



by Elder Stephen A. West

a pairing of disciplines

a few years ago as I was taking a group through my employer's law department, where about 62 lawyers worked, a visitor asked what had prepared me as a lawyer. I think my answer surprised the listeners. • "Perhaps the most helpful skills were those I learned as a missionary for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," I said.

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“Why is that?”

someone asked.

“I learned to talk to people with opinions contrary to my own,” I replied, “to help them move from where they were to where I hoped they would be in such a way that they would feel comfortable and benefitted by the progress that they had made.”

I still believe that a lawyer—whether involved in litigation, negotiation, or arbitration—fulfills a role similar to that of a missionary to the degree that both help people change their thoughts and behavior. There are some wonderful parallels between being a Christian and being a lawyer. The Savior said, “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.”⁷ Given that a Christian is one who strives to be like the Savior, let me draw some parallels between what the Savior did and what we should expect a lawyer to do. First, the Savior is a peacemaker. Second, He is a healer. Third, He is a counselor, an advocate, and a judge.

PEACEMAKER

Like the Savior did during His sojourn on Earth, a lawyer makes peace. A peacemaker is one who shows others solutions they cannot see on their own. If we can settle disputes in ways where both parties to the dispute feel that justice has been done and that they have been heard, we can help make peace and bring harmony where there was turmoil.

Jesus Christ said, “Blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.”⁸ He demonstrated the skill of making peace on many occasions, including one potentially turbulent confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees who brought before him “a woman taken in adultery.”⁹ The scribes and Pharisees pointed out that the Law of Moses dictated that the woman be stoned. In response, the Savior “stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the

ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”¹⁰ Eventually, the scribes and Pharisees “went out one by one . . . and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”¹¹

The Savior later told his disciples, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”¹²

Before an attorney or anyone else can make peace, he must first have peace within himself. Early in my legal career, I learned the importance of gaining inner peace through prayer. This lesson came as a result of being in the same high priests quorum as George Romney, a former governor of Michigan, who was then serving as secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. As we talked in the quorum about prayer, Brother Romney mentioned that when he arrived at his office in the morning, his secretary knew that his door would be locked for the first few minutes. “I go in and kneel at my desk and pray for guidance before I start the day,” he said.

A lawyer who aims to make peace must see all sides of a dispute. As a lawyer you quickly start to understand that there are at least two sides to all issues and that you need to understand all points of view to be effective. In addition, a peacemaking lawyer knows there are times when applying cer-

tain legal principles is not appropriate. For example, determining fault is not always compatible with making peace.

HEALER

As a follower of Jesus Christ, a lawyer should be a healer. A healer remedies ills while taking care not to cause further harm. Just as the Savior spent time with sinners, a lawyer works with those in need of help. The Lord said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.”¹³ As lawyers we often help people reconcile transgressions and leave mistakes behind.

John W. Davis, a lawyer for J. P. Morgan and AT&T, a leader of the New York Bar, and the name partner in the Davis and Polk law firm, said in describing the role of a lawyer:

*We build no bridges. . . . We paint no pictures. . . . There is little of all that we do which the eye of man can see. But we smooth out difficulties, we relieve stress; we correct mistakes; we take up other men's burdens, and by our efforts we make possible the peaceful life of men in a peaceful state.*¹⁴

That concise job description helps explain why the law is a profession and not just a job.

If a Christian lawyer is to be a healer, he or she must possess integrity. I learned some lessons while clerking for Judge A. Sherman Christensen, then a federal judge for the District of Utah. His secretary had

c o u n s e l o r

p e a c e m a k e r

h e a l e r

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in her desk drawer the government's stationery and stamps, and she also had the judge's personal stationery and stamps. The judge was careful that no personal letter ever went out on government stationery or with a government stamp. He was careful that U.S. government ballpoint pens did not leave the office in his shirt pocket and that there were always some of his coins and bills in his secretary's desk to take care of his personal expenses.

I also remember having Judge Christensen point out to me, as a young law clerk, the litigation performance of James E. Faust, then a practicing lawyer in Salt Lake City. The judge said to me in his chambers, "If you watch James Faust and follow the way he does things, you will know how you should act as a lawyer. Look at these pleadings."

Although it was a complex case, the document was plainly and precisely drafted. As to all of those matters that could be

agreed upon, there was a signed stipulation of all parties to that effect. As to those matters in dispute, that also was indicated. The judge suggested that I continue to watch the pleadings that James Faust filed in this and in any subsequent litigation and the way he represented his clients in court to see, in the judge's words, "How it should be done." I have never forgotten that experience and have followed it both in early days as to matters of law and in more recent times as to matters of religion.

COUNSELOR, ADVOCATE, AND JUDGE

A lawyer who seeks to follow Christ emulates Him in fulfilling the roles of counselor, advocate, and judge. Although those roles may seem at times conflicting, their complementary qualities allowed the Savior to more effectively work out his mission. A lawyer who teaches, argues on behalf of, and righteously judges others also will be at his best.

Proverbs says, "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety."⁹ Practicing law teaches you to see people as individuals and not to think of them in stereotypes. You start to see some good in all men as you get to know them and understand what is happening in their lives. Later, you often find that there are reasons that they are as they are, and you start to understand that there is some good in almost everyone.

A lawyer may serve as both a judge and an advocate. The Savior has been categorized as both our Judge¹⁰ and our Advocate¹¹ with the Father. It is unusual to think of a judge later being the defendant's attorney in what may be thought of as a higher court—but in many ways, why not? The judge has heard both sides of the story and has weighed all the facts and the laws that relate to the issue. Who better could be an advocate at the next level than such a person? How reassuring it is to know that the Savior will be not only our Judge but also our Advocate with the Father.

Lawyers do not fare well in literature, and even the scriptures make remarks critical of lawyers. However, a wonderful defense argument given by a lawyer representing unpopular clients is found in the book of Acts. The Sadducees laid their hands on the Apostles and put them in a common prison, but an angel opened the prison doors and said, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life."¹²

After the Apostles had gone into the temple and while they were teaching, the high priests, not knowing the Apostles were gone, called the council together and sent to the prison to have the Apostles brought before the council. They then received word that the Apostles were not in prison but in the temple, teaching the people. So the officers went forth and arrested the Apostles and brought them before the council. The high priest asked them,

Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in his name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. . . .

When they heard that, they . . . took counsel to slay them.

Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. . . .

And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.¹³

This is a fine scriptural description of a lawyer, representing what may appear to some to be guilty men, doing the work a lawyer should do.

As lawyers who counsel, advocate, and judge, we learn the wisdom of adherence to

rules. We learn how to draft and establish rules. We learn about fairness in rules. We learn about the desirability of having everyone who is bound by them understand and accept rules and laws and principles. However, we know there are some laws that we have to keep whether or not we understand them or accept them, because they are the law. Examples of such laws might be eminent domain laws, selective service laws, and yielding right-of-way laws.

In this regard, in a religious context, we think of Adam saying, when asked why he offered sacrifices, "I know not, save the Lord commanded me."¹⁴ When Noah was told to build an ark, he responded by doing so though he must have thought it an unusual request. When Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son, it required adherence to a directive he must have had great difficulty understanding. We also learn that there are times when obedience to a law or rule or principle has to be automatic and immediate.

In conclusion, let me tell you of an experience I had at an interdenominational religious service sponsored by the Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington, D.C., commemorating the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. It was held in a megachurch in the center of the District of Columbia. A group of young grade school students were brought in carrying a large banner made of butcher paper. They spread themselves all the way across the front of this great chapel with this long banner. All of the students had put their painted handprints on the banner. Across the top of the banner it read, "I HAVE A DREAM," the famous quotation from Martin Luther King, Jr.

Under each of the students' handprints was an explanation of each child's dream, what each wanted to become. The banner read something like this: a truck driver, a beautician, a lawyer, a professional basketball player, a carpenter, a lawyer, a farmer, a baseball player, a lawyer. Fully one-third of

the young people had written "a lawyer," a fact that surprised me. As my eyes went across the banner, I saw one handprint that had written underneath, "A lawyer because of what I can do for my people."

I thought of *Brown v. Board of Education* and several other lesser-known cases that have brought dignity and a measure of equality to large groups of people, and I thought that these young students had seen what so often many in society forget—that the law and lawyers can bring about great and lasting change in a nation, state, or community. I also thought of the fact that *Brown v. Board of Education* was initiated by a combination of ministers and lawyers and how many other things of significance in the histories of our country and many other countries have been brought about by Christians and lawyers working together. It is a powerful pairing of disciplines. May we who carry both designations live up to the responsibilities that each discipline puts upon us.

ENDNOTES

1 3 Nephi 27:27.

2 3 Nephi 12:9.

3 John 8:3.

4 John 8:6–7.

5 John 8:9.

6 John 14:27.

7 Mark 2:17.

8 Address, New York, 16 Mar. 1946, in 1 Record of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 101, 102 (1946), quoted in Frederick R. Shapiro, *The Oxford Dictionary of American Legal Quotations*, 273 (1993).

9 Proverbs 11:14; see also Proverbs 24:6.

10 2 Nephi 30:9; Moroni 10:34; D&C 137:9.

11 D&C 29:5; D&C 32:3; D&C 38:4; D&C 45:3; D&C 62:1; D&C 110:4.

12 Acts 5:20.

13 Acts 5:28–29, 33–35, 38–40.

14 Moses 5:6.