifice of animals to the

pantheon of Greek and Roman gods was a well-established part of Greco-Roman life long before Paul arrived in Corinth.¹ At the time Paul was writing, such sacrifices were performed not only for purely religious occasions, but also at state festivals and various private functions, such as birthday and wedding celebrations.² Thus, as Bible scholar Richard B. Hays explained:

*For those few Corinthian Christians who were among the wealthier class . . . , their public and professional duties virtually required the networking that occurred through attending and sponsoring such events. To eat the sacrificial meat served on such occasions was simple social courtesy; to refuse to share in the meal would be an affront to the host.*³

Many scholars agree that this group of more educated, socially conscious Corinthian Church members was the likely source of the inquiry to which Paul was responding in chapter 8.⁴

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Being familiar with these customs, Paul addresses the propriety of eating meat sacrificed to idols from two perspectives: that of knowing and that of caring—or, to use his terms, *knowledge* and *charity*. The former is the perspective apparently taken by the Saints who made the inquiry; the latter seems to be the one Paul hopes to persuade them to consider. As several scholars have suggested, Paul seems to restate the contention of the Corinthian inquirers concerning what knowledge teaches them about the issue and then to respond to their position from the perspective of charity.⁵

Using the perspective of knowledge, Paul states:

We all have knowledge. . . .

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth . . . ,

But to us there is but one God, the Father. . . .

But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. [1 Corinthians 8:1, 4–6, 8]

In other words, Paul acknowledges—at least for the sake of his response—that the Corinthian inquirers “know” that the idols to whom the meat is sacrificed are not real, that there is but one true God whom they worship, and that it does not really matter whether the meat has been prepared as part of what is essentially a meaningless ritual. It is still meat. Thus the “knowledge” that the Corinthian inquirers possessed had freed them—at least in their eyes—to make an enlightened choice about whether to eat the meat sacrificed at these social occasions.

This part of Paul’s response would undoubtedly have pleased many of his more educated inquirers, because it placed such a high premium on knowledge or *gnosis*, to use

the Greek term. There were few, if any, things in Greek culture that exceeded *gnosis* in importance. Thus, as Hays observed, the Corinthian inquirers might well have thought that “the strong Christian, armed with the appropriate *gnosis*, can go without compunction to the pagan temple and eat whatever is offered there; indeed, doing so may be a way to demonstrate one’s spiritual maturity and freedom.”⁶ Further, Hays theorizes the inquirers “probably appealed to Paul to set the record straight by encouraging the weak to overcome their qualms and enter the world of spiritual freedom enjoyed by those who possess *gnosis*.”⁷

If that was in fact the motive of the Corinthian inquirers, they were to be sorely disappointed by Paul’s response, which highlighted the difference between the perspective of knowledge they had adopted and the perspective of charity Paul advocated. Without contesting the correctness of what the Corinthian Saints knew, Paul invited them to look at the issue from another point of view.

Paul first reminds them, in chapter 8, that “there is not in every man that knowledge” and that “some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol” (v. 7). He then warns them to “take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak” (v. 9), explaining that

if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? [vv. 10–11]

Paul thus appeals to the Corinthians who thought they had full knowledge concerning the subject to consider the impact of their actions on their fellow Saints. Although the “educated” might well understand that there

was no religious significance to the consumption of meat offered to dumb idols, others might not have the same knowledge, and seeing the well-educated Saints eating at the idol's temple, these so-called "weaker" Saints might well assume that there was something to this idol worship. Thus the knowledge of the inquiring Corinthian members of the Church might lead to the destruction of their fellow Saints for whom Christ had given his life.

Given the differences in these two perspectives, Paul informs the Saints of the course that he will follow: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend,⁸ I will eat no flesh while the world standeth" (v. 13). Having the perspectives given by both knowledge and charity, Paul apparently opts for the course indicated by the latter. He seems to be saying that although knowledge may teach that one can eat meat offered to idols without incurring any spiritual damage, charity demonstrates that such conduct may constitute a "sin . . . against the brethren" (v. 12). Given that choice, Paul not surprisingly decides that he will eat no meat offered to idols, even if he "knows" in one sense that it does not really matter whether or not he does.

Although Paul saves his personal resolution of the issue until the last verse of chapter 8, he had clearly indicated to the inquirers where he was headed with his summary of the matter in verse 1 when, in answer to their assertion that "we all have knowledge,"⁹ he stated, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

Paul's message at this point seems fairly clear. He appears to be saying that having charity is much more important than having knowledge. Indeed, he seems to imply that the two are polar opposites. Knowledge artificially inflates or puffs up one's selfish ego and leads one to "sin . . . against the brethren, and . . . against Christ" (v. 12). Charity, on the other hand, edifieth, or, to use the Greek term *oikodomeo*, "builds up" or "strengthens" the entire community of Saints.¹⁰

Given this seemingly clear message, we at a university dedicated to the acquisition and advancement of knowledge must pause somewhat and ask ourselves two questions. First, is it possible that caring is that important? And second, is it possible that knowing is that harmful?

Let's consider each of these questions in turn. First, is caring, or charity, that important? The scriptures amply demonstrate that the answer to that question is an unequivocal yes. Paul himself addresses the issue in words that are familiar to us all:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

[1 Corinthians 13:1–2]

The ancient American prophet Mormon picks up the theme in words recorded by his son, Moroni: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all" (Moroni 7:46).

Nephi made a similar observation when he said, "The Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity. . . . And except they should have charity they were nothing" (2 Nephi 26:30).

In his abridgement of the Jaredite record, Moroni sums up the matter, stating that "except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which [Christ] hath prepared in the mansions of [his] Father" (Ether 12:34).

Clearly, charity is very important. In fact, it is essential to our exaltation. Without it we are nothing compared to what we could be. It is the "very core" of the gospel,¹¹ the very core of the exalted life to which we all aspire.

Thus far, Paul’s apparent message to the Corinthians seems to be right on target. Charity is that important. But, turning to the second question, is it also true that knowledge pales by comparison, that it is indeed harmful because it inevitably gets in the way of charity, as Paul seems to suggest? To put it more bluntly, are we all wasting our time here at this university where we are expected to expend so much effort in studying and acquiring knowledge? Isn’t it enough if we just learn to be really nice to everyone? Again, scriptural and prophetic statements supply the answer—but this time the response is an emphatic no.

The Doctrine and Covenants informs us that “it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance” (D&C 131:6). Similarly, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “a man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity.”¹² Furthermore, the knowledge we are to acquire is not limited to what we might narrowly classify as religious matters. In section 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord instructs us to learn

of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms. [D&C 88:79]

This sounds like a description of general education courses at most universities.

It therefore appears that both charity and knowledge are important—indeed, that both are essential to our exaltation. So why does Paul seem to go to such great lengths to disparage knowledge in his response to the Corinthians’ inquiry about eating meat offered to idols? Why does he not simply inform them that it is not the charitable thing to do and, therefore, not advisable?

The answer, I believe, is that Paul wanted to teach the Corinthian Saints about more than the propriety of eating meat offered to idols. He wanted to teach them something about knowledge and its relationship to charity. It seems that the Corinthian inquirers had confused awareness of factual information with complete knowledge. Paul does not dispute the fact that idols are not real or that there is only one true God. But mere awareness of these factual realities—which the Corinthians apparently thought constituted complete knowledge of the matter—was only a partial or incomplete knowledge, a kind of knowledge that puffs one up in an artificial way. Thus Paul warns the inquirers, “If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know” (1 Corinthians 8:2). True knowledge does not puff up; it humbles. When we have true knowledge, we are not so much impressed by all that we know as we are humbled by all that still remains for us to learn. Accordingly, if we think we know everything on a subject, it is a pretty good sign that we really know “nothing yet as [we] ought to know.” And Paul seems to indicate that the missing link—the element that transforms the mere accumulation of factual information into complete knowledge—is charity.

To understand how this works, one might view factual information as isolated, random dots on a page. Knowledge consists of making connections between the dots in such a way that an ordered picture appears, as in a dot-to-dot puzzle. When we begin to see connections between the various bits of factual information we have at our disposal, we begin to acquire knowledge. However, if we do not consider the impact our actions and knowledge have on others, we will see neither all the dots on the page nor the multitude of connections that might be made to give more clarity and texture to the picture.

The perspective of charity thus allows us to see things in a new and more complete way. It

permits us to make connections that we would not otherwise make. The result is a more detailed, accurate picture of things—one that may differ as much from that produced by incomplete knowledge as a Rembrandt differs from a child's simple stick-figure drawing. Charity can therefore provide the context in which our knowledge can become complete. It was only when the Corinthian inquirers began to place the facts they "knew" in the context of their impact on others—when they began to look at the matter from the viewpoint of charity—that they could begin to see that their knowledge was not as certain or complete as they had initially thought.¹³

Paul therefore seems to be teaching the Corinthian inquirers the same thing Peter taught the members of the early Church when he directed them to add to their knowledge "brotherly kindness" and "charity," among other things (2 Peter 1:6–7). "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8). Although Peter may have been talking about a specific kind of knowledge, the lesson seems to apply to all learning. It is only when factual information is coupled with charity that it can be fully productive and complete; otherwise it too often remains mere awareness of "barren" and not fully connected items of data.

Similarly, Paul seems to be saying not that knowledge is bad, but that it is unproductive, barren, and incomplete without charity. He seems to be saying there is some kind of critical relationship between knowledge and charity.

And just what is that relationship? I confess at the outset that I do not have the complete answer to that question. But I do have some thoughts that I hope will lead you to consider more fully and accurately what that answer might be.

First, I suggest that there is some kind of symbiotic relationship between knowledge and charity, that they feed one another, that the

possession of knowledge helps us be more charitable, and that the attribute of charity helps us be more knowledgeable. Let me illustrate with a couple of simple examples.

In a 1988 address to the Democratic National Convention, the Reverend Jesse Jackson told about his mother, "a working woman," he said, who on "so many of the days . . . went to work early, with runs in her stockings."¹⁴ He implied that others made fun of her because of the condition of her nylons. Although he does not elaborate, given the era and the coldheartedness of some human beings, one can imagine that some of her coworkers might well have whispered to one another behind her back, in tones just loud enough for her to hear, "Look at that dumb woman. She doesn't even know enough to wear good stockings to work." Apparently responding to such observations, Reverend Jackson stated, "She knew better, but she wore runs in her stockings so that my brother and I could have matching socks and not be laughed at at school."¹⁵

A charitable act? Undoubtedly. And, I suggest, made more so by the fact that Reverend Jackson's mother did indeed know what was proper work attire. Had she been completely unaware that wearing nylons with runs in them was not the style, her act, although still laudable, would not have been quite as selfless—not quite as charitable. Her knowledge of the way things were, though perhaps making her choice a bit more difficult, allowed her to exercise charity at a higher level than would have been possible had she been ignorant of the price she was being asked to pay. The same is true of our charitable offerings: When we see things as "they really are" (Jacob 4:13), we are in a position to give an even greater gift than when we see "through a glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Moreover, knowledge can make our charitable acts more productive and fruitful. Although all our hearts may go out to a person

who has been deprived of sight, an ophthalmologist with knowledge of the workings of the human eye is in a much better position to do something about it. Jesus' charitable compassion for the blind was made all the more powerful and productive because of his knowledge of the principles concerning how such defects could be cured.¹⁶ Knowledge can therefore both deepen charity and make it more productive.

Conversely, charity can both deepen knowledge and make it more productive. This is demonstrated by the story of Bartolomé de Las Casas, who in 1514 was a rather ordinary 40-year-old Catholic priest living what was the typical gentlemanly life of a Spaniard on his estate in Cuba. Like many of his fellow countrymen in the Americas at the time, he owned ample land and numerous Indian slaves. Although he was a university graduate, he had not, up until that time, shown much interest in, or aptitude for, scholarly things. Fifty-two years later, when he died at the age of 92, Las Casas had become one of the greatest scholars of the Spanish empire, producing thousands of pages of materials, including works on law, history, anthropology, political theory, and theology.¹⁷ Moreover, Las Casas' scholarship was as productive as it was extensive, and he became a vocal advocate of the Native American people. His scholarly reputation was such that when the king of Spain convened a conference in 1550 to consider the most pressing issue of the day—the manner in which the Spanish should deal with the indigenous population of the New World—Las Casas was one of only two scholars invited to debate the matter.¹⁸

What triggered this sudden outburst of scholarly productivity, this seemingly unquenchable search for knowledge? It was Las Casas' arrival at the conclusion that the indigenous people of the New World were being treated unjustly and that they, of all people, were in need of the love of Christ. The way

in which Las Casas arrived at that conclusion demonstrates how charity can transform awareness of factual information into the kind of deep and productive knowledge that only a lifetime of dedicated searching can produce.

Shortly before Christmas in 1511, Las Casas was part of a congregation in Hispaniola that heard a stern sermon from the Dominican friar Antonio de Montesinos concerning the Spaniards' mistreatment of the indigenous people. Although Las Casas remembered Montesinos' words well enough to record them in a work he began more than 16 years later,¹⁹ they had no immediate impact on him. Las Casas "took no steps to change his way of life and for more than two years after the sermons continued to play the role of comfortable gentleman-ecclesiastic."²⁰ Without charity, Las Casas' awareness of the plight of the Indians remained unconnected and isolated dots of information. He had, at best, incomplete knowledge of the matter.

Yet something began to work within Las Casas once he began to view this information from the perspective of charity. While preparing a sermon to deliver at the Pentecostal mass at the newly established settlement of Sancti Spiritus in 1514, Las Casas came upon a verse from chapter 34 of Ecclesiasticus:²¹

Tainted his gifts who offers in sacrifice ill-gotten goods! . . .

Like the man who slays a son in his father's presence is he who offers sacrifice from the possessions of the poor.

*The bread of charity is life itself for the needy, he who withholds it is a person of blood.*²²

These powerful words greatly affected Las Casas. As historian Lewis Hanke explains:

Pondering on this text for several days and turning over in his mind the doctrines preached by the Dominicans, Las Casas became increasingly convinced "that everything done to the Indians thus

far was unjust and tyrannical." The scales fell from his eyes, he saw at last what was to be forever after the truth for him, and experienced as complete a change of life as did Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus.²³

Once Las Casas viewed the information he had from this new perspective, previously unperceived connections began to appear everywhere. Thus he said, more than four decades later:

Never have I read a book . . . all these interminable forty-four years, in which some argument or authority was not adduced to prove and corroborate the justice of these Indian peoples and to condemn the injustices and evils and harm done to them.²⁴

The same charitable impulses also motivated Las Casas to make this more expanded knowledge productive. He not only preached the sermon at Sancti Spiritus, he immediately gave up his Indian slaves and embarked on a lifelong journey to acquire and use all the knowledge he could on behalf of the Indian people, making repeated arduous trips across the Atlantic to persuade the Crown to alter its policies toward them.

Sparked by what he called "the charity of Jesus Christ, which knows no measure nor seeks any rest while on this pilgrimage,"²⁵ Las Casas' knowledge was both deepened and made more productive.

Near the end of his life, Las Casas wrote: "For forty-eight years I have studied and sought to make clear the law; I believe, if I do not deceive myself, that I have penetrated to the pure waters of principle."²⁶ How many of us can say that we have worked hard enough on a subject that we have penetrated to "the pure waters of principle"? If we have not, perhaps we need to work as hard at acquiring more charity as we do at gathering more factual data.

I do not mean to suggest by these simple examples that only those who are charitable can gain knowledge or that only those who are knowledgeable can have charity. It only takes one as brilliant and yet uncaring as the Unabomber to make it clear that the relationship is a little more complex than a one-to-one correlation between knowledge and charity. However, it is still possible to conclude that knowledge allows one to be more charitable than one otherwise could be and that charity can lead one to be more knowledgeable than one would have been in the absence of that attribute.

Moreover—examples such as the Unabomber notwithstanding—it is still possible to conclude that one cannot possess *full* knowledge without charity and that one cannot possess *full* charity without knowledge. It may well be that the Savior's atoning sacrifice—the epitome of charity—became possible only when he fully understood what was going to be required of him in order to carry out that sacrifice. Perhaps only when he completely realized the full measure of the pain he was being asked to bear was it possible for Christ to exercise the kind of pure love that constitutes full charity. And conversely, some aspects of the full knowledge the Savior possesses may have been obtained only because he had the charity required to make that atoning sacrifice. Perhaps his full understanding of how to succor each individual in each individual trial came about only as a result of the love that motivated him to shrink not from drinking even the dregs of that bitter cup.

Indeed, the relationship between charity and knowledge may be even deeper than that. It may well be that charity is a large part of that which distinguishes knowledge from the more complete and divine attribute of intelligence, the attribute that makes God a god. As we at this university are well aware, the Lord states in the Doctrine and Covenants that "the glory of God is intelligence" and that intelligence is

“light and truth” (D&C 93:36). The Lord also explains that “truth is *knowledge* of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24; emphasis added). And what is the light component of the equation? Although I am sure the matter is complex and that I am far from understanding it in even the most elementary way, I suggest that at least a portion of that light—a portion of the power by which all things exist (D&C 88:7–13)—is the divine attribute of charity.

After the apostle John informed the Saints in his first epistle that “God is light” (1 John 1:5), he stated that “God is love” (1 John 4:8), using the Greek term *agape*, the same term that is translated as “charity” in 1 Corinthians,²⁷ thereby suggesting some critical link between light and charity. Distinguishing intelligence from mere knowledge, Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated, “Knowledge can be obtained and used in unrighteousness. . . . But intelligence presupposes the wise and proper use of knowledge, a use that leads to righteousness and the ultimate attainment of exaltation.”²⁸ Could any more wise, proper, and exalting use be made of knowledge than to effectuate a comprehensive atonement for all mankind, an act that was clearly motivated by charity, or “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47)?²⁹

If charity is indeed an essential component of the intelligence equation, Elder McConkie’s observation that “the devil has tremendous power and influence because of his knowledge, but . . . is entirely devoid of the least glimmering of intelligence”³⁰ could highlight the power implicit in the attribute of charity and explain why Paul, Mormon, and others view it as so critical. Seen from this perspective, the presence or absence of charity may be the key factor in determining whether our knowledge exalts us or condemns us.

Regardless of the exact relationship between charity and knowledge on the one hand and intelligence, or light and truth, on the other, it is clear that charity and knowledge are

both essential to our exaltation and that the two are related to each other in a profound way. The last thing I want to consider then is, What does all this mean to us at BYU today? Let me make three suggestions.

First, as we engage in this lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, we should consider the impact our knowledge has on others, keeping in mind that our knowledge will likely be incomplete and unproductive if we do not view things from the perspective of charity. Bruce C. Hafen, a former dean of the BYU Law School, illustrated how incomplete knowledge can manifest itself when he wrote about the way some students react to the knowledge they acquire in law school.

I have seen some of them try out their new intellectual tools in some context like a priesthood quorum or a Sunday School class. A well-meaning teacher will make a point they think is a little silly, and they will feel an irresistible urge to leap to their feet and pop the teacher’s bubble. If they are successful, they begin looking for other opportunities to point out the exception to any rule anybody can state. They begin to delight in cross-examination of the unsuspecting, just looking for somebody’s bubble up there floating around so that they can pop it with their shiny new pin of skepticism.³¹

When we begin to use knowledge in this way, we can rest assured that we have neither charity nor complete knowledge. The acquisition of both will be enhanced if we remind ourselves of the need for caring and humility in our educational endeavors.

Second, even though the acquisition of knowledge is properly a major focus of our lives, we should make equal efforts to acquire charity. It requires just as much energy and perseverance to acquire charity as it does to obtain knowledge. It requires that we “keep the commandments of God,” as King Benjamin told his people, for such actions cause us to “be filled with love towards God and all men”

(Mosiah 2:4). Moreover, according to Mormon, it requires that we pray “with all the energy of heart, that [we] may be filled with this love” (Moroni 7:48), for, ultimately, charity, like knowledge, is a gift from God (see 1 Corinthians 12:8, D&C 46:18).

Third, in order to make the knowledge we acquire more productive and to increase our charity, I suggest we look for ways to use the knowledge we have to help others and that we regularly do so without monetary remuneration. After making clear the need to develop charity, Nephi observes that if we “labor for money [we] shall perish” (2 Nephi 26:31). This implies that we can never fully develop charity nor make our knowledge fully productive if we do things for others only when we expect monetary compensation in return.

My colleague Cole Durham once told me of an important lesson he learned about such things from Lowell Bennion, who at the time was the director of the LDS institute of religion at the University of Utah. When Cole was growing up, his father suffered from multiple sclerosis. Cole’s father was able to provide for his family because he was a lawyer, but there were still some things his physical limitations prevented him from doing. On one occasion, when Brother Bennion saw that the Durham house was in need of a new coat of paint, he offered to perform the task, knowing that Cole’s father was physically unable to do so. After working long hours, Brother Bennion finished the job. As he was cleaning up, Cole’s father asked him, “How much do I owe you, Lowell?”

“You don’t owe me anything,” came the reply.

Cole’s father protested, “But we can afford to pay.”

Brother Bennion kindly responded, “But I couldn’t afford to do it for money.”

I suggest that all of us would do well to adopt that same principle—that we all commit to use the knowledge we acquire to help

others, and that at times we do so without payment. Among lawyers there is a professional obligation to provide a certain amount of pro bono, or free, legal work each year. Although I admit there are a number of lawyers who do not fulfill this obligation and an even larger number who do so grudgingly, a personal commitment to provide pro bono service would be appropriate for all of us, regardless of the occupation we choose. On one occasion when we were discussing the lawyer’s obligation to perform pro bono work, one law student resisted the notion by stating, “Why should *we* have to provide services for free? No one expects the local grocer to give away groceries for free.” Although no one may expect it, nothing prevents anyone, including grocers and others, from providing their services and their knowledge for free.

For nearly 40 years a man I know and respect greatly operated a store in the coal-mining community of Price, Utah. The store was somewhat akin to a general store, stocking everything from hardware and hunting equipment to furniture and fishing poles and plenty of toys at Christmas. When the store closed on Christmas Eve, there were sometimes toys, bikes, and other goods that had earlier been placed on layaway that had still not been retrieved, often because those who, a month or two earlier, had hoped to give these items as gifts had discovered there was simply no money to pay for them. On numerous occasions this man made a detour or two on his way home on Christmas Eve to anonymously drop off items that would never be paid for but that would also never be forgotten. Such acts and such an attitude are critical components of charity and, I suggest, of true knowledge.

We should always remember that we need to know *and* we need to care. And we need to know and care in the most profound ways if we are to succeed in what is our ultimate purpose in this life. We should realize that such deep knowledge and charity come about only

as a result of hard work on our part, work we should be anxiously engaged in at this university. But just as important, we need to remember that all this is possible only because someone else cared in the most profound way. Charity, after all, is “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47). Without his love, and the atoning sacrifice that it produced, we truly would be nothing. Knowledge of that fact is the most important knowledge we can have because it becomes the building block and the motivating factor for all other important knowledge we can acquire.

May we ever strive to be like him—perfect in both knowledge and charity—is my prayer, in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Notes

1. For a description of the history and significance of sacrifice in the Greco-Roman culture, see Wendell Lee Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10* [Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985], pp. 1–64.

2. Willis, *Idol Meat*, p. 13; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* [Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1997], pp. 136–37.

3. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 137.

4. See Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 137. Hays refers to the inquirers as “gnosis- [or knowledge] boasters” (p. 145).

5. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 136; Willis, *Idol Meat*, p. 66; Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1857], p. 136.

6. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 136.

7. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 136. Hays suggests:

The Corinthians who advocated this position may actually have argued that their more scrupulous brothers and sisters—the “weak,” as the Corinthian letter called them—should try to build up the strength of their own consciences by attending such ceremonies and eating the idol meat. If they would

only do that, they would see that no harm comes of it, and their consciousness would be raised. [p. 136]

8. The Greek term used, *skandalizo*, means to “entrap, i.e., trip up . . . or entice to sin” (James Strong, *Strong’s New Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986], Greek dictionary item 4624. See note a of 1 Corinthians 8:13: “cause my brother to stumble, falter.”

9. That “all have knowledge” is one of the few Corinthian assertions that Paul expressly rejects, for he makes clear in verse 7 that “there is not in every man that knowledge.”

10. See note d of 1 Corinthians 8:1. Strong’s concordance notes that *oikodomeo* derives from the term used for “house-builder” and connotes something that constructs or confirms (Strong, *Concordance*, Greek dictionary item 3618).

11. Addie Fuhriman, “Charity,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* [New York: Macmillan, 1992], 1:264: “The concept of charity is fundamental to the teachings and the procedures of the Church, being the very core of all it does.”

12. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1938), p. 217.

13. That the issue was more complex than the Corinthian inquirers had assumed is made clear by the remainder of Paul’s response, which continues through chapter 10. In verses 18 through 21 of chapter 10, Paul provides additional instruction on the impropriety of eating meat offered to idols.

Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? . . .

But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.

Thus, joining in festivals at which meat was offered to idols was wrong not only because it might cause others to sin, but also because it was in some way incompatible with true devotion to the Lord. Indeed, the issue had already been resolved at an earlier conference in Jerusalem, at which the apostles, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, had arrived at the conclusion that while Gentile converts did not need to be circumcised, they were to “abstain from meats offered to idols” (Acts 15:29). The exact relationship between all these verses—as well as others in chapter 10 that seem to suggest that one can eat meat offered to idols if one remains ignorant of that fact—has provided considerable grist for the scholarly mill of Bible commentators.

14. Address by the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson to the Democratic National Convention, July 19, 1998, p. 11; text of address found on the Internet: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/jesse/speeches/jesse88speech.html>

15. Jackson 1988 address, p. 11.

16. See, e.g., Mark 8:22–25, Mark 10:46–52, John 9:1–7.

17. As one scholar noted, “Bartolomé de las Casas was one of the most prolific writers who ever lived, and his writings are as notable for their variety as for their total bulk” (Henry Raup Wagner, *The Life and Writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas*, collab. Helen Rand Parish [Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1967], p. 253).

18. See Wagner, *The Life*, pp. 176–77.

19. See Wagner, *The Life*, pp. 8, 195–97. Las Casas’ book *Historia de las Indias* was not completed until more than 30 years after it was initiated.

20. Lewis Hanke, *Bartolomé de Las Casas: An Interpretation of His Life and Writings* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1951), p. 20.

21. Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, is a part of the Apocrypha

included in the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate; see Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 41. See also James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1975), pp. 244–45. Although the Apocrypha was included in the original King James Version, “since the early part of the 19th century it has been excluded from almost all protestant Bibles,” due to doubts concerning its authenticity (McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 41). See also D&C 91.

22. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993), p. 47. The ellipsis indicates omitted material of two kinds: (1) verses omitted by the author of this paper, and (2) verses omitted by Las Casas in his *Historia de las Indias*, even though they were included in the Vulgate version of the Bible. See also notes 9 and 10 from p. 47 of Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*, found on p. 484.

23. Hanke, *Bartolomé*, p. 20. There is some dispute as to the rapidity of Las Casas’ conversion process. See note 8 from p. 47 of Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*, found on p. 483.

24. Las Casas, quoted in Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*, p. 48.

25. Las Casas, quoted in Gutiérrez, *Las Casas*, p. 55.

26. Las Casas, quoted by Manuel M. Martínez, “Las Casas on the Conquest of America,” in Juan Friede and Benjamin Keen, eds., *Bartolomé de Las Casas in History* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 314.

27. See Strong, *Concordance*, p. 243, s.v. “charity”; p. 857, s.v. “love”; and *agape*, Greek dictionary item 26.

28. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 386.

29. There also appears to be a correlation between the power of God and his charity. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord instructs us that the “powers of heaven”—that

is, the powers of God—“cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness” (D&C 121:36). And what are those principles? “Persuasion, . . . long-suffering, . . . gentleness and meekness, . . . love unfeigned; . . . kindness, and pure knowledge” (D&C 121:41–42). Compare these qualities with those that Mormon uses in his effort to describe charity:

Charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not

in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. [Moroni 7:45]

Although there is not an exact match, there are remarkable similarities between Mormon’s description of charity and the Lord’s articulation of the principles upon which heavenly power is based.

30. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 386.

31. Bruce C. Hafen, *The Believing Heart* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), pp. 78–79.