On the cover:
Light penetrates the fog at Mount Tamalpais
State Park in Marin County, California.

COVER PHOTO BY MILA ZINKOVA, WIKIMEDIA
We are excited to begin a new year and a new decade for the Religious Educator. Additionally, in 2011 the Religious Studies Center (RSC) celebrates its thirty-fifth anniversary. Established in 1975 by Jeffrey R. Holland, then dean of Religious Education, the RSC promotes research and publication of topics central to the mission of Religious Education at BYU. Ten years after the RSC was founded, President Holland wrote as university president, “With the horizons expanding at an unprecedented rate for the study of what is ancient and what is modern, it is fitting for us to look to the resources, scholarship, and leadership of the [Religious Studies] Center to assist us in our search for ‘all that God has revealed, all that he does now reveal, and [all] that he will yet reveal . . . pertaining to the kingdom of God.’ We build on a grand tradition and hope to add an increasing amount of substantial, published research to the good work already begun.”

In a real sense, we realize that we are competing for your time. With the proliferation of online publishing and the continued expansion of the book and journal trade, no one has enough time to read everything, even in a given field. Certainly this is the case with the restored gospel—countless blogs, articles, and books are posted and released, making it impossible to engage them all. We hope this issue offers many articles well worth your time.

During my research, speaking, and personal travels this past year, I have visited places both near and far. Each place has provided me some insight about myself and about the world around me. Beyond the diversity of the landscape, the people differ widely from those in my own neighborhood. They speak many languages and have different customs, yet they share many of the same dreams. They want to live in a healthy and happy family, and they need shelter and nourishment.

No matter where I travel on this amazing planet, there is something to learn at each destination if I am open to it. Likewise, we hope readers will find value in the diversity of articles in the Religious Educator. Some pieces offer new insight to a familiar topic. Some offer valuable teaching tools. What unites them all is a fresh perspective on the gospel of Jesus Christ, the “good news” we all share.

Enjoy!

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel
Editor
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Staff Spotlight
Four Fundamentals for Those Who Teach and Inspire Youth

Elder Richard G. Scott

Elder Richard G. Scott is a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. This address was given at the Church Educational System Religious Educators Symposium on August 14, 1987, at BYU.

The time devoted to the preparation of this message has been rewarded with the deepest feelings of love, thanksgiving, and gratitude to the Lord for His mercy and kindness in providing us with the holy scriptures, for the indescribable blessing of prayer, and, when we have given sufficiently of ourselves, for the blessing of answer to prayer.

I likewise have feelings of gratitude for the declarations of the prophets that demonstrate a love for the scriptures and lead us to study, ponder, and apply them in our lives.

I have a profound feeling of love for each of you who have participated in this symposium, who so willingly devote yourselves to teaching the gospel to Father in Heaven’s children. I likewise sense deep feelings of love. That love gives encouragement to try to express the feelings of my heart this morning in a way that can be understood to bless the lives of the students you, with such tender care, so willingly serve.

Some of your students may ask, “Why are we studying the Old Testament when President Ezra Taft Benson has spoken so vigorously about the need to know the Book of Mormon?”
In the 1986 October conference, our beloved prophet, President Benson, said:

That sacred and holy book has been of inestimable worth to the children of men. In fact, it was a passage from the Bible that inspired the Prophet Joseph Smith to go to a grove of trees near his home and kneel in prayer. What followed was the glorious vision that commenced the restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. That vision also began the process of bringing forth new scriptures to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Bible in bearing witness to a wicked world that Jesus is the Christ and that God lives and loves His children and is still intimately involved in their salvation and exaltation. . . .

Today we have three new books of scriptures: the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. I love all of these sacred volumes. (in Conference Report, October 1986, 100–101; or Ensign, November 1986, 78–79)

These statements from the living prophet of God indicate the importance of all scripture. Each of your students needs to determine personally how he or she will follow the admonition of the prophet to know and to live the teachings of the Book of Mormon. However, this year’s course in seminary and institute provides you with the opportunity to open the curtains of understanding to many who otherwise may never on their own find the treasures contained within the Old Testament.

I express gratitude to those who prepared the curriculum for this year and, particularly this morning, to all who have labored so diligently to prepare the workshops and messages of this symposium to further facilitate the understanding of the sacred contents of the Old Testament. They have provided you with suggestions, teaching aids, and methods to help your students find the diamonds of truth that sometimes must be carefully mined from the pages of the Old Testament. How wonderful it is that you have the opportunity to invite your students to drink of the waters of truth the Lord has placed in the Old Testament.

You have come to know that your students learn from you in three ways: What they hear, What they see, and What they feel.

What they hear results from your painstaking preparation for each class encounter. Each skill you develop, each teaching capacity you exercise helps them benefit from what they hear.

What they see is more than the visual aids you use within the classroom. Paramount and predominant in what they observe is the example of your
own life—how you work; how you react to challenges in and out of the classroom; for those of you with families, how you treat them. How you live is constantly under observation. It impacts the lives of your students even in moments when you are least aware that you are being an example.

But the greatest impact of all is what they feel in your presence in the classroom and elsewhere. Your commitment to teach the precious children of our Father in Heaven is not alone the long hours you spend in preparation for each class, nor the many hours of fasting and prayer that you may become a more effective teacher. It is the commitment to a life every hour of which is purposefully lived in compliance with the teachings and example of the Savior and of His servants. It is a commitment to constant striving to be evermore spiritual, evermore devoted, evermore deserving to be the conduit through which the Spirit of the Lord may touch the hearts of those you are trusted to bring to a greater understanding of His teachings.

I have observed the influence of some of you, the tremendous consequences of your devoted service as instruments of truth. Years ago, when the first missionaries were being called from South America, they were few in number, enthusiastic but lacking in formal preparation. I contrast that now with the repeated example observed in many areas in South America, Central America, and Mexico, areas with which I am most familiar. There are now young men and young women who have an understanding of the truths of the gospel, a commitment to live them and to teach them to others. Years ago, the peer leaders in the missions were invariably from North America. That is no longer the case. We find equally prepared, devoted, and capable priesthood bearers from the other countries. Much of that preparation has come from laborious, patient testifying and teaching of others like you. From such efforts, there has come a core of capable, devoted, scripturally oriented leaders. One example will illustrate:

Ten years ago, a stake president was called in an area of Mexico. For nine years, he did his devoted best with relatively slow growth resulting. The stake was reorganized. A twenty-seven-year-old returned missionary, who taught seminary and institute, was called as the stake president. He and his similarly trained counselors understand the doctrine, teach and serve as guided by the Spirit, and lead from the scriptures. The result is wondrous.

I think of one of your number whom I love very much who was given the opportunity to accept a position at considerably increased salary or to continue in the Church Educational System. It was not difficult for him or
his wife to determine that they would accept fewer material blessings to con-
tinue the singular privilege of teaching truth to precious children of Father in
Heaven. I am grateful for that determination and for the potent influence on
the many youth that continues to result from it.

I know that each of you has been willing, and many have made great sac-
rifices to serve in the Church Educational System on a full-time, part-time,
or Church-service basis. How can I tell you how we appreciate you, how we
need you, how we love you? How can one measure the eternal consequences
of your selfless service and willingness to give and to give more? How can
we thank your children who likewise make sacrifices to support you in this
sacred service?

Long ago, you realized that the willingness of your students to listen to
your counsel, to open their hearts to you privately, to place you on a pedestal
of respect and honor and appreciation is not entirely merited by your capacity
or service. It is a gift of God to open hearts and minds of those willing to be
taught. It is a great blessing from the Lord that you may teach each individual
truth, encouraging resolute determination to live righteously and to serve
generously. In those sacred moments when we ponder the most important
things in life, I am confident you recognize the singular privilege and enor-
mous blessing of being a teacher of youth. I feel blessed to be in your presence
today. There radiate from you a power and a genuine love that touches me to
the depths of my soul. These feelings encourage me to speak of those thoughts
that I have felt so strongly to communicate this morning.

As I am lifted to the heights by the teachings of our prophet, President
Benson, and consider the depth of understanding, the clarity of communicat-
ing truth embodied in his sermons, I feel the influence of a spiritual giant. I
ask myself, “Who led the child to love the Lord and His teachings?” Parents,
of course, and inspired teachers. They helped kindle and encourage the flame
of testimony in this inspiring prophet of God.

You have a similar opportunity. More than what you teach, more than
what you show or say, the spirit that radiates from you will affect your stu-
dents. A truly effective, inspiring teacher of youth cannot be marginal in
conviction, intermittent in testimony, or wavering in obedience.

I stand before you in honest recognition of my own weakness, having
prayed, pondered, and labored intently that I might find a way to communi-
cate understandably four fundamentals that I know will help you teach youth.
May they be considered in all you do. I pray for the ability to communicate through the Spirit and for you to receive the message by the Spirit.

Teach by the Spirit

The first fundamental I would emblazon in your mind and heart is teach by the Spirit. You never know the extent of your influence when you teach by the Spirit.

Some years ago, a young man listened to a radio broadcast in which Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said that Joseph Smith was instructed of the Lord by revelation. The word revelation captured the young man’s interest and penetrated deeply into his consciousness. The experience left an imprint that had a pivotal influence on his life. He has devoted his life to the study, understanding, teaching, and illuminating of the scriptures.

Through prayer and quiet, persistent effort over years, he helped touch hearts, which led to the opportunity to study the original manuscript of Joseph Smith’s translation of the Bible. That and other extensive work helped establish the authenticity of the published translation. He made significant contribution to the Latter-day Saint edition of the scriptures. That man is Robert J. Matthews, dean of Religious Education and professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

This next example will further illustrate the vital importance of teaching by the Spirit. I am sure that the essence of the experience that I now relate has been felt time and again in your own life. I mention it so that you may remember that the most lasting impressions, the greatest teaching, and the most enduring effects for good will result from your ability to invite the Spirit of the Lord to touch the hearts and minds of those you teach.

A few years ago, I had an experience I will not forget. It occurred during a priesthood meeting. A humble, unschooled priesthood leader in Mexico struggled to teach truths of the gospel contained in his lesson material. It was obvious how deeply they had touched his life. I noted the intense desire he had to communicate those principles. He recognized that they were of great worth to the brethren present. His manner evidenced a pure love of the Savior and love of those he taught.

His love, sincerity, and purity of intent permitted a spiritual influence to envelop the room. I was so touched that, in addition to receiving again a witness of the truths that he presented, I began to receive some personal impressions as an extension of those principles taught by the humble instructor.
These impressions were intended for me personally and were related to my assignments in the area.

As each impression came, it was faithfully recorded. I recognized that because a teacher had taught by the Spirit, I had been given precious truths that were greatly needed for me to be more effective in the service of the Lord. In part, I recorded: “You are to continue to build the Church on the foundation of true principles but with increased expression of love you have been blessed to feel for the great Lamanite people.” There followed specific directions, instructions, and conditioned promises that have altered the course of my life.

Subsequently, I visited the Sunday School class where a very well-educated individual presented his lesson. That experience was in striking contrast to the one enjoyed in the priesthood meeting. While technically correct, the lesson did not have the same spiritual effect. The subject was Joseph Smith; the content of the lesson, information the class would likely never otherwise hear. The instructor used his highly developed expertise, yet the message lacked spiritual power.

This second experience so contrasted with the first that strong impressions came again. I began to write down those impressions. One begins with the statement: “Teach and testify to instruct, edify, and lead others to full obedience, not to demonstrate anything of self. All who are puffed up shall be cut off.” Another entry reads, “You are nothing in and of yourself, Richard.”

In this experience, there came such an outpouring of impressions that I felt it inappropriate to try and record them in the midst of a Sunday School class. I sought a more private location. There I continued to write as accurately and as faithfully as possible the feelings that flooded into my mind and heart.

After each powerful impression was recorded, I meditated upon it, pondered the feelings I had received to determine if I had accurately expressed them. Then I studied their meaning and application in my own life.

Subsequently, I prayed expressing what I thought I had been taught by the Spirit. When that feeling of peace and serenity confirmed what I had sought, I asked if there were yet more that I should be given to understand. There came further impressions, and the process was repeated until I received treasured specific direction that has immeasurably enriched my life.

This experience embodies principles I know to be true regarding communication from the Lord to His children here on earth. It illustrates how as you teach by the Spirit, an environment can be established that will permit the
Lord to communicate personalized messages through the Holy Ghost to meet an individual’s need. I feel, in part at least, that is what this scripture teaches: “He that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth. . . . wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:21–22).

I believe that we often leave the most precious personal direction of the Spirit unheard because we do not record and respond to the first promptings that come to us when we are in need or when impressions come in answer to urgent prayer.

Will you help your students understand these principles?

Teach the Reality of Personal Communication with God

The second fundamental I would strongly emphasize is teach the reality of personal communication from and to God. Help each individual understand how to pray worthily and how to receive and recognize answers from God.

Honestly, I only partially comprehend that process. Yet application of principles I only begin to understand has repeatedly changed the course of my life. It has brought further knowledge, truth, and motivation that could not have been known in any other way. It has shown me undiscovered truths about myself, reduced unnecessary dependence upon others, and repeatedly filled my heart, mind, and soul with such overpowering joy and such all-pervading peace as to be beyond my power to express. It has directed my thoughts and acts in efforts to help others in need, and given me specific information and knowledge unattainable by other means critical to my efforts to act as an instrument to unravel tangled lives.

Personal communication from and to God through the Holy Spirit is as real to me as life itself and far more precious than all the treasures of the earth. Please help those you serve feel the vital importance of prayer in their life. Let them know of your witness of the reality of communication with God.

You have spent years studying the scriptures and the declarations of inspired servants of the Lord relating to spiritual communication. You have pondered those truths and faithfully endeavored to try to apply them in your life. Sacred personal experiences have resulted in your own guidance and direction. While you likely will not feel prompted to share specifics of that sacred counsel, testify that it occurs so that your students, trusting your example, will venture forth in faith.
Have you learned the lesson it took me so long to recognize? When I first received Church assignments that embodied counseling and training others, I was very anxious to share personal experiences considered to have some application in the lives of those individuals. This sharing was based upon an honest desire to help. As further experience was gained, I seemed to have more examples from my own life, or lessons learned from others, that I was eager to share to benefit others. Again, this sharing was done with great sincerity and a desire to help.

As the years have passed, I find that I am now much less moved to suggest to others the specific things I have learned. Rather, I am powerfully motivated to share with them how the most treasured lessons were learned from the Spirit.

There have been many people who have deeply touched and molded my life. Yet I have come to recognize that the guidance, understanding, enlightenment, and experience most treasured have come directly from the Lord through the Holy Spirit.

You know that the Lord has given us no magic wand to provide immediate answers to life’s challenges. You know there is no secret formula for solutions. You have confirmed that God communicates with us on the basis of simple, understandable, verifiable principles. Please testify of that knowledge to those you teach. Let them feel the certainty of your witness that the Lord answers prayers when we live worthily and ask in faith.

**Kindle a Love of the Scriptures**

The third fundamental I would stress is please kindle a love of the scriptures in the mind and heart of each precious youth. Help ignite within them that flame of unquenchable fire that motivates those who have felt it with a desire to know evermore of the word of the Lord, to understand His teachings, to apply them, and to share them with others.

A love of the scriptures can be encouraged in two ways:

First, walk with them step-by-step through many passages of the sacred word of the Lord. Help them feel your enthusiasm, respect, and love for the scriptures.

Second, help them learn to read, ponder, and pray privately to discover the power and peace that flow from the scriptures.

To appreciate the value of reading scriptures together, consider this counsel of President Marion G. Romney:
I urge you to get acquainted with this great book [the Book of Mormon]. Read it to your children, they are not too young to understand it. I remember reading it with one of my lads when he was very young. On one occasion I lay in the lower bunk and he in the upper bunk. We were each reading aloud alternate paragraphs of those last three marvelous chapters of Second Nephi. I heard his voice breaking and thought he had a cold, but we went on to the end of the three chapters. As we finished he said to me, "Daddy, do you ever cry when you read the Book of Mormon?"

“Yes, Son,” I answered. “Sometimes the Spirit of the Lord so witnesses to my soul that the Book of Mormon is true that I do cry.”

“Well,” he said, “that is what happened to me tonight.”

I know not all of them will respond like that, but I know that some of them will, and I tell you this book was given to us of God to read and to live by, and it will hold us as close to the Spirit of the Lord as anything I know. Won’t you please read it? (in Conference Report, April 1949, 41)

Your engendering in youth a love of the scriptures can prevent tragedy. I am overwhelmed with the thoughts of what will occur in the lives of those under your influence as they live to prevent the consequence of deep sin in their lives because they accept truth and live it. These words of President Spencer W. Kimball eloquently depict what I mean:

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” says the old adage. My experience would lead me to believe that the odds are greater. When I see the simple scraping of the upper arm and the application of a little vaccine in the prevention process, I compare it with what I suffered in my twenties with the dreaded smallpox when I could have died, remembering a couple of minutes for a vaccination against many days for the disease to run its course. And when I see one wince so little at the poke of a needle against typhoid fever, I contrast that moment with the many weeks of dizziness and distress and intense fever which nearly burned me out, followed by weeks of starvation and pain and hunger and weakness, trying to gain back my strength. Then I believe that our function is in prevention rather than, or in addition to, cure, with full assurance that as the one increases, the other decreases. The less prevention the more need of cure processes, and the more prevention the less cure is needed. The more needles, the fewer hospital beds, psychiatrists’ couches, and bishops’ offices. ("What I Hope You Will Teach My Grandchildren," address to seminary and institute personnel, Brigham Young University, July 11, 1966, 8)

Help youth understand that personal scripture study is a joyous lifetime pursuit. President Kimball observed: “I ask us all to honestly evaluate our performance in scripture study. It is a common thing to have a few passages of scripture at our disposal, floating in our minds, as it were, and thus to have the illusion that we know a great deal about the gospel. In this sense, having a little knowledge can be a problem indeed. I am convinced that each of us, at some time in our lives, must discover the scriptures for ourselves—and not
just discover them once, but rediscover them again and again” (“How Rare a Possession—the Scriptures!” *Ensign*, September 1976, 4).

Elder Howard W. Hunter noted: “Those who delve into the scriptural library . . . find that to understand requires more than casual reading or perusal—there must be concentrated study. It is certain that one who studies the scriptures every day accomplishes far more than one who devotes considerable time one day and then lets days go by before continuing” (in Conference Report, October 1979, 91; or *Ensign*, November 1979, 64).

The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

Search the scriptures . . . and ask your Heavenly Father, in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, to manifest the truth unto you, and if you do it with an eye single to His glory nothing doubting, He will answer you by the power of His Holy Spirit. You will then know for yourselves. . . . You will not then be dependent on man for the knowledge of God; nor will there be any room for speculation. No; for when men receive their instruction from Him that made them, they know how He will save them. Then again we say: Search the Scriptures, search the Prophets and learn what portion of them belongs to you and the people of [this] century. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1958], 11–12)

President Benson teaches powerfully from the scriptures, both publicly and privately. I was blessed to be present recently when he set apart a new mission president. Then he drew his chair close to the president and his wife, opened the scriptures, and began to read and comment on verse after verse for almost an hour. Consider just one comment made that will be motivating inspiration throughout that president’s mission. President Benson said: “Your mission will soar on the Book of Mormon.”

With counsel applicable to each of us who teach of the scriptures, President Marion G. Romney states:

You can’t teach the gospel unless you know it. . . .

So I would suggest that you do study the gospel and study it every day. You should never let a day go by that you don’t read it.

Now, I don’t know much about the gospel other than what I’ve learned from the standard works. When I drink from a spring I like to get the water where it comes out of the ground, not down the stream after the cattle have waded in it. . . . I appreciate other people’s interpretation, but when it comes to the gospel we ought to be acquainted with what the Lord says and we ought to read it. You ought to read the gospel; you ought to read the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants; and you ought to read all of the scriptures with the idea of finding out what’s in them and what the meaning is and not to prove some idea of your own. Just read them and plead with the Lord to let you understand what he had in mind
when he wrote them. . . . Become converted to it. Become acquainted with the lan-
guage of the scriptures and the teachings of the scriptures.

After you have done that, you have to live it. You can’t learn the gospel without
living it. Jesus didn’t learn it all at one time. He went from grace to grace. . . . You
can’t understand [the gospel] just by reading it and knowing the words; you have to
live it. (address at coordinators’ convention, Seminaries and Institutes of Religion,
April 13, 1973, 4)

Oh, how your students would be blessed if we were to teach as did Nephi:
“I, Nephi, did exhort them to give heed unto the word of the Lord; yea, I did
exhort them with all the energies of my soul, and with all the faculty which
I possessed, that they would give heed to the word of God and remember to
keep his commandments always in all things” (1 Nephi 15:25).

Help your students interlock scriptures throughout the standard works.
Greater understanding of gospel principles will result. Consider the statement
of the Master in the Sermon on the Mount before His sacrifice:
“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”
(Matthew 5:48).

Now ponder His statement to the Nephites: “Therefore I would that ye
should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3
Nephi 12:48).

Jesus’ inclusion of Himself as an example in the second reference after
His resurrection has great meaning.

One has to be impressed with the value of the Old Testament scriptures
by considering the impact just a few of them had on the people of the Book
of Mormon. Consider one example from Nephi: “And I did read many things
unto them which were written in the books of Moses; but that I might more
fully persuade them to believe in the Lord their Redeemer I did read unto
them that which was written by the prophet Isaiah; for I did liken all scrip-
tures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning” (1 Nephi 19:23).

Share the beauty of the scriptures and the peace, serenity, and assurance
that distill from them. Consider David’s psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still
waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his
name’s sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Psalm 23)

Help your students appreciate the value of considering the context in which a scripture is given.

As impressive as are the statements of Moroni concerning charity, they are tremendously more meaningful when we consider that for many years he hid from every other living being because of the certainty that his life would be taken if discovered.

There is a power that can change lives in the specific words recorded in the standard works. That power is weakened when we paraphrase or alter the actual wording. I therefore suggest that you encourage students to cite scriptural content with precision. All you do to encourage students to memorize accurately selected scriptures will bring to bear in their lives the power of their content. This experience illustrates what I mean.

Some years ago, I received an assignment to go to another part of the world to investigate allegations that a Church leader had fathered a child out of wedlock. I took with me a very spiritual mission president knowing that the assignment would be difficult. The accused was a close friend. We interviewed him, those who made the accusations, and those who supported him. After two days, I could not honestly say I had an impression of innocence or guilt. Each time there appeared to be damaging evidence, other evidence appeared to confuse or refute it. Late into the night I continued to wrestle with the matter in prayer and meditation. I searched the scriptures and was led to some I felt would be helpful.

We met with him again the next morning. This time I was impressed to take a different approach. I began. “Whoever is responsible for the act has this scripture to face. Would you read it and then explain in your own words its meaning?” He read it perfectly, but as he began to explain, he hesitated and stumbled. I continued, “This verse speaks of those sent by the servants of the Lord. Would you read it and explain its meaning?” Other scriptures followed. By then, his whole attitude had changed, and he was perspiring and nervously shifting. There came a knock at the door, and he said, “I see you have another interview. I’ll just wait outside,” which he did.

About forty-five minutes later, the phone rang. It was the man. He said, “Can I see you privately?” He entered the room, sat down, and pulled from
his pocket a piece of paper and pushed it across the table. It was a signed confession. How grateful I am for the scriptures that penetrated his heart and initiated the full operation of repentance, which in time has brought a full restoration of blessings.

Teach of the power in the written word of God.

**Encourage Students to “Come unto Christ”**

The fourth fundamental is more easily undertaken as a result of prayerful application of the other three: Encourage your students to “come unto Christ” (Omni 1:26). Persuade each one to make Christ the center of their life.

That is the most vital message of all. Moroni declared, “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32).

Sometimes it is easier for a young man or a young woman to understand more fully the meaning of the life of the Savior and to love him by beginning to appreciate the powerful examples of others in the scriptures. This truth is depicted in the following statement by President Spencer W. Kimball. As I read it, consider how the individuals mentioned have potently affected his life.

I’m hoping that you will involve our youngsters heavily in scripture reading. I find that when I get casual in my relationships with divinity and when it seems that no divine ear is listening and no divine voice is speaking, that I am far, far away. If I immerse myself in the scriptures, the distance narrows and the spirituality returns. I find myself loving more intensely those whom I must love with all my heart and mind and strength, and loving them more. I find it easier to abide their counsel. We learn the lessons of life more readily and surely if we see the results of wickedness and righteousness in the lives of others.

To know the patriarchs and prophets of ages past and their faithfulness under stress and temptation and persecution strengthens the resolves of youth.

To come to know Job well and intimately is to learn to keep faith through the greatest of adversities. To know well the strength of Joseph in the luxury of ancient Egypt when he was tempted by a voluptuous woman, and to see this clean young man resist all the powers of darkness embodied in this one seductive person, certainly should fortify the intimate reader against such sin.

To see the forbearance and fortitude of Paul when he was giving his life to his ministry is to give courage to those who feel they have been injured and tried. He was beaten many times, imprisoned frequently for the cause, stoned near to death, shipwrecked three times, robbed, nearly drowned, the victim of false and disloyal brethren. While starving, choking, freezing, poorly clothed, Paul was yet consistent in his service. He never wavered once after the testimony came to him following his supernatural experience. To see the growth of Peter with the gospel as the catalyst moving him from a lowly fisherman—uncultured, unlearned, and ignorant, as they rated him—blossoming out into a great organizer, prophet, leader,
theologist, teacher. Thus, youth will take courage and know that nothing can stop
their progress but themselves and their weaknesses.

When one follows the devious paths of Saul from a tender of asses to king of
Israel and prophet, and then through arrogance and pride and hostilities and ignoring his Lord and the prophet, to watch this madman slip down from his high place
to the tent of Endor’s witch, and then to see him in defeat in battle, rejected of the
prophet, to ignominy and devastation; and then to see his decapitated head placed
upon the wall for all his enemies to gloat over and spit at—this will surely teach vital
lessons to youth. He climbed from peasant to king and prophet and then slid back
to witchcraft. What a lesson on pride and arrogance.

Our children may learn the lessons of life through the perseverance and per-
sonal strength of Nephi; the Godliness of the three Nephites; the faith of Abraham;
the power of Moses; the deception and perfidy of Ananias; the courage even to
death of the unresisting of the Ammonites; the unassailable faith of the Lamanite
mothers transmitted down through their sons, so powerful that it saved Helaman’s
striplings. Not a single one came to his death in that war.

All through the scriptures every weakness and strength of man has been
portrayed, and rewards and punishments have been recorded. One would surely
be blind who could not learn to live life properly by such reading. The Lord said,
‘Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they
which testify of me.’ And it was this same Lord and master in whose life we find
every quality of goodness: Godliness, strength, controls, perfection. And how can
students study this great story without capturing some of it in their lives? (“What I
Hope You Will Teach My Grandchildren,” 6–7).

In summary, there are four fundamentals I ask you to consider as under-
pinnings to your devoted service:

Teach by the Spirit.

Testify of the reality of personal communication from and to God. Help
each one understand how to pray and how to receive and recognize answers
from God.

Kindle a love of the scriptures in the mind and heart of each of your
students.

Strive to persuade each one to “come unto Christ” to make Him and our
Father in Heaven the center of life.

Although I have tried, I can never express the gratitude I feel for those who
have lifted my vision beyond themselves to the Savior. I can only attempt to
share with others some of what fills my heart to overflowing because of their
efforts in my behalf. I have sincerely tried to qualify to be led to do that today.

As I have spoken to you, I have felt a spirit emanate from you. I have felt
impressed with how the Lord loves you, how He loves others of you around
the world, how He loves those who administer to your needs and direct your
programs.
This year gives you an opportunity to unfold teachings about the Savior, about His plan of happiness that many do not know are in the Old Testament, to provide that additional witness of the reality of the living God.

I know He lives. I love Him with every fiber of my being. With you, I want to use my life in service to Him and in lifting Father’s children around the world by striving to help them understand and live His teachings.

May you be blessed as you serve, teach, and testify. We need you. We love you. God bless you, I pray sincerely, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.  

AE
This fragment, dating to about 100 BC, was originally part of a psalms scroll (11Q5) and preserves biblical psalms 121 and 122. It illustrates the occasionally attested practice of using paleo-Hebrew script as a sign of respect to write the divine name YHWH (Yahweh/Jehovah). Two of the six occurrences of the divine name found on this fragment are on the second line, third word from the right, and on the eighth line, second word from the right (below the empty space).
The Name and Titles of God in the Old Testament

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Jehovah is a divine name, while “God” is a title in the Old Testament as it has come down to us. Jehovah, the God of Israel, is also designated by other titles in the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament). The overview that follows identifies and describes the most common ones. First, however, a context for examining this name and these titles is provided by reviewing the importance of God’s name for ancient Israelites.

Knowing God’s name and titles was, and still is, necessary to worship properly and to invoke divine power. Many passages in the Old Testament illustrate this. For example, Jehovah instructed Moses that through the Aaronic priestly prayer the priests “shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them” (Numbers 6:27). Centuries later, Elijah instructed the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, “Call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD [Jehovah]: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God” (1 Kings 18:24; see also 2 Kings 5:11; Joel 2:32).

In certain passages, Jehovah’s name and titles seem to function as substitutes in place of him. Thus, scripture often indicates that Israelites called on God’s name in prayer (see Psalm 116:13; Mosiah 4:11, 20; Alma 13:28).
Likewise, to praise God’s name was to express praises to and for him. Job declared, for example, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord [Jehovah]” (Job 1:21). And the Psalmist proclaimed, “Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore” (Psalm 113:2; see also Enos 1:1; Alma 7:4; 3 Nephi 11:17).

Taking God’s name upon oneself served to identify a person as a worshipper and devotee (see Numbers 6:27; Mosiah 5:8–12). By extension, a divine name symbolized divine presence: “The place which the Lord your God shall choose . . . to put his name there . . . thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings” (Deuteronomy 12:5–6; see also 12:11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11). Knowing God’s name was thus an important dimension in knowing and worshipping him.

Because of its inherent sacred nature, there were consequences for misusing God’s name. Jehovah instructed the Israelites, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). The Hebrew term (shaw’) translated “vain” in the King James Version (hereafter KJV) means “worthless, frivolous, of no consequence, destructive.” Although exact consequences are not provided, Jehovah promised he would “not hold . . . guiltless”—literally, “not leave . . . unpunished [yenaqgeb]”—someone who employed his name in a trivial or irreverent manner, whether in casual conversation, in covenant making, or when swearing oaths (see also Leviticus 19:12). Not only is the Being it designates holy, but the name itself is holy: “Neither shall ye profane my holy name” (Leviticus 22:32). The Psalmist encouraged all people, “Glory ye in his holy name” (Psalm 105:3), and “let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy” (Psalm 99:3).

The ancient Israelites were not alone in recognizing the power inherent in knowing and properly using divine names. Their ancient Near Eastern neighbors had similar conceptions; however, they lacked the understanding that Jehovah was the only true God: “I am the Lord [Jehovah], and there is none else, there is no God beside me” (Isaiah 44:6, 8; 45:21).

**Jehovah and His Titles in the Old Testament**

In the following basic overview of the terms used by ancient Israelites to refer to their God, only one is a proper name—YHWH/Jehovah. The rest of these terms were used in Hebrew as common nouns and adjectives. They also functioned as titles for Israel’s God.
This name of the God of Israel—יהוה/yhwh—occurs over 6,800 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is sometimes referred to as the Tetragrammaton, meaning “four letters.” Due to historical developments in the English language—for example, the letter $j$ used to be pronounced as $y$—and because the pronunciation of $w$ and $v$ alternates in different languages, the four letters of this divine name are variously written in English as YHWH, YHVH, and JHVH. Whatever the variations in English and other modern languages, the four Hebrew consonants are always the same: יהוה/yhwh (there are no vowel letters nor capital letters in Hebrew). This name has traditionally been rendered Jehovah in English; scholars prefer Yahweh, or simply YHWH. It is derived from the verb meaning “to be” and means either “He is (exists)” or “He causes to be.” The name I AM is an alternate form from the same verb (see Exodus 3:14; John 8:58; D&C 29:1; 38:1; 39:1).

Despite the frequency of $ywhb$ in the Hebrew Bible, “Jehovah” appears only seven times in the King James Version of the Old Testament (see Genesis 22:14; Exodus 6:3; 17:15; Judges 6:24; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; 26:4). This is because the translators generally followed a Jewish practice that developed sometime after 500 BC of not pronouncing the divine name $ywhb$ out of respect for its holiness. Substitute titles were employed when reading the biblical text, leading to the loss of the original pronunciation of $ywhb$. The substitute title most often used in later centuries was יְהוָה/’adonay, “(my) Lord” (discussed below). Since the Middle Ages, the vowel marks (vocalization points) for the word ’adonay have usually been placed around the four consonants of the divine name יהוה/yhwh in copies of the Hebrew Bible, reminding readers to say “(the) Lord” (“the” is not in the Hebrew text), instead of the divine name $ywhb$. This explains why the Hebrew name $ywhb$ is usually represented by the title “the Lord” in English Bibles. Printing “LORD” in a capital and small capital letters shows respect for the divine name and allows English readers to distinguish between occurrences of $ywhb$ in the Hebrew Bible and actual occurrences of the noun ’adon, “lord.”

The familiar name Jehovah is thus an artificial, hybrid form created by combining the consonants $ywhb$ and the vowels from ’adonay (a-o-a)—YaHoWaH, which became Jehovah in English. This hybrid form did not consistently appear in English until the early sixteenth century. The divine name $ywhb$ was never actually pronounced “Jehovah” in antiquity. Scholars postulate that $ywhb$ was originally pronounced “Yahweh,” based in part on
the shortened form of the name *yhw* that appears independently in the Hebrew Bible as *yah/JAH* in Psalm 68:4 and Isaiah 26:4 (“for in the LORD [yah] JEHOVAH [yhw] is everlasting strength”). This form also occurs in the last portion of the phrase *hašēlū-yah*, in English usually spelled *hallelujah*, meaning “praise Yah/the LORD” (see Psalm 150:1, 6) and in Israelite personal names, such as Elijah, “my god is Yah/Jehovah,” and Isaiah, “Yah/Jehovah helps [or saves].”

Curiously, the use of the name YHWH/Jehovah as a divine component in Israelite personal names is not attested until the time of Moses. (Many Israelite and other West Semitic personal names were formed by compounding two words, one of which was often a divine name or title.) The name of Moses’s mother, Jochebed—“YHWH/Jehovah is glory/power” (see Exodus 6:20)—is the earliest Yahwistic personal name in the Bible as we have it. Based on biblical evidence, the practice of using the name *yhw* in Israelite personal names did not really become popular until the tenth century BC. In the Old Testament, abbreviated forms of the divine name *yhw* appear in translation in first position in Israelite personal names as *Jeho-* and *Jo-* (for example, Jonathan, “Jehovah has given”). In final position, it occurs as *-iab* and *-jah* (for example, Adonijah, “my Lord is Jehovah”).

The Bible routinely depicts YHWH/Jehovah as the only God Israelites should worship. Somewhat surprisingly, there is currently no clear ancient Near Eastern archaeological or textual evidence other than the Bible for the worship of YHWH/Jehovah or the use of his name prior to the ninth century BC, about a century after the time of King David. From the mid-ninth century onward, the Hebrew name *yhw* is well attested in Israelite and in some non-Israelite inscriptions.

Because of this situation, most scholars posit that (1) the Israelites’ ancestors in Genesis worshipped the god El (see below), as did the Canaanites and other West Semites, that (2) Israelites later began to worship YHWH/Jehovah, that (3) some but not all Israelite religious traditions were recast to indicate the worship of YHWH from very early times, and that (4) later Israelites assumed that their ancestors’ worship of El was actually the worship of YHWH because the two came to be viewed as one in biblical tradition.

Latter-day Saints do not subscribe to this developmental view of ancient Israelite knowledge of and devotion to YHWH/Jehovah. They do, however, uniquely accept that Jehovah in the Old Testament was the premortal Christ. Taking this view, the question arises, does the Hebrew name *yhw*
ever designate God the Father, or is it consistently used to designate God the Son? Some Latter-day Saints do think the name YHWH/Jehovah at least occasionally designates God the Father in the Old Testament. For example, Keith Meservy stated that “in at least three Old Testament passages it appears that LORD [YHWH/Jehovah] applies to Heavenly Father, not Jesus Christ: Ps. 110:1; Ps. 2:7; Isa. 53:10.”

However one deals with such passages, understanding the meaning of the name YHWH/Jehovah—“He is” or “He causes to be”—and realizing how this divine name is masked in translation—represented by the title “the LORD”—can be helpful in appreciating the degree to which God the Son is mentioned in the Old Testament and the manner in which he fulfilled his purposes in those earlier dispensations. The tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple were, after all, considered the “house of the LORD [yhw/h/Jehovah]” (see Joshua 6:24; 1 Kings 8:63). Of course, in all of this, Latter-day Saints understand that the Son represented and still represents the Father and does all that he does in the name of and under the direction of the Father.

**םאל/’el/God**

םאל/’el is the Hebrew form of a common Semitic singular noun designating deity, “god/God,” in a variety of texts (Hebrew belongs to the Semitic language family). Second millennium BC texts, especially those from Ugarit, indicate that ’el/’il also came to function as the name of the chief West Semitic god, El. The Hebrew plural of ’el is ’elim. It occurs four times in the Hebrew Bible, including Exodus 15:11: “Who is like unto thee, O LORD [yhw/h], among the gods [’elim]?” A singular formation presumably related to ’el is ’eloah (compare Arabic al-’ilah, “the god,” Allah). Less commonly attested, ’eloah is the basis for (or a back-formation from) the plural noun ’elohim, which occurs very often in the Bible (discussed below).

The name-title ’el is attested about two hundred times in the Hebrew Bible and is usually employed as a designation for YHWH/Jehovah, whether found in close proximity to that divine name or not. For example, Psalm 19:1 reads: “The heavens declare the glory of God [’el],” and Isaiah 43:12 reports: “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD [yhw/h], that I am God [’el].” The occasional use of a definite article with ’el, literally “the God [ha’el],” further indicates the use of this term as a title: “Thus saith God the Lord [ha’el yhw/h; literally “the God YHWH/Jehovah”], he that created the heavens” (Isaiah 42:5; see also, for example, 2 Samuel 22:31, 33, 48).
One of the few biblical attestations of 'el not used in reference to YHWH/Jehovah occurs in Ezekiel 28:2, in which Jehovah instructed Ezekiel to “say unto the prince of Tyrsus [the Phoenician city of Tyre], Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God ['el], . . . yet thou art a man, and not God ['el].” This passage can also be translated, “you have said ‘I am a god ['el], . . . but you are a man, and not a god ['el].”

Although feminine forms of the noun 'el do not occur in the Hebrew Bible, they are attested in West Semitic texts. For example, Ugaritic texts include 'ilt, “goddess,” and 'ilht, “goddesses” (for example, “He supplied the goddesses with ewes”).

The masculine singular noun 'el occurs in a variety of West Semitic personal names, including such Israelite names as Joel/yo‘el, “YHWH/Jehovah is God,” and in geographic names, such as beth-‘el/Bethel, “House of God” (see Genesis 28:19). The name Israel also contains the noun 'el (yisra‘el), and is usually translated as “God prevails,” “May God contend,” or “God rules.”

The etymology of 'el, “god/God,” is uncertain. It is sometimes connected with the Semitic lexical root ‘-w-l, “to be strong,” and with a Hebrew homonym ‘el, “power, strength.” If there is a linguistic relation between these two forms of 'el, God and power, then the significance of this name-title for Deity becomes immediately evident.

אלהים/’elohim/Elohim/God

After YHWH/Jehovah, the second most common designation for deity in the Hebrew Bible is 'elohim, “gods/God,” occurring about 2,750 times. Most of these occurrences designate YHWH/Jehovah as the God ['elohey] of Israel, but sometimes 'elohim refers to non-Israelite gods.

Grammatically, 'elohim is the masculine plural form of the Hebrew common noun ‘eloh, which means “god/God.” When functioning as the subject of a sentence, this plural name-title usually occurs in the Hebrew Bible with a singular verb. Sometimes 'elohim designates Israel’s God but with no mention of the name YHWH. For example, “And Joseph said unto [his brothers], . . . ye thought evil against me; but God ['elohim] meant it unto good” (Genesis 50:19–20). In some biblical passages 'elohim alternates with the name yhwh, making it clear they indicate the same being, as in Exodus 6:2: “And God ['elohim] spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord [yhwh].” And often a form of 'elohim occurs in conjunction with yhwh, as in Genesis 2:4, “The Lord God [yhwh ‘elohim] made the earth and the heavens” and in the phrase “thus
saith the **Lord** God [**yhwḥ ‘elōhay**] of the Hebrews” (Exodus 9:1). This use of a grammatically plural noun with singular verbal forms is routinely labeled the “plural of majesty” or “plural of absolutization”—using a plural form to represent the greatness or absolute power of the being designated by the noun, in this case ’elohim/God.16

The common noun ’elohim and grammatical forms thereof also occur in the Hebrew Bible with a plural sense designating non-Israelite gods, including this verse in which a form of ’elohim designates both YHWH/Jehovah and Canaanite deities: “Thou shalt not do so unto the **Lord** thy God [**yhwḥ ‘elōhayka**]: for every abomination to the **Lord**, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods [‘elōheyhem]” (Deuteronomy 12:31). As is the biblical custom, the plural form is translated singularly, “God,” when used with “the **Lord** [yhwḥ],” and is translated “gods” when used in reference to other deities. Similarly, “When Solomon was old, . . . his wives turned away his heart after other gods [‘elohim]: and his heart was not perfect with the **Lord** his God [**yhwḥ ‘elōhayw**]” (1 Kings 11:4). Additionally, a form of ’elohim occurs several times in phrases naming peoples or places, including “all the gods [‘elōhey] of Egypt” (Exodus 12:12) and “the gods [‘elōhey] of Syria, and the gods [‘elōhey] of Zidon, and the gods [‘elōhey] of Moab” (Judges 10:6). However, the form of ’elohim in the similar phrase ‘elohey yisra’ēl is regularly translated as singular, “the God of Israel” (see 1 Samuel 1:17).17 A reference to non-Israelite deities is presumably contained in the commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods [‘elohim] before me” (Exodus 20:3).

The nature of the noun ’elohim in the Hebrew Bible is further illustrated by its use in reference to unnamed divine beings, members of the heavenly council, such as in Psalm 82:1: “God [‘elohim] standeth in the congregation of the mighty [‘ēl]; he judgeth among the gods [‘elohim].” A few verses later, this psalm reads: “I have said, Ye are gods [‘elohim]; and all of you are children of the most High [‘elōyon]. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes” (Psalm 82:6–7). Although this psalm has engendered a variety of interpretations, Latter-day Saints generally see in it a statement on humanity’s divine nature and a depiction of a heavenly host that, at least in part, includes the spirits of premortal humans.18

Another interesting passage, and the last one cited here, narrates the serpent’s encouragement to Eve to eat some fruit in Eden, saying, “For God [‘elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [‘elohim], knowing good and evil” (Genesis
While the modern New Revised Standard Version renders the final phrase, “you will be like God,” the recent NET Bible more accurately renders, “you will be like divine beings [plural].”

Based on such evidence, most Bible readers understandably accept that the noun 'elohim, “God/gods,” merely provided a generic way of referring to divine beings in the Old Testament, whether YHWH/Jehovah, members of the heavenly council, or non-Israelite gods. In this dispensation Latter-day Saints use the name-title “Elohim” to designate God the Father, as distinct from Jehovah—God the Son. As just reviewed, the available biblical evidence does not provide ancient confirmation for this usage. Some Saints have suggested the plural form 'elohim supports the Latter-day Saint doctrine of divine parents (plural), or that 'elohim should always be understood as plural, referring to the godhead in all biblical passages (in harmony with Nephi’s assertion that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are “one God” [2 Nephi 31:21]). While such doctrinal truths may lie behind an original use of 'elohim in remote antiquity, such suggestions are not supported by biblical usage. The Latter-day Saint use of Elohim—designating a singular being, God the Father—is based on the prophetic pronouncements of the Restoration, not the use of 'elohim in the Hebrew Bible as it has come down to us.

Joseph Smith Jr. preached a sermon at Nauvoo on June 16, 1844, about two weeks before he was killed, that included comments on the doctrine of the plurality of Gods. In it he is reported to have said in reference to Genesis 1:1 and 1:27: “The word Eloheam ought to be in the plural all the way thro—Gods—the heads of the Gods appointed one God for us—& when you take a view of the subject it sets one free to see all the beauty holiness & perfection of the God [Gods?]” While his emphasis in these remarks is clearly theological, rather than linguistic, Joseph Smith knew enough Hebrew to recognize that the term 'elohim/Elohim (or Eloiheam, as it is written in this quotation) was a plural term. However, when he declared, “The word Eloheam ought to be in the plural all the way thro—Gods,” it is not entirely clear what he intended to convey by the phrase “all the way thro.” Perhaps he meant just the passage on creation, which he was using for his theological exposition. Consider the frequent use of the phrase “the Gods” in Abraham 4–5 in relation to the planning and creation of this earth, in the place of “God,” 'elohim, translated as singular in the KJV Genesis account. Less likely, Joseph Smith may have intended to convey that each and every attestation of 'elohim in the whole Hebrew Bible should be rendered as a plural, “Gods.” If he
meant this, then he presumably assumed that later editors were responsible for altering the Hebrew Bible, for as was reviewed above, singular verbs are used when the subject *'elohim* is used to designate YHWH/Jehovah, and YHWH/Jehovah and *'elohim* are used interchangeably to designate the God of Israel.\(^{23}\)

Joseph Smith’s comment, “The heads of the Gods appointed one God for us,” certainly conveys his understanding that ancient Israelites had, and we have, a God who directs his covenant people through his prophets. This God (*'elohim*) is regularly designated in the Old Testament as YHWH/Jehovah, the premortal Christ. The use of the grammatically plural name-title *'elohim* to designate Jehovah, God the Son, in the Old Testament and to name God the Father in this dispensation serves to emphasize their matchless power and grandeur.

**ヤヌ/‘adon/Lord**

The common noun *‘adon*, “lord,” was employed in Hebrew and some other West Semitic languages in reference to deity and to humans. The name of the Greek deity Adonis, for example, derives from *‘adon*, transferred through the Phoenicians. When *‘adon* refers to God in the Bible, it is printed “Lord” in translation. Sometimes *‘adon* refers to human rulers, and is rendered “lord” (except at the beginning of sentences). First Samuel 25:26, for example, reports that Abigail swore an oath to David, saying, “Now therefore, my lord [*‘adoni*], as the Lord [*yhwh*] liveth.”

The word *‘adon* occurs as a title for Jehovah over four hundred times in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible, usually as a plural form with a first-person singular pronominal suffix, *‘adonay*, literally “my lords,” but usually translated “(the) Lord.”\(^{14}\) Isaiah 6:1, for example, reads “I saw also the Lord [*‘adonay*] sitting upon a throne.” Israelite personal names composed with this title include *‘adoniyah*/Adonijah, “my lord is YHWH,” and *‘adoniram*/Adoniram, “my lord is exalted.”

In some biblical passages, the title *‘adonay* immediately precedes the divine name *yhwh*. As mentioned above, the practice of pronouncing *‘adonay*, “Lord,” developed when the name *yhwh* was encountered in the biblical text. Therefore, occurrences of the phrase *‘adonay yhwh* are usually rendered “Lord God” in English (with God printed with small caps), rather than the expected but redundant-looking “Lord Lord,” even though the word “God” is not in the Hebrew of this phrase. One well-known example of this appears in Amos 3:7: “Surely the Lord God [*‘adonay yhwh*] will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”
The frequent use of the title ‘adonay for YHWH/Jehovah in the Old Testament underscores the supreme rule of Israel’s God. As Moses emphasized to the Israelites, “The Lord [yhw] your God [‘elohykeem] is God of gods [‘elohey ha’elohim], and Lord of lords [‘adoney ha’adonim], a great God [ha’el baggadol]” (Deuteronomy 10:17). He was, and still is, the Lord or ruler of his people, who covenant to be loyal to and obey him.

Other Name-Titles Used for Israel's God

The Hebrew Bible also employs a number of other, less commonly attested titles in reference to Israel’s God. Four of these follow.

שדי/shadday/Shaddai/Almighty. Scholars have struggled for millennia to interpret the divine name-title shadday. Usually translated “Almighty,” suggestions include deriving it from a word meaning “strong, powerful,” from a word for “breast” (thus designating life and fertility), or from a word for “mountain” (thus meaning “one who dwells in the mountains”). The English translation “Almighty” is based on some of the renditions of Hebrew shadday in the Latin Vulgate and, to a lesser extent, the Greek Septuagint, whose translators wrestled with how to translate a term the etymology of which was unknown to them.25

This title occurs forty-eight times in the Old Testament, usually in parallel or conjunction with ’el, but also with the name yhw and other divine titles. Examples include: “the Lord [yhw] appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God [’el shadday]” (Genesis 17:1); “[Naomi said] the Almighty [shadday] hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord [yhw] hath brought me home again empty” (Ruth 1:20–21); and “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High [’elyon] shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty [shadday]” (Psalm 91:1).

Numerous occurrences of the divine title “Almighty” in the Book of Mormon, New Testament, and Doctrine and Covenants may be based on the use of shadday in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 2 Nephi 9:46; Revelation 11:7; D&C 84:96). Understood in its traditional sense, the use of this title for YHWH/Jehovah again emphasizes his might, supremacy, and ability to deliver and sustain his people—he is all-mighty/Almighty.

עליון/’elyon/Most High. The adjective ’elyon, “upper, higher,” not only describes objects and people, but also functions as a nominal, divine name-title meaning “Most High” in Hebrew and other West Semitic texts. In the Bible, ’elyon occurs in conjunction with YHWH/Jehovah’s titles or in parallel
to them or his name (sometimes in close proximity and sometimes several verses away). Examples from approximately two dozen occurrences in the Old Testament include: “Melchizedek . . . was the priest of the most high God [‘el ‘elyon]” (Genesis 14:18; see also 14:19, 20, 22); and “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord [yhw], and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High [‘elyon]” (Psalm 92:1; see also 91:1, quoted above). The title ‘elyon thus emphasizes the exalted nature of God.

אביר יעקב/’abir ya’aqob/Mighty One of Jacob. The Hebrew title ‘abir ya’aqob is translated as “mighty One of Jacob” and “mighty God of Jacob” five times in the King James Version, even though “God” is not in the Hebrew phrase. The variation ‘abir yisra’el “mighty One of Israel” occurs one time (Isaiah 1:24). Two examples include “His hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob [‘abir ya’aqob]” (Genesis 49:24) and “I the Lord [yhw] am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob [‘abir ya’aqob]” (Isaiah 49:26). The Hebrew noun ‘abbir (with double “b”) appears in the Bible with the meaning “powerful, strong,” and designates people and animals, including bulls (see Isaiah 34:7). This suggests to many Bible scholars that the spelling ‘abir (with a single “b”), attested only in this divine title, is artificial and that the biblical phrase ‘abir ya’aqob/yisra’el should be translated “Bull of Jacob/Israel,” powerfully symbolizing the “might” or strength of God.26

Conclusion

The preceding overview explains and illustrates biblical occurrences of the name YHWH/Jehovah and important titles employed by the ancient Israelites in their worship of him.27 There are thousands of occurrences of this
divine name and these titles in the Old Testament. Only a few of them have been cited here as examples. However, when one knows them, they are readily seen on every page of the Old Testament. Hopefully, readers will not only be more attentive to the scriptural occurrence of these titles and this name but will also consider how these titles were employed to represent the nature of YHWH/Jehovah—powerful, exalted, everlasting, Lord, Almighty, God.

It is enjoyable, instructive, and appropriate to read or think “Yahweh” or “Jehovah” whenever one encounters the phrase “the Lord” in translations of the Old Testament, such as in the King James Version. In so doing, one actually uses the name of God found in the Hebrew text of this scripture. As has been elsewhere observed, “We can find Jesus Christ in the Old Testament by substituting Jehovah for Lord whenever it appears. Then something wonderful happens. Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ, appears from beginning to end of this great book as the God of the Old Testament.”

Knowing the divine name and titles reviewed above and understanding what they mean helps us not only more fully understand and appreciate the Old Testament, but also more fully comprehend whom the ancient Israelites worshipped. Reverently considering this divine name and these titles during our own worship can be very meaningful for latter-day worshippers of Jehovah/Jesus, the Great I AM. Recognizing the source of salvation, the Psalmist prayed, “Save us, O Lord our God [ywhh ’eloheynu], and gather us . . . to give thanks unto thy holy name” (Psalm 106:47). And Nephi, Benjamin, Peter, and others declared, there is “no other name given . . . whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ” (Mosiah 3:17), who is YHWH/Jehovah, the Lord.

Notes

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1. Examples of relevant references from the Book of Mormon are also provided to demonstrate the continuity in other ancient scripture of the observations made herein.

2. Some have wondered if YHWH/Jehovah is a name that originated as a title, and could thus perhaps be used to designate God the Father as well. While this may be possible, it goes beyond our knowledge. The witness of the available evidence—the Hebrew Bible and Restoration usage—is that Jehovah is the name of Israel’s God, God the Son.

3. Portions of this discussion of the name Jehovah first appeared in Dana M. Pike, “Biblical Hebrew Words You Already Know and Why They Are Important,” Religious Educator 7, no. 3
The first vowel in the English form Jehovah is different from the first vowel in 'adonay because of the nature of the 'aleph, the first letter in 'adonay. This vowel would normally be pronounced as a short “eh,” but the preceding ‘aleph changes it to a short “ah.” Thus the first vowel in the name Jehovah came to reflect the traditional pronunciation of this vowel. Jehovah was spelled Iehouah in William Tyndale's translation of the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) in 1530. The English j developed from the letter i, which when it appeared as the initial letter in a word was pronounced like a y. Thus, Tyndale and others in his day pronounced the name Iehouah as “Yehowah,” while we, centuries later, write and pronounce it “Jehovah.”

From outside the Bible we do not know of any non-Israelites who employed this divine name in their personal names. See the reference in the following note.

Nonbiblical evidence that anyone in the ancient Near East worshipped YHWH or used this divine name in personal names prior to the tenth century BC is extremely limited and very ambiguous at best. For a summary of the relevant data, see Dana M. Pike, Israelite Theophoric Personal Names in the Bible and Their Implications for Religious History (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 33–40.


For support that YHWH/Jehovah is Christ, see Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:27, who stated, “All revelation since the fall has come through Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.” See also “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” Ensign, April 2000, 2, and scripture passages such as 1 Nephi 19:10, 12–13; 2 Nephi 9:2, 4–5, 19; Mosiah 3:5, 8; and D&C 110:2–4.

Interestingly, the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, D&C 109, may seem at first glance to lack distinction between God the Father and the name Jehovah. Joseph Smith addresses “Jehovah” in 109:14, 42, 56, and 68, while verses 22, 24, and 29 each begin, “We ask thee, Holy Father.” In fact, in D&C 109 the Prophet employs a number of phrases used to refer to Jehovah in the Old Testament, including “Lord God of Israel” in verse 1. Some Church members have suggested this indicates a lack of delineation by Joseph Smith in the use of the name Jehovah (using it for the Father and the Son). Others have suggested this dedicatory prayer contains expressions to the Son in the context of a prayer to the Father. For example, “Such . . . expressions of praise to Jehovah, and also a formal prayer to the Father . . . are perfectly linked together in the revealed dedicatory prayer. . . . The command to build the house came from the Lord Jesus. He conveyed the Father’s will and gave the direction. It was his voice that spoke to Joseph Smith” (Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler, Revelations of the Restoration [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000], 865–66).
The term ‘elim’ in this verse presumably refers to other members of the divine council in heaven. See also, for example, Psalm 19:1: “Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty [beney ‘elim, literally ‘sons of gods,’ or ‘divine beings’].”

A name-title is a title that comes to function in place of, or even as, a name.


One example of the occurrence of this noun ‘el is in Genesis 31:29: “It is in the power [‘el] of my hand to do you hurt.” See also an example of the plural form of this noun, ‘elohim, in Job 41:25: “When he raiseth up himself, the mighty [‘elim] are afraid.” Lexicographers have wondered whether ‘el, meaning “power,” developed from ‘el, “god/God,” or whether it was the other way around, or if there is any connection at all.

The derivation and etymology of ‘el are complex linguistic issues not likely to be clarified any time soon, and they go far beyond the scope of this paper.

Other texts and cultures preserve related practices. For example, past European monarchs sometimes employed the “royal we,” using a plural pronoun, to represent the greatness of their own power, and there are a number of occasions in the Quran in which Allah says “We” when referring to himself. This phenomenon is somewhat different, however, from what is being discussed regarding ‘elohim in the Bible. God/’elohim always speaks in the singular in the Bible and refers to himself in the singular, with the exception of Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our image.” In Genesis 11:7, YHWH/Jehovah says, perhaps speaking to the heavenly host, “Let us go down, and there confound their language.”

Likewise, this plural form occurs in conjunction with the singular names of non-Israelite deities, such as “Chemosh the god [’elohey] of the Moabites, and Milcom the god [’elohey] of the children of Ammon” (1 Kgs 11:33).

This concept is attested in many biblical passages; see also D&C 121:32 for the concept of divine beings assembled in a heavenly council: “According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was.” For a more complete and detailed discussion of Psalms 82 from a Latter-day Saint perspective, see, for example, Daniel C. Peterson, “Ye Are Gods’: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” in The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 471–594, and David E. Bokovoy, “Ye Really Are Gods’: A Response to Michael Heiser concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John,” FARMS Review 19, no. 1 (2007): 267–313.

The plural rendition of ‘elohim in the KJV and the NET Bible is grammatically accurate, given the plural form of the Hebrew participle that is translated “knowing.” If the singular sense of “God” had been intended by ‘elohim, the participle would have been singular, not plural.

See for example James R. Clark, ed., Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 5:26, in a doctrinal exposition published under the names of President Joseph F. Smith, his counselors, and the Twelve Apostles: “God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title ‘Elohim, is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race.”

The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph, comp. and ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 379–380. The quote included here is from a written report by Thomas Bullock. Latter-day Saints may be more familiar with the editorially “improved” version of this quotation, found in Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. Joseph

22. It is now recognized that the Hebrew letter he, “h,” is part of the independent form *’elohah*, and that -*im* is the plural suffix (not the *’eloi* and *beam* as presented in this quotation). Joseph Smith studied Hebrew with Professor Joshua Seixas in Kirtland, Ohio, in the early months of 1836. References to his study of Hebrew in Kirtland are found in Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–51), 2:385, 390, 396, 397, and elsewhere. For a convenient summary and discussion of his efforts with Hebrew, see D. Kelly Ogden, “The Kirtland Hebrew School (1835–36),” in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio*, ed. Milton V. Backman (Provo, UT: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1990), 63–87.

23. A similar ambiguity is evident in another declaration from Joseph Smith’s same sermon: “I once asked a learned Jew, ‘If the Hebrew language compels us to render all words ending in *heim* in the plural, why not render the first *Eloheim* plural?’ He replied, ‘That is the rule with few exceptions; but in this case it would ruin the Bible.’ He acknowledged I was right” (*Teachings*, 372). The “first *Eloheim*” must be a reference to the occurrence of *’elohim* in Genesis 1:1. Presumably, the Jewish man’s reply, “It would ruin the Bible,” refers to the theology of the Bible as understood by Jews and Christians, but it does not necessarily imply that the Jewish person was saying that every attestation of *’elohim* in the Hebrew Bible should be translated as plural.

24. The use of this plural form is usually understood to reflect the principle of “plural of majesty,” referred to above in connection with *’elohim*.

25. Helpful in considering the broader use of the Hebrew term *shadday* as a title for deity is the occurrence of the cognate plural form *shaddayin* in the Deir ‘Allah inscription, a text written with ink on plaster discovered in fragmentary condition at Deir ‘Allah, a site located in the eastern Jordan River Valley about a mile north of the Jabbok River. The text is written in a local dialect with Aramaic and Ammonite affinities and dates to about 800–750 BC. The plural *shaddayin* is usually just transliterated “Shaddayin” rather than translated, but it clearly refers to divine beings who “took their place in the [heavenly] assembly.” The term occurs in parallel with *’elohin* (as it is written in that dialect), “gods” (1.5–6; see Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 435–39, 444).


27. A few other titles associated with Israel’s God could have been discussed if space permitted, such as the common noun *ba'al* (“master,” Hosea 2:16), which more often occurs in the Hebrew Bible as Baal, the name-title of the Canaanite storm god. Other rarely attested titles involve compounds with the divine name YHWH/Jehovah, and which generally function as the names of altars and cities, such as “the LORD our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16). One important exception is the title “the LORD of hosts,” *yehub s.eba’oth* (see, for example, 1 Samuel 1:11), which occurs over two hundred times in the Old Testament (primarily in prophetic books). The Hebrew term *s.eba’oth* sometimes occurs transliterated as “Sabaoth” in the New Testament (see Romans 9:29) and the Doctrine and Covenants (see 87:7). For a discussion of this term and the phrase “the LORD of hosts,” see Pike, *Biblical Hebrew Words*, 103–5.


29. See similarly 2 Nephi 25:20; 31:21; Mosiah 5:8; Acts 4:12; D&C 18:23.
In the Council in Heaven, Jesus offered to redeem us, saying, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:2).
any parents, as they have labored through the process of raising a teen-
ger, may have wondered at times if Satan’s idea of destroying agency
was such a bad idea. However, most parents have learned from experience
that trying to control a child’s decision, even in the right direction, can often
result in the child’s rebellion. Very few, if any, like to be forced to do some-
thing, even if it is good. Having the right to live according to our personal
desires and to exercise our agency, even if what we choose is not wise or
good for us, is very precious to us. We prize our moral agency so highly that
any attempt to undermine, circumvent, manipulate, control, or eliminate it
often leads to conflict. These battles have spanned heaven and earth and have
included both individuals and great assemblies.

The War in Heaven
In one of the most significant of such conflicts, Lucifer “became Satan”
(Moses 4:4). When Satan “rebelled against [God], and sought to destroy the
agency of man” (Moses 4:3), there was “war in heaven” (Revelation 12:7). That
conflict led to Satan being “thrust down from the presence of God” (D&C 76:25), for God had given “unto man his agency” (Moses 7:32) and would not allow it to be destroyed. Sadly, Satan was able to amass a large following to his cause, which resulted in the loss of “a third part of the hosts of heaven” (D&C 29:36; Revelation 12:4), the first casualties of an ongoing war.

It seems baffling that Satan was so successful in enlisting “many” (Abraham 3:28) in a cause that would lead to the loss of something as precious as agency. An examination of Satan and his tactics in relation to the doctrine of agency may reveal some possible answers as to how he could have done so. We must remember that even today his arguments are very convincing to some. We hope some of the lessons we learn will help reduce the casualty count as the war rages on.

The scriptures do not give much detail about what Satan proposed or how he promoted his ideas in the war in heaven. However, they do reveal significant information in regard to his motives and character, which is very helpful in understanding his tactics. We know that Satan was “an angel of God who was in authority . . . who rebelled” against God and his Son (D&C 76:25). He desired the “honor” and “power” (D&C 29:36) of God for himself. He wanted not only to “exalt [his] throne above the stars of God” (Isaiah 14:13) but also to exalt himself above all, including God (see 2 Thessalonians 2:4). President Ezra Taft Benson taught that Satan’s pride created in him a desire not only to be honored, but “to be honored above all others. In short, his prideful desire was to dethrone God.” The Doctrine and Covenants tells us that Satan wanted “to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ” (D&C 76:28). This was not just a resentful resistance to God’s authority, not just a strong aversion or opposition, but a desire to take over. Satan wanted to overthrow our Father in Heaven.

It appears that Satan felt there was an opportunity to attain his desires when our Heavenly Father presented a plan that would result in the loss of some souls. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the devil said he could save them all, and laid his plans before the grand council who gave their voice in favor of Jesus Christ. So the devil rose up in rebellion against God, and was cast down, with all who put up their heads for him.”
The scriptures are silent in regard to how Satan proposed to “redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost” (Moses 4:1). Yet Satan presented an argument that was so convincing that many preferred it over the Father’s plan. The scriptures tell us that Satan’s proposal would “destroy the agency of man” (Moses 4:3). Just how Satan’s plan would destroy agency is not explained. The most often taught theory is that Satan wanted to force mankind to live the gospel. However, nowhere in scripture are the words “force” or “compel” used in connection to Satan’s plan. In addition, the scriptures teach that Satan “persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one” (Moroni 7:17) and that he is “the father of all lies” (Moses 4:4; 2 Nephi 2:18) and has been so “from the beginning” (D&C 93:25). To be “forced” does not seem to be very appealing, nor is it likely that such an argument was compelling enough to rally a large following. As mentioned previously, most people not only resent being forced, but usually oppose it vigorously. Robert J. Matthews taught:

I think we often miss the major issue of the contention in premortality that eventually led to the war in heaven. We talk about it as though Satan were going to force everybody to obey when he said, “I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost”—we interpret that as meaning that he was proposing forced obedience.

It seems strange to me that a third of all the spirits that had the potential to be born into this world would have favored a proposal of forced obedience. Most of us do not like to be forced. As I see it, the issue was not so much one of force as it was that Satan said he would guarantee salvation for his spirit brothers and sisters. He promised salvation without excellence, without effort, without hard work, without individual responsibility, and without obedience to righteous laws. That is the lie he promulgated in the pre-earth councils.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. suggested that Satan’s proposal may have involved something other than simple force. He said, “Satan’s plan required one of two things: Either the compulsion of the mind, the spirit, the intelligence of man, or else saving men in sin.” This second option has some interesting implications, which we will examine later. Forcing people “to do good” may be one way to destroy agency, but it is not the only way.

To understand how Satan may have sought to destroy agency, we must understand what agency is and what is required in order for it to operate. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained it this way:

Agency is the ability and freedom to choose good or evil. . . . Four great principles must be in force if there is to be agency: 1. Laws must exist, laws ordained by an Omnipotent power, laws which can be obeyed or disobeyed; 2.
exist—good and evil, virtue and vice, right and wrong—that is, there must be opposition, one force pulling one way and another pulling the other; 3. A knowledge of good and evil must be had by those who are to enjoy the agency, that is, they must know the differences between the opposites; and 4. An unfettered power of choice must prevail.9

The most common conclusion seems to be that Satan’s desire was to eliminate point 4, the “unfettered power of choice” by forcing mankind to “be good.” However, agency required all four conditions to be in place. The removal of any of them would destroy agency. As one considers the options, it is difficult to imagine even those wicked spirits that made up the “third part” that followed Satan being amenable to being forced.

The Need for a Redeemer

To appreciate some of the options that may have been more appealing to those that chose to follow Satan, let us briefly examine the heart of the gospel plan—the need for a redeemer. Satan sought this position, for which Christ had been chosen “from the beginning” (Moses 4:1). The need for a redeemer is abundantly spoken of in scripture. We can capsulize these teachings by referring to just a few scriptures.

Because of the Fall of Adam, we all need a redeemer. From the Fall, the natural man has become “an enemy to God” (Mosiah 3:19). When we break the laws of God, we sin, “for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Because “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23), we all find ourselves unfit to dwell in God’s presence, for “no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom” (3 Nephi 27:19) or “dwell in his presence” (Moses 6:57). And “by reason of transgression . . . man became fallen [and] were cut off from the presence of the Lord. Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption” (2 Nephi 9:6–7). Thus without a redeemer man would have become “lost forever,” and there would be “no means to reclaim men from this fallen state” (Alma 42:6, 12).

Our Father in Heaven’s plan required the suffering and death of a redeemer “who did no sin” (D&C 45:4). Obviously, Satan would not have qualified, yet he selfishly aspired to the glory and honor of the position, with little or no regard for those for whom the plan was laid. He also knew that Christ, as God’s “Firstborn” (D&C 93:21) would be God’s heir.10 Satan’s request of the Father to “send me, I will be thy son” (Moses 4:1) was just the beginning of his
aspirations, for Satan did not want to settle for being God’s heir; he wanted God’s throne.

Agency and Law

In Father Lehi’s great discourse to his son Jacob, he explained the need for a redeemer who “offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law” (2 Nephi 2:7). He also explained that there is a “punishment which is affixed” (v. 10) unto the law. He then taught, “If ye shall say there is no law, ye shall also say there is no sin” (v. 13). In other words, if there is no law there is nothing forbidden, and if nothing is forbidden there can be no such thing as sin nor agency. “How could [there be] sin if there is no law?” asked Alma (Alma 42:17; see also Romans 4:15).11 If there is no sin, there is no need for a redeemer to offer himself a sacrifice for sin. Jacob later taught that “where there is no law given there is no punishment; and where there is no punishment there is no condemnation” (2 Nephi 9:25).12 If Satan could destroy the law, he would also destroy both agency and the need for a sinless redeemer.

Lehi explained to Jacob that if there is no law there is no opposition, and if there is no opposition “man could not act for himself” (2 Nephi 2:16), meaning that man could not have agency, for there are no alternatives from which to choose. Speaking on this subject, Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, “In other words, if we did not have opposition, we could not exercise our free agency by making choices.”13 In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord said, “And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves” (D&C 29:39). If there is no law there can be no temptation to break a law. The result would be the loss of agency.

Satan’s boast that he could “redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost” (Moses 4:1) may have been made on the premise that there would be no law and therefore no sin. President Brigham Young said, “There is no being in all the eternities but what is governed by law. Who is it who desires to have liberty and no law? They who are from beneath. This is what Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, wanted. He wanted to save the world without law, to redeem the world without order.”14 If there was no law and, as a result, no sin, there would be nothing that would prohibit entrance into the kingdom of God. Satan was fabricating the impression that any conduct would be permitted without any negative consequences. In essence, he was camouflaging the misery that would naturally follow sin.
Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote:

When the Eternal Father announced his plan of salvation—a plan that called for a mortal probation for all his spirit children; a plan that required a Redeemer to ransom men from the coming fall; a plan that could only operate if mortal men had agency—when the Father announced his plan, when he chose Christ as the Redeemer and rejected Lucifer, then there was war in heaven. That war was a war of words; it was a conflict of ideologies; it was a rebellion against God and his laws. Lucifer sought to dethrone God, to sit himself on the divine throne, and to save all men without reference to their works. He sought to deny men their agency so they could not sin. He offered a mortal life of carnality and sensuality, of evil and crime and murder, following which all men would be saved. His offer was a philosophical impossibility. There must needs be an opposition in all things. Unless there are opposites, there is nothing. There can be no light without darkness, no heat without cold, no virtue without vice, no good without evil, no salvation without damnation.15

The Propaganda of Satan

The proposal of a life of sin and indulgence, followed by salvation, would seem much more appealing than a proposal to force mankind to keep God’s commandments. Elder Orson Pratt taught that Satan’s proposal was one to save mankind in their sins, rather than saving them from their sins.16 President Brigham Young also taught that, “If you undertake to save all, you must save them in unrighteousness and corruption.”17 Doesn’t that idea sound familiar? The very persuasion used so successfully today by Satan may be very similar to the one used by him in the premortal life. “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us” (2 Nephi 28:7). “Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day” (Mormon 8:31). The tactics that Satan uses with such great success to gather souls to him in this life may well have been used in his first great gathering in the pre-earth life. President Howard W. Hunter taught that the temptations used by Satan “in leading one-third of the hosts from heaven” continue “to direct his miserable efforts against the children of men here on earth.”18 History seems to indicate that Satan has very few new strategies but successfully uses the same old half-truths packaged a little differently for a particular time or setting.

Promoting the Impossible

Whatever Satan’s idea was, it was not only “evil before God” (2 Nephi 2:17) but indeed impossible—impossible because without law there would be more than
chaos, confusion, and anarchy; indeed, “all things must have vanished away” (2 Nephi 2:13). Forcing people to live the gospel is just as impossible. First, it is virtually impossible to force another to choose anything. There is always another option, even if the alternative is death. Those who say, “I had to do it” are actually saying, “I chose to do it rather than face the consequences.”

Second, even a person who performs good deeds, if void of righteous intent, “is counted evil before God” (Moroni 7:8). The fact is that none of the options we have discussed that could have been promoted by Satan would really work. Neither compulsion nor sin are possible ways to save all mankind. President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said, “I question whether the intelligence of man can be compelled. Certainly men cannot be saved in sin, because the laws of salvation and exaltation are founded in righteousness, and not in sin.” Yet these impossibilities did not matter to Satan, who “deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). He continues still to deceive many into thinking they can “take happiness in sin” (Mormon 2:13), knowing full well that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). His intent, however, is not to save mankind but rather to “bring [mankind] into subjection unto him” (Alma 12:6). It is consistent with his character to seek to deceive mankind into believing they can “enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25), thinking “there is no harm in this, . . . and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Nephi 28:8). To Satan, like others who are motivated by pride, the fact that his plan would not only fail to “redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost” but would have the opposite effect—that not one soul would be saved—was irrelevant as long as he could obtain his desires.

The Archetype of Pride

There are numerous examples of men like Amalickiah, who follow the model that Satan set up as the prototype, and who have as their only “intention to gain favor with” the masses, “that [they] might place [themselves] at [the] head and dethrone the king and take possession of the kingdom” (Alma 47:8). To them, it matters not whether they have to employ pretense, lies, deceit, fraud, murder, war, or any other means, so long as they can gain “the hearts of the people” and eventually obtain “the kingdom” (Alma 47:30, 35). They “care not for the blood of [the] people” (Alma 49:10) and become “exceedingly angry” when they do not obtain their own selfish desires (Alma 49:26; see also Abraham 3:28).
Those who seem to pattern their effort to gain power and control after Satan provide us with a basis for understanding why so many could be deceived into thinking that a premise that would destroy agency was desirable. Consider the argument espoused by Korihor that the need for a Christ was “a foolish and a vain hope” and “the effect of a frenzied mind” (Alma 30:13, 16). He taught that the “foolish traditions” of the gospel of Christ “bind” the people to laws and ordinances, preventing them from enjoying “their rights and privileges” (v. 27). According to Korihor, who was both tutored and deceived by the devil (v. 53), those that live by the laws of God are not “a free people” but “are in bondage” (v. 24). The notion that the laws and ordinances of God are restrictive and prevent us from enjoying true freedom has been used successfully by the adversary to bring souls into captivity for a very long time. The lie that true freedom means “freedom from all unpleasantness: from hardship, from discipline, from the stern voice of duty, from the pain of self-sacrifice” is a philosophy so “pleasing unto the carnal mind” that it can be promoted with “much success” (v. 53). If real freedom means that there are no restrictions whatsoever, no laws to bind us down, then “whatsoever a man [does is] no crime,” and it would not be necessary for an “atonement [to be] made for the sins of men” (v. 17).

Promoting a similar philosophy of indulgence, Nehor used the very same words Lucifer used in the pre-earth life when he told the people “that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life” (Alma 1:4; emphasis added). Such teachings are so “flattering unto the people” (Jacob 7:2) that those who promote them often draw “away much people after [them]; even so much that they [begin] to be very powerful” (Alma 2:2). Their hope is to “gain the voice of the people” (Alma 2:4) and eventually obtain the kingdom. The Book of Mormon gives repeated examples of prideful individuals who, through their cunning and flattering words, lead all who will follow them through a pattern of rebellion, mutiny, and war. Wars thus instigated are an effort of the wicked to obtain “power and authority over the people” (Alma 51:8). Nehor, Amlici, Amalickiah, and a multitude of others have followed this pattern, which Satan established for manipulating the minds and “the hearts of many people to do wickedly” (Alma 46:10). They have led men into thinking, as Cain did, “I am free” (Moses 5:33), when in reality they become “bound down by the chains of hell” (Alma 13:30; see
also 2 Nephi 1:13). It seems to be a pattern of ancient date; perhaps it even existed from the very beginning.

**Conclusion**

Although information found in scripture is quite limited in regard to what took place in the War in Heaven, we have tried to draw on a few sources and examples to expand our perspective of the possibilities. Although we may not completely understand exactly what Satan proposed, in understanding his motives we can perhaps find significant lessons for our own battles with the adversary. For example, C. Terry Warner provided a thoughtful insight as he scrutinized his own “self-seeking” in his efforts to follow the Savior:

In the way I went about my quest, I found resemblances to Lucifer’s method of waging the great war he began in heaven against his own brothers and sisters. He had proposed a scheme that he maintained would benefit us all, but it was really for his own glory. So when his self-nomination was rejected, he smarted with disappointment and resentment and set out to make anyone and everyone pay for his defeat. Unwilling, like many of us, to take responsibility for his sin, he sought to shift it elsewhere; as John beheld in vision, he “accused [his righteous brethren] before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10). He spread his discontent to throngs of others, stoked their indignation, and marshaled them into a coalition sustained by their shared resentment.

Whether Satan’s plan to destroy the agency of man was a proposition to force righteous behavior, a scheme to allow sinful conduct without consequence, or some other agency-destroying proposal we have not discussed, the intent and result is the same. His prideful resentment and anger caused him to seek “that all men might be miserable like unto himself” (2 Nephi 2:27). His rebellion caused him to lose that which he wanted most—the honor and power of God. The sad irony is that the honor and power that Satan sought was available to him and all those that overcome their pride and humbly honor God and keep his commandments. For God has said, “If ye are faithful ye shall be . . . crowned with honor, and glory, and immortality, and eternal life” (D&C 75:5). Our Heavenly Father loves his children and “delight[s] to honor those who serve [him] in righteousness” (D&C 76:5). However, being overcome by pride, Satan rejected the plan that could have made him “equal with” God (D&C 88:107) because he wanted “the pleasure of being above the rest.” Having “sought that which was evil before God” (2 Nephi 2:17), he “kept not his first estate” (Abraham 3:28) and lost all opportunity for the honor and power he sought.
As we study and ponder these things, we should hope for more inspiration than speculation, to the end that we might come to appreciate the goodness of our God and avoid the snares of the adversary. Whatever Satan’s reasons and methods, this much we know: “Lo, he is fallen!” (D&C 76:27). And so will we fall if we believe that anything proposed by Satan and his followers is preferable in any way to the teachings of God and his prophets. For the day will surely come that Satan shall be cast “into the bottomless pit, . . . that he should deceive the nations no more” (Revelation 20:3).

Notes

1. The scriptural term “third part” is often misapplied as the fraction one-third. As one author put it, “When John speaks of the war in heaven, his description of Lucifer’s activities is slightly different from the typical interpretation in Latter-day Saint circles. He states that the devil drew away a ‘third part’ of the hosts of heaven with him (see Revelation 12:4; D&C 29:36–38). The distinction between ‘one-third’ and a ‘third part’ may seem subtle, yet it is real. The fraction one-third implies 33 1/3 percent, whereas the phrase ‘third part’ implies a numerically undetermined segment of the population who symbolize the fact that Satan’s power over the premortal spirits was limited. Thus, the numerology in the passage implies that we have no knowledge of the fraction or percentage of the Father’s children who followed the adversary. All we know is that Satan had a limited influence over those in the presence of God” (Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003], 118–19). For further explanation of the symbolic use of the term third part as meaning “limited” or its use in reference to meaning “partial and incomplete,” or what has been termed “remnant theology,” see Richard D. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 95–96, 108; Jay Parry and Donald Parry, *Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 110.

2. Although 2 Thessalonians 2:9 seems to imply that this may be a reference to a specific individual in the Christian Church, Elder McConkie taught that “Lucifer is the man of sin, spoken of by Paul who was to be revealed in the last days before the second coming of the Lord. (2 Thess. 2:1–12)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1974], 3:63). See also Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 1:175; Joseph Smith Translation, 2 Thessalonians 2:7–9.


5. It is evident that Satan has used force and coercion at times, and would have others “exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men” (D&C 121:37). However, there is little or no scriptural evidence that such was his intention in the pre-earth life. There have been occasional statements by early Church leaders that may imply such a conclusion. For example, in 1881 President John Taylor taught that Satan “sought to take away the agency of man, to make man a poor miserable serf” (in *Journal of Discourses* [London:...
Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–96] 22:300). In 1885 Elder Moses Thatcher referred to Satan’s proposal as a “coercive scheme of human redemption” and a “coercive, agency destroying plan” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:305). But the topic of how Satan had planned to destroy the agency of man is seldom mentioned in gospel writing until the twentieth century. At least two different schools of thought have been suggested as possibilities by leaders of the Church. This article examines the less common prospect that Satan may have proposed that mankind could be saved in sin, as alluded to by President Brigham Young, Orson Pratt, and President J. Reuben Clark, Jr. The idea that is most often taught in the Church today is doctrine that Satan was going to “force” the human family to do his will. After the publication of Elder James E. Talmage’s *Articles of Faith* in 1899 and *Jesus the Christ* in 1915, this became the most common idea of how Satan proposed to destroy agency (see *Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983], 57, and *Jesus the Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984], 8). Since that time it has been taught on a regular basis (see Conference Reports, April 1917, 144; April 1926, 77; October 1936, 60; October 1938, 134; April 1949, 27; April 1950, 24–25; October 1987, 42; May 2008, 40; and Chauncey C. Riddle, “Devils,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow [New York: Macmillan, 1992], 1:379; to cite just a few). Elder Bruce R. McConkie also taught the more common idea of “force,” as well as implying the possibility that Satan proposed the idea of salvation after a life of sin (*Mormon Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 27, 153 and *The Millennial Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982], 666–67).

6. The question that arises here is that if Satan “persuadeth no man to do good,” and has been evil “from the beginning,” was there ever a time when he was a righteous person who was interested in promoting the cause of righteousness? Although the answer to this question may not be definitive, there is information that sheds light on the subject. That the name Lucifer means “shining one,” “light bringer” or “son of the morning” (Bible Dictionary, “Lucifer,” 726) implies that at some point he did bear the gospel light. Lehi taught that the devil was “an angel of God” (2 Nephi 2:17). President George Q. Cannon, commenting on Satan’s title as a son of the morning, said: “This angel was a mighty personage, without doubt. The record that is given to us concerning him clearly shows that he occupied a very high position; that he was thought a great deal of” (*Millennial Star*, September 5, 1895, 563–64). Orson Pratt called Satan “an angel of light, and holy angel, prior to” his standing in opposition to God (in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:288). Stanza 21 of the poetic version of Doctrine and Covenants 76 refers to Satan as “an angel of light” (“The Answer to W. W. Phelps Esq. a Vision February 1843,” *Times and Seasons* [February 1, 1843] 4:83). It would seem logical to believe that Satan’s prominence as “an angel of God” would naturally assume a degree of righteousness, not just the typical qualities such as intellect or natural leadership ability that generally assist individuals to rise to leadership positions. The scriptures say nothing about Satan prior to his rebellion, other than those already quoted and some inferences that could be made from a few others. For example, if we were to use the same comparison that Isaiah used to connect Satan and the king of Babylon (see Isaiah 14:12, 2 Nephi 24:12a), with Ezekiel’s condemnation of the king of Tyrus, we could conclude that Satan, at least at one time, was righteous enough to be considered by Ezekiel as “perfect”—meaning whole, complete, or sound. He said, “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezekiel 28:15). Moses 4:4 says, “And he became Satan, yea, even the devil” (emphasis added), implying that he was not at first in his adversarial role to the degree that he was after his rebellion. The Book of Mormon makes it clear that after a person has been “enlightened by the Spirit of God, and have had great knowledge of the things pertaining to righteousness, and then have fallen away into sin and transgression, they become more hardened” (Alma 24:30), which certainly seems to be the case with Satan. To what
degree that state of enlightenment (which is generally associated with the “light and truth” that comes with worthiness) is related to righteousness rather than just “having the same instruction and the same information” (Alma 47:56) is difficult to determine (see also Alma 9:19, 23; 21:3; 3 Nephi 6:17–18; D&C 82:3; Smith, *Teachings*, 67). There seems to be no question that Satan had great knowledge, for without it he could not have become “perdition” (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973], 2:225), but knowledge does not always mean righteousness. The point is that by the time of the great council in heaven, Satan’s pride had cast a dark shadow on any gospel light he may have had. His greatest interest seems to have been himself rather than promoting the personal development and progress of Heavenly Father’s children by encouraging righteousness.


10. This may have been one of the factors that motivated Satan to rebel. Brigham Young taught, “There was a devil in heaven, and he strove to possess the birthright of the Savior” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:279).

11. Daniel H. Ludlow taught, “What if [God] had never given us any law? It is true that in such a condition we never could have broken a law (committed sin), and thus there would have been no evil” (*New Era*, September 1973, 14).

12. President Boyd K. Packer pointed out that both the New Testament and Lehi teach that “if there is no moral law, there is no sin” and that “moral law assumes accountability; no accountability, no penalties!” (“The Law and the Light,” in *The Book of Mormon: Jacob Through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy*, papers from the Fourth Annual Book of Mormon Symposium, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988], 5–6).


16. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet note, “In the premortal councils of heaven, by stating that he would save them all Lucifer essentially proposed the redemption of all men and women in their sins. ‘If you undertake to save all,’ said Brigham Young, ‘you must save them in unrighteousness and corruption’” [in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:282]. Elder Orson Pratt also taught the difference between the Father’s plan to save his children from sin and Lucifer’s design to save all mankind in their sins. “There must be an agency wherever intelligence exists, and without agency no intelligent beings could exist; and . . . Satan sought to destroy this . . . and to redeem them all in their sins” [in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:288]” (*Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987–92], 3:354; emphasis added).


19. Joseph Smith taught, “The devil could not compel mankind to do evil. . . . God would not exert any compulsory means, and the devil could not; and such ideas as were entertained [on these subjects] by many were absurd” (*History of the Church*, 4:358).

20. For further explanation on the doctrine of agency compared to freedom, see Oaks, “Free Agency and Freedom,” 1–17.
21. This is not to imply that no good ever comes from doing the right thing for the wrong reasons. The following commentary on Moroni 7:6–13 may be helpful: “These verses could easily be misunderstood. It is not that evil persons—or persons with less than noble motives—cannot do good things. They certainly can. It is just that their deeds prove in the end to be a blessing neither to themselves nor to those they serve. That is, so long as good deeds are motivated by selfish or malicious desires they cannot transform and enrich either the giver or the receiver” (Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987–92], 4334). Righteousness is not a by-product of forced obedience.


23. President Ezra Taft Benson taught, “In the pre-earthly council, Lucifer placed his proposal in competition with the Father’s plan as advocated by Jesus Christ (see Moses 4:1–3). He wished to be honored above all others (see 2 Nephi 24:13). In short, his prideful desire was to dethrone God (see D&C 29:36; 76:28). . . . The scriptures abound with evidences of the severe consequences of the sin of pride to individuals, groups, cities, and nations” (in Conference Report, April 1989, 4). To thoroughly examine the consequences of pride on the heart of man, and particularly on Satan, is a study that is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is made clear in President Benson’s marvelous message that the prideful often promote and even begin to believe things that are absolutely false! Pride overcomes wisdom, right thinking, and sound judgment, replacing them with self-interest and enmity. It prevents us from seeing things clearly. The prideful “won’t change their minds to accept truths, because to do so implies they have been wrong” (in Conference Report, April 1989, 5). Pride is deceptive (see Obadiah 1:3). It makes its victims believe they can obtain the impossible. In Satan’s case that was obtaining the “honor” and “power” of God (see D&C 29:36) in ways that are contrary to truth. It creates illusions that lead those possessed by it in the opposite direction of all that is good. It is indeed an “ugly” and “damning sin” (in Conference Report, April 1989, 5). “In the premortal council, it was pride that felled Lucifer” (in Conference Report, April 1989, 3).

President Benson also taught that “the antidote for pride is humility” (Benson, in Conference Report, April 1989, 6), and the “opposite of pride is humbleness, meekness, submissiveness (see Alma 13:28), or teachableness” (in Conference Report, April 1986, 5). The author has come to believe that the opposite of pride can be best characterized by one word—charity—which includes all of the virtues mentioned by President Benson. Charity is the antithesis of pride. Charity is “the greatest of all” virtues (Moroni 7:46), and pride is appropriately referred to by C. S. Lewis as “the great sin” and “the utmost evil.” According to Lewis, “it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: [and] is the complete anti-God state of mind” (*Mere Christianity* [New York: Macmillan, 1960], 108–9). Jesus Christ is the epitome of charity, and Satan is the epitome of pride. To understand Satan and his motives, one must understand pride and its effects, just as one must understand charity to understand Jesus Christ. Perhaps the best window through which we can see and understand Satan is through those who love that which he loves, and who do what he does, and are possessed by pride as he is, for they are “but mirroring our ego-saturated brother in the premortal world who wanted things his own way” (Neal A. Maxwell, *Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977], 46).


On Sunday, April 3, 1836, Elijah restored priesthood keys for the gathering of Israel.
The Gathering of Israel

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An understanding of the doctrine of the gathering of Israel is essential to a sound understanding of the gospel. Of the gathering, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “It is a principle I esteem to be of the greatest importance to those who are looking for salvation in this generation.”

The doctrine of the gathering stands at the very heart of the message of the restored gospel. We do not really understand who we are as a people, the covenants God has made with us, or the destiny that is ours until we gain a meaningful understanding of this doctrine.

On Sunday, April 3, 1836, a week after Joseph Smith dedicated the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet recorded that after he administered the Lord’s Supper, “I retired to the pulpit, the veils being dropped, and bowed myself, with Oliver Cowdery, in solemn and silent prayer. After rising from prayer, the following vision was opened to both of us” (D&C 110, section heading). This vision is recounted in section 110 of the Doctrine and Covenants. It begins with a description of the Savior, who appeared to Joseph and Oliver
to accept the dedication of the temple. At his departure, three other angelic ministrants appeared. First came Moses, then came a prophet bearing the title Elias, and then came Elijah. Each of these heavenly ministrants laid their hands on Joseph and Oliver’s heads and bestowed upon them the particular keys each had held during their mortal ministries.

“Moses,” the Prophet said, “appeared before us, and committed unto us the keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth, and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north” (D&C 110:11). Then Elias appeared. He committed the keys of the dispensation of Abraham, which means that he restored that power and authority that is unique to Abraham’s dispensation. He said “that in us and our seed all generations after us should be blessed” (v. 12). Elijah then appeared, as Malachi said he would, to restore the keys by which the hearts of the fathers would be turned to their children and the children to their fathers, lest the whole earth be “smitten with a curse” (v. 15, see also Malachi 4:5–6).

The appearance of these men plays an important part in the story we are about to tell. Indeed, our story would not be complete without our coming to understand the particular blessings restored by each of these men, why they were chosen to restore them, and how these events relate to the gathering of Israel.

As we proceed with this discussion, let us do so in the form of a conversation. You ask the questions, as it were, and I, with the aid of the scriptures and the words of prophets, will attempt to answer them. We begin:

**Question:** Who is included in the term *Israel*?

**Answer:** The term *Israel* refers to the literal descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The greatest promise the Lord can give to a righteous man, beyond the promise of his own salvation, is that of a righteous posterity. This promise, along with a host of attendant promises, God made to Abraham. He made the promise anew to Abraham’s son Isaac and made it yet again to Isaac’s son Jacob.

**Question:** Why was Abraham chosen to receive this covenant?

**Answer:** The covenant had come down from the beginning through the fathers to Abraham (see Abraham 1:3). Abraham, in what constituted a new dispensation, sought for the blessings of this covenant, and the Lord chose to renew it again through him (see Abraham 2:9–11).

**Question:** Why was Moses the one chosen to restore the authority to hold the keys of the gathering of Israel?
After four hundred years of bondage in Egypt, the Lord sent Moses to the children of Israel. Having turned them to Christ, Moses was to liberate them from their enslavement and bring them as a nation to Mount Sinai. Here the Lord intended to sanctify them and renew with them the covenant he had made with their father Abraham. Having been so empowered, they were to return to the land the Lord had promised the seed of Abraham and there build a temple to their God.

Question: The Old Testament tells us that “an angel of the Lord” appeared to Moses on Sinai. Are we to understand the “angel” was Christ?

Answer: Yes. The Book of Mormon makes this very clear. When Christ came to announce the fulfillment of the law of Moses to those in the Americas, he said, “I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel” (3 Nephi 15:4–5).

Stephen testified that Christ sent Moses to deliver the children of Israel (see Acts 7:20–37). Paul tells us that Moses regarded the reproach of Christ to be of greater value than the treasures of Egypt (see Hebrews 11:26–27). Peter said that all the holy prophets since the world began testified of Christ (see Acts 3:21).

Question: Does scripture foretell that Moses would come to restore Israel to the covenants made with their fathers?

Answer: Yes. The Lord promised Joseph of Egypt “that he would preserve his seed forever, saying, I will raise up Moses, and a rod shall be in his hand, and he shall gather together my people, and he shall lead them as a flock, and he shall smite the waters of the Red Sea with his rod” (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:34).

And again in Moses 1, we find the Lord speaking to Moses, saying, “I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and thou shalt be made stronger than many waters; for they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God. And lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days; for thou shalt deliver my people from bondage, even Israel my chosen” (Moses 1:25–26).

Question: Why was it so important that Moses take the children of Israel to Sinai first?

Answer: Sinai was the holy mount. It was the place where the children of Israel were to meet their God. It was the place where they were to enter into covenants with him. For all intent and purpose, Sinai would be Israel’s first temple. To gather Israel was to lead them back to true temple worship. This event would in subsequent dispensations be the type for the gathering
of Israel. As the story unfolds, we see that the tabernacle in the wilderness, Solomon’s Temple, and Herod’s Temple were all constructed after the same pattern. They were the physical embodiment of Mount Sinai.

When they arrived at Sinai, Moses was instructed to establish bounds around the holy mount beyond which the children of Israel were not to go. None were to go up to the mount or even touch the border of it. Any doing so, be they man or beast, were to be killed (see Exodus 19:12–13).

The glory of the Lord would occupy the top of the mountain; Moses alone, Israel’s high priest, would be allowed to part the veil and enter here. Later, Aaron and the seventy were permitted to advance partway up the mountain, where Christ appeared to them, while the people were only permitted to come up to the base of the mountain (see Exodus 24:9–11). These bounds were a type for the order of the tabernacle, which would be divided into three parts: the outer court, unto which the people could enter but go no further; the Holy Place, into which the priests could enter; and the Holy of Holies, into which only the high priest could enter. This in turn became the pattern for the temples which would be built in Jerusalem.

**Question:** Am I to understand that at the time of Moses, the reason the children of Israel were “gathered,” meaning freed from their Egyptian bondage and taken to Sinai, was to covenant with God to be his people?

**Answer:** Yes, exactly. God sought to renew with Israel the covenant he had made with their fathers. In Exodus 19, Moses led Israel to the base of Mount Sinai, where they camped. Then Moses ascended the mountain to speak with God. “Ye have seen,” God said to Moses, “what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:4–6).

Moses reported this to his people, and they said, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord” (Exodus 19:8). Moses was then directed to sanctify his people preparatory to God’s appearing to them. The word *sanctify* means to be “separated” or “set apart.” It involved an ordinance of washing wherein the children of Israel were to be made clean that they might stand in the presence of God. If we add to the story what we learn from the revelations of the Restoration, it means that they were to be consecrated to God and that he was going to endow them with power from on high before they commenced their journey to their land of promise.
Again we see the type: In Joseph Smith’s day, those liberated from the bondage of false religions were to gather with the Saints at Nauvoo. Here they built their Sinai, or temple, and here they were endowed prior to their journey to the promised land in which they would build a temple to their God. In like manner, today all the children of Israel are invited to come to the house of the Lord where they will be sanctified and endowed with power from on high prior to making their journey through life.

Moses sought to gather Israel and restore to them that which they had lost. They had broken their covenants and lost their land of inheritance and the knowledge of how they were to worship their God. Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated the matter succinctly: Israel was scattered “because they forsook the Abrahamic covenant.”

**Question:** So Israel is scattered when she breaks her covenants and gathered when she returns to them?

**Answer:** Yes. Lands of inheritance are only a symbol of that covenant. They are a physical representation of the promise of an eternal inheritance given to those who keep their covenants.

The pattern common to all dispensations includes the Lord sending messengers to teach the gospel. Those who embrace the gospel are then required to sacrifice whatever is necessary to come to the Lord’s temple. There the Lord grants them the fulness of gospel blessings. It is the temple and the blessings associated with it that made the Holy Land holy. Isaiah gives us a perfect example of what is involved in his description of the great events of the last days:

> And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.
>
> And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:2–3)

Here, Isaiah is saying that after the gospel has come to you, you must go to the temple. It is there that you will be taught in the ways of the God of Jacob. It is there that the promises of the covenant are given.

**Question:** So you are saying that to be gathered means to be baptized and then to go to the temple to receive the same promises that were made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
**Answer:** Exactly. Now, consider Joseph Smith’s testimony alongside that of Isaiah: “What was the object of gathering the Jews, or the people of God in any age of the world? . . . The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose.”

In the context of a revelation dealing with the building of the temple in Nauvoo, the Lord said:

How shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name?

For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was.

Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments, for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory, honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. (D&C 124:37–39)

Doctrine and Covenants 84 gives us the best understanding of what was involved at the time of Moses. It tells us that without the ordinances and authority of the priesthood, no man could see God. Remember that Moses had to be translated to enter his presence. Our text reads thus:

For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God;

But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fullness of his glory.

Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also; And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel. (D&C 84:22–26)

**Question:** So if I understand these texts correctly, they are telling us that what was to take place at Sinai prior to the children of Israel making their epic journey to their holy land was the same thing that took place in the early history of the Church in this dispensation?
Answer: It is the same story all over again. The one story is but the type and shadow of the other. Thus to those of our day, the Lord says,

Behold, I say unto you, the redemption of Zion must needs come by power;
Therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel.
For ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched-out arm.

And as your fathers were led at the first, even so shall the redemption of Zion be. (D&C 103:16–18)

Question: I thought the gathering of Israel centered in her rightful descendants being given the lands that had been promised to their progenitors. You are telling me that the gathering centers in their returning to the covenants of salvation?

Answer: Yes; let me show you how the revelations of the Restoration teach this doctrine. In Doctrine and Covenants 39, we have an account of the Lord speaking to a Baptist minister by the name of James Covill. The Lord tells him that he needs to be baptized. “And if thou do this, I have prepared thee for a greater work. Thou shalt preach the fulness of my gospel, which I have sent forth in these last days, the covenant which I have sent forth to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel” (D&C 39:11; emphasis added). The point here is that to gather Israel is to baptize Israel, wherein they turn to Christ, taking his name upon them.

In Doctrine and Covenants 137 we find a revelation in which Joseph Smith saw Father Adam, Abraham, his own parents, and his brother Alvin in the celestial kingdom. Joseph understood that the vision foretold what could be, for both his father and mother were still living. Nevertheless, Joseph was surprised to see Alvin in the celestial kingdom because he had died before John the Baptist had come to restore the authority to baptize, and thus Alvin had not participated in that ordinance. It is in this revelation that Joseph learns that those who died without hearing the gospel in this life can hear it taught in the world of the spirits. Note the language Joseph uses to express his surprise on seeing Alvin in this vision: “[I] marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins” (D&C 137:6, emphasis added).

Question: So you are saying that to be gathered is to return to covenants, to return to Christ, and only then to return to lands of inheritance?
**Answer:** You have just summarized the testimony of prophets in the Book of Mormon. Nephi expressed the principle thus: “For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel” (2 Nephi 30:2).

**Question:** So who has claim to the lands promised to Abraham’s seed?

**Answer:** I will answer your question with the words of Abraham himself: “But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother’s son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice” (Abraham 2:6; emphasis added). Only those who hearken to the voice of the Lord and keep the covenants we have referenced ever had or ever will have any claim from God to a land of inheritance.

**Question:** So what is the doctrine of the scattering of Israel?

**Answer:** In ancient times, when Israel turned from Christ and broke her covenants, she lost the right to a land of inheritance, it being a seal or token of the covenant; she was then scattered among the nations of the earth. Prophecy repeatedly foretold that Israel would be scattered among all the nations of the earth, and that scattering continues to this day.

We as a Church have been commissioned to gather scattered Israel, which we do by sending out missionaries to declare Christ and to invite all who believe to be baptized. When appropriate, those baptized are invited to gather with the Saints as they did in Kirtland, Nauvoo, and the Rocky Mountains during pioneer days. This is so that they can receive the full blessings of the temple. Now that the Church is in a position to take temples to the ends of the earth, members of the Church in foreign lands are asked to stay in their homelands and build up Zion there.

**Question:** Does this apply in the same way to the lost tribes?

**Answer:** Yes. The plan of salvation is the same for all alike.

**Question:** This seems to suggest that the lost tribes are lost spiritually rather than physically. Would that be correct?

**Answer:** Yes. They are lost in the same sense that the children of Israel were lost when Moses went to them—not in the sense that they have no knowledge of their longitude and latitude, that they cannot find themselves
on a map, or that they cannot find a road that will lead them back to civilization. They are lost in the sense that they do not know what promises were made to their fathers. They do not know the saving truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they do not know where the truth is to be found.

**Question:** What were the promises that were made to their fathers?

**Answer:** We know these promises as the Abrahamic covenant. This is what was restored by the Elias from Abraham’s day to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple. It is the power and authority to perform eternal marriage. When a couple is married in the temple, they, like Abraham, receive the promise that they will have seed that is as countless as the sands of the sea or the stars of the heaven. This is the promise of the continuation of the family unit throughout the endless expanses of eternity.

Abraham was promised that his seed would hold the priesthood and be the missionaries that would take the gospel to all other nations. This is why Joseph and Oliver were told that in their seed all generations after them would be blessed. This promise is extended to all who enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, who wrote more on this subject than perhaps any of our latter-day leaders, said: “The crowning blessings of the gospel are received in temples, in holy sanctuaries apart from the world, in the places where only the faithful assemble. It is in temples—whether they be the portable tabernacle of testimony used by Moses, or the magnificent wonder of the world built by Solomon, or the temples of the latter days—that the saints receive the mysteries of godliness. It is in these holy houses that faithful couples enter into the ordinance of celestial marriage through which they become parties to the Abrahamic covenant, the covenant of eternal increase, the covenant that in them and in their seed all generations shall be blessed.”

**Question:** What is the sealing power restored by Elijah?

**Answer:** Elijah restored the authority by which all gospel ordinances—including baptism, the endowment, and eternal marriage—are made valid and binding on earth and in heaven. This is the authority which enables us to seal both the living and the dead.

**Question:** So how would you summarize the message that we have been commissioned as a people to take to the ends of the earth relative to the gathering?

**Answer:** In Enoch’s great panoramic vision of the future history of the earth, the Lord described the great events of our dispensation in a single
sentence. It is the story of the gathering of Israel: “And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem” (Moses 7:62). The idea of righteousness coming down out of heaven certainly embraces the First Vision and the Restoration of the gospel at the hands of angels. Truth coming forth out of the earth is the Book of Mormon. These events testify of Christ and his Resurrection and the Resurrection of all men. These, then, appear to be the great doctrines destined to gather Israel.

Surely Jeremiah referred to these same events when he penned these words:

O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.

Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods?

Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The Lord.

(Jeremiah 16:19–21)

Once again people will hear of a God who speaks, of a God of miracles; they will discover the God of heaven in contrast to a god concocted in the councils of men.

The Book of Mormon is the stick of Joseph, written by Lehi and prophets who descended from him. It was written to gather their posterity back to Christ and the covenants of salvation. In the preface of the Book of Mormon, Moroni states that the purpose of the book is “to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever.” Missionaries take the book to the posterity of these ancient prophets, and from it their descendents learn who they are and of the promises the Lord made to their fathers. Thus those who were “lost” to the truth and system of salvation are found.

Nephi describes the matter thus: “And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore,
he will proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men” (2 Nephi 25:17; emphasis added). To describe someone as being in a “lost and fallen state” does not convey the idea that they are hiding under the polar ice cap. What it does convey is that they have lost the knowledge of the covenants God made with their fathers and the knowledge of salvation as found in Christ, who is the Messenger of the Covenant and the Holy One of Israel.

**Question:** So what does the Book of Mormon tell us about the latter-day gathering?

**Answer:** Nephi’s younger brother Jacob, having been instructed by an angel of the Lord, taught much on this subject. He tells us that after the time of Christ, Israel would be scattered again because of their rejection of Christ but gathered when they returned to him in the last days. “Wherefore, after they are driven to and fro, for thus saith the angel, many shall be afflicted in the flesh, and shall not be suffered to perish, because of the prayers of the faithful; they shall be scattered, and smitten, and hated; nevertheless, the Lord will be merciful unto them, that when they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, they shall be gathered together again to the lands of their inheritance” (2 Nephi 6:11). And again he said, “But behold, thus saith the Lord God: When the day cometh that they shall believe in me, that I am Christ, then have I covenanted with their fathers that they shall be restored in the flesh, upon the earth, unto the lands of their inheritance” (2 Nephi 10:7).

Here is the testimony of Nephi:

And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations, yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind—and when that day shall come that they shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah, then, at that time, the day will come that it must needs be expedient that they should believe these things. (2 Nephi 25:16)

**Question:** So the Book of Mormon prophets make it clear that scattered Israel, even in her scattered state, still has claim to the promises made by the Father. Do the Book of Mormon prophets specifically say that they must join the Church to obtain such promises?

**Answer:** Yes. Jacob said, “And now, my beloved brethren, I have read these things that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord that he has covenanted with all the house of Israel—That he has spoken unto the Jews, by
the mouth of his holy prophets, even from the beginning down, from generation to generation, until the time comes that they shall be restored to the true church and fold of God; when they shall be gathered home to the lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise” (2 Nephi 9:1–2; emphasis added).

Christ talked at length about this doctrine at the temple in Bountiful. His remarks centered on the necessity of those who were lost repenting and hearing his words. “But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance” (3 Nephi 21:22; emphasis added).

Speaking of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, Christ said, “Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him [meaning Joseph Smith] to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant” (3 Nephi 21:11). Here Christ is saying that those in the last days who reject his words found in the Book of Mormon and thus deny the testimony of Joseph Smith, the great revelator of Christ for this dispensation, will not, as Moses prophesied, be numbered among those who have rightful claim to the blessings of the covenant.

The Lord told Jeremiah, “I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might” (Jeremiah 16:21). Those who reject this message—that God is a God of miracles, a God who speaks, a God who sends angels to the earth, and who has restored his ancient covenant—will not find themselves in the house of the Lord, and they will thereby be cut off from among the people of the covenant.

**Question:** There certainly seems to be a lot of confusion about the return of the ten tribes. Is the gathering of Israel and the return of the ten tribes one event or two?

**Answer:** “The gathering of Israel is one thing,” stated Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “the return of the Ten Tribes to a specified place is another; and Moses gave to men in our day the keys and power to perform both labors.”

**Question:** Relative to the return of the ten tribes, what are we to understand about the promise that their prophets will lead them?
**Answer:** Again, Elder McConkie has responded:

Their prophets! Who are they? Are they to be holy men called from some unknown place and people? Are they prophets unbeknown to the presiding officers of “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth”? (D&C 1:30.) Perish the thought! The President of the Church, who holds the keys to lead the Ten Tribes from the nations of the north wherein they now reside, holds also the keys of salvation for all men. There are not two true churches on earth, only one; there are not two gospels or two plans of salvation, only one; there are not two competing organizations, both having divine approval, only one. “Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1:13.) God forbid. Their prophets are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are stake presidents and bishops and quorum presidents who are appointed to guide and direct the destinies of their stakes and wards and quorums.

**Question:** Do we know anything about the highway that is spoken of as being “cast up” in the great deep upon which the ten tribes are to return?  
**Answer:** The language comes from Isaiah; we will let him respond:

And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there; And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighings shall flee away. (Isaiah 35:8–10)

Isaiah was speaking of the straight and narrow path, not a physical highway built of asphalt or cement.  
**Question:** Does this text indicate why the tribes will return?  
**Answer:** It appears that they will come to receive the blessings of the temple. Consider this language: “And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy” (D&C 133:32–33).

**Question:** Have the ten tribes been scattered throughout all the nations of the earth or have they remained together as a people?  
**Answer:** We have a host of scriptural texts that tell us that all twelve of the tribes of Israel have been scattered among all the nations of the earth. Mormon stated the matter thus:
And as surely as the Lord liveth, will he gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob, who are scattered abroad upon all the face of the earth.

And as he hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant that he hath covenanted with them.

And then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and then shall they be gathered in from the four quarters of the earth unto their own lands, from whence they have been dispersed; yea, as the Lord liveth so shall it be. Amen. (3 Nephi 5:24–26)

Scriptural language cannot be more emphatic than this. As both an introduction and a conclusion, Mormon states that if God lives, what he has said must be true. He tells us that all the tribes have been scattered among all nations and that they are to come to a knowledge of the covenant that God made with their fathers and to a knowledge of Christ before they can be returned to their lands of inheritance. It appears that the ten tribes were together in various groups and were visited by Christ after he visited the Nephites; but like the Nephites, they became “a lost and fallen people” and were scattered.

To capture and summarize the primary message of the Book of Mormon, Moroni paraphrases a charge given by Isaiah to the scattered remnants of Israel in the last days: “Awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled” (Moroni 10:31).

Having so said, Moroni then invites Israel in her lost and fallen state to return to the Church. He says:

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot. (Moroni 10:32–33; emphasis added)
Isaiah said, “Put on thy strength, O Zion” (Isaiah 52:1). In a revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants, the question is asked, “What is meant by the command in Isaiah, 52d chapter, 1st verse, which saith: Put on thy Strength, O Zion—and to what people had Isaiah reference to?” (D&C 113:7). The stated answer is that “he had reference to those whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel; and to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that power which she had lost” (D&C 113:8). This clearly places the whole story of the gathering of Israel in the context of an event that is to take place under the direction of the priesthood. The birthright to the priesthood, it also notes, still rests with the scattered remnant of Abraham’s seed.

So it is that we return to the events that took place April 3, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple as recorded in D&C 110. Following the appearance of Christ to accept that edifice as his holy house came Moses, Elias, and Elijah, each to restore his distinctive priesthood keys. The order of their coming is a type—it represents perfectly the history of the house of Israel. First came Moses to restore the keys by which the great message of the Restoration would be declared to Israel, lost and scattered to the ends of the earth. She was to be gathered again to the covenant of her fathers, specifically and particularly the Abrahamic covenant. Then came an Elias from Abraham’s day to restore the authority by which a man and a woman are sealed together for time and all eternity and are granted all the blessings promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then came Elijah, with the keys by which all gospel ordinances are sealed. The order is perfect, the doctrine sweet, and the way sure.

**Question:** If this covenant embraces the blessings of salvation, the salvation is a family affair. After the days of Abraham, no one could be saved in the kingdom of God unless they held a place in his family. Is this the case?

**Answer:** It most certainly is. Salvation is a family affair. We cannot, as those of the sectarian world would suppose, obtain it separately and singly. Salvation, meaning exaltation, requires the eternal union in marriage of a man and a woman (see D&C 131). That marriage must be performed by the sealing power restored to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836 (see D&C 110:14–16).

It should also be noted that Joseph Smith taught that those not naturally of Abraham would be adopted as his seed when they received the gift of the Holy Ghost after baptism.7 Elder McConkie summarizes the whole matter thus:
What, then, is involved in the gathering of Israel? The gathering of Israel consists in believing and accepting and living in harmony with all that the Lord once offered his ancient chosen people. It consists of having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of repenting, of being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of keeping the commandments of God. It consists of believing the gospel, joining the Church and coming into the kingdom. It consists of receiving the holy priesthood, being endowed in holy places with power from on high, and receiving all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through the ordinance of celestial marriage. And it may also consist of assembling to an appointed place or land of worship.  

I conclude with an extract from the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple. The Prophet importuned the heavens, pleading, “May all the scattered remnants of Israel, who have been driven to the ends of the earth, come to a knowledge of the truth, believe in the Messiah, and be redeemed from oppression, and rejoice before thee” (D&C 109:67). To this we would but say, “Amen,” with the appended plea that we might play our rightful part in this the greatest drama of earth’s history. 

Notes

4. McConkie, New Witness, 539.
7. See Teachings, 149–50; see also Abraham 2:10.
Gospel teachers often choose to pass over the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38, but it is filled with internal and external contrast, irony, and wordplay, and it has important things to teach us.
The Story of Judah and Tamar

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In my experience, gospel teachers often choose to pass over the story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38, and understandably so. By itself, the story has no obvious moral to teach and, due to cultural differences, is difficult to understand without what some scholars call “literary competence.” Moreover, some teachers and students may be uncomfortable with the sexual elements central to the plot. Readers may also wonder why it is inserted, seemingly at random, between Joseph being sold into Egypt and his rise to prominence in Egypt.

Beyond those, other factors such as time limitations in the classroom may influence teachers to leave out Genesis 38. One important reason may be the paucity of Latter-day Saint treatments. The Prophet Joseph Smith neither commented on it nor made any changes in the Joseph Smith Translation. According to the Brigham Young University general conference scripture index, Genesis 38 has been cited only once in general conference. A bibliographic search through various databases of Latter-day Saint literature turns up very little. Most references only mention Thamar (the King James Version...
New Testament spelling of Tamar) because of her inclusion in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:3).

The institute manual for Religion 301 devotes roughly half of one page to chapter 38, providing a brief explanation of the pre-Mosaic levirate custom. It suggests several possible reasons for the narrative’s inclusion in the Bible. First, it “illustrate[s] the effects of the covenant people forgetting the importance of marrying in the covenant.” Second, it “shows the lineage of Judah from which the Messiah would eventually come.” Third, it further provides an example that “ancestry is not the determiner of one’s righteousness.” Lastly, “the truth that failure to honor one’s commitments often leads to greater trouble is clearly shown.”

I view the passing over of Genesis 38 as something regrettable because the chapter has some important things to teach us. My goal in this article is to provide teachers with enough background and understanding to answer student questions on the chapter, largely by “[making] use of the means which the Lord has provided for us” (Alma 60:21)—in this case scholarly means. To that end, I will first recount the Judah-Tamar story with some cultural background and literary commentary. Second, I will outline some of the skillfully interwoven threads demonstrating a literary unity between Genesis 37 and 39 (and the more extended Joseph story). Finally, I will offer ideas on using parts of the Judah-Tamar story in teaching.

Exposition

Genesis 38 is filled with internal and external contrast, irony, and wordplay, but translation obscures much of it. The intent of my exposition is accurately captured by President Brigham Young when he said it is important to read and understand the scriptures as though we were in the place of those writing them. What language nuances and cultural nods would an Israelite understand that a modern reader of the English Bible would not? Due to space limitations, I offer a summary with brief commentary instead of a full translation.

Judah leaves his brothers, settles near an Adullamite, and marries an unnamed Canaanite woman, who bears him three sons in quick literary succession—Er, Onan, and Shelah. Judah finds a wife for Er whose name is Tamar. Er is killed by the Lord because he is wicked, leaving Tamar a childless widow.

The timing of these events vis-à-vis Joseph being sold into Egypt is uncertain, but the account is compressed, moving through the events of many
years with the barest of detail. Judah moves, marries, and engenders three sons, two of them growing to marriageable age, all in the space of six terse verses. The text describes the firstborn, Er, simply as “wicked.” The author/editor apparently considered the nature of his wickedness unimportant to relate; rather, what matters for the purpose of the story is that Er, as Tamar’s first husband, died before engendering children. Here also we have our first wordplay. In Hebrew, Er’s name ʾer is the consonantal inverse of “wicked,” ra’. In Hebrew terms, ʾer was ra’.

Judah instructs his second son, Onan, to raise up children in Er’s name with Tamar. Onan takes advantage of this by engaging repeatedly in sexual relations with Tamar but acting in such a way that she cannot conceive, thus displeasing God, who kills him. Judah instructs Tamar to remain as a widow in her father’s house until his third son, Shelah, is old enough to marry her and fulfill the levirate obligation.

One could interject at this point that Judah lived prior to the law of Moses, so how does the levirate obligation (from Latin levir, “husband’s brother”) apply? First, one could suggest that the author/editor of the Torah often viewed the past through the perspective of the present, and may be retrotejecting his own views. More likely is that the law of Moses often codified preexisting cultural norms, sometimes modifying them in the process. The Mosaic version of the levirate law is found in Deuteronomy 25:5–10. Deuteronomy specifies that this duty belongs to a brother-in-law who may refuse (in contrast to Genesis 38, where no right-of-refusal appears to exist). In pre-Mosaic times, the ultimate responsibility in assuring offspring fell to the father-in-law. Judah, therefore, as father-in-law, bore responsibility for carrying out this obligation, and he dutifully instructs Onan to marry Tamar and raise up children in his brother’s name. This difference in where the ultimate responsibility fell explains why Tamar later chose to deceive Judah instead of Shelah (the last living brother-in-law) and fulfill her religious duty to her husband.

Onan’s actions toward Tamar were particularly heinous in Israelite eyes: “By frustrating the purpose of the levirate institution, Onan has placed his sexual relationship with his sister-in-law in the category of incest—a capital offense.” Thus the death of Onan at the hand of the Lord.

At Judah’s instruction, Tamar returns to her father’s household as a widow, bereft of both husband and offspring. Moreover, as long as Tamar remained
childless, her husband’s property did belong not to her but reverted to Judah and his other sons. This may have been part of Onan’s motivation.

Time passes. Judah’s wife dies, and Judah’s mourning comes to an end. Shelah has grown enough to be given to Tamar, yet Judah withholds him from her. Judah travels to the sheepshearing at Timnah. Tamar, informed of his trip, conceals her identity with a veil and strategically places herself in Judah’s path at “an open place” (Genesis 38:14).

Though the King James translators understood the Hebrew petach ‘enayim as “an open place,” modern interpreters have understood the phrase differently. First, most read ‘enayim as a proper noun on the basis of verse 21 and Joshua 15:34, and then petach as either the crossroads leading to, or the opening/entrance to the city Enaim. Regardless of the specific meaning, petach ‘enayim can also be read quite literally as “opening of the eyes.” Here again is important irony. Judah will see and “know” (have intercourse with) Tamar, but he will not see and know (recognize) her. At “opening of the eyes,” Judah’s eyes are closed to Tamar’s identity. Indeed, from verse 13 to verse 24, Tamar’s name is never used in the text, allowing the reader to “see” her as Judah does, or more precisely, as Judah does not. For Judah, like a spate of recent films, this episode will end with a plot twist and revealed identity; in this case, however, the reader is aware of the twist from the beginning.

As Judah passes by, he takes Tamar for a prostitute and promptly propositions her. She agrees to a future offer of a kid from Judah’s flock but demands his seal, cord, and staff as surety. Judah later sends the kid, as promised, via his friend the Adullamite, who cannot find her. The locals inform him that there has never been a prostitute there. Some time later, rumor reaches Judah that Tamar is pregnant by harlotry. He angrily condemns her to be burned. When brought out, she shows to Judah his staff, seal, and cord, saying, “By the man, whose these are, am I with child” (Genesis 38:25). Judah, recognizing them as his own, suddenly understands what has taken place and declares that Tamar is in the right and he in the wrong.

Tamar veils herself not because veils were traditionally worn by harlots, but to conceal her identity from Judah. Judah likely assumed she was a harlot because she was at a crossroads or city entrance, where harlots traditionally stationed themselves. Perhaps a harlot is what Judah wanted or hoped to see, manifested by his abruptness in what Robert Alter terms “a wonderfully businesslike exchange. . . . Wasting no time with preliminaries, Judah immediately tells her, ‘Let me lie with you.’” His “sexual appetite will not tolerate
postponement, although he has been content to let Tamar languish as a childless widow.”27

Nevertheless, Judah should not be castigated as the Israelite equivalent of a businessman planning to cheat on his wife while ostensibly on a business trip. The text attempts to minimize his sexual guilt through the inclusion of several details. Judah’s wife has died, and the mourning period has passed. The act was clearly not premeditated, as Judah encountered her by chance (from his perspective) on the normal route to sheep shearing and did not bring anything for payment. There is no indication that such actions were habitual on Judah’s part, nor does it happen again with Tamar. “The text is careful to emphasize that had Judah known the identity of the woman, he would never have had relations with her: ‘she had covered her face’; ‘he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law’; ‘he was not intimate with her again.’”28

Judah promises Tamar a calf from his flock for payment. Tamar, showing great presence of mind, demands his staff, seal, and cord39 until then. The significance of this is often lost on modern readers. Judah is handing over the Near Eastern equivalent of a wallet with driver’s license and credit cards—identification that will later enable Tamar to establish her innocence. In Mesopotamia, loss of one’s seal resulted in the annulment of all legal agreements.30 That Judah agrees to turn these items over, in spite of the potential problems, attests further to a serious (but apparently temporary) lapse of control over his physical appetite.

Three months later, when Tamar’s pregnancy becomes known, Judah promptly orders that she be brought out and burned.31 Judah clearly applies a double standard by having visited a zonah (harlot) but condemning his daughter-in-law for having acted as one.32 While being brought out, Tamar produces the staff, cord, and seal of the man responsible and asks Judah to identify their owner. Judah, upon recognizing his own objects, realizes what has happened, and acknowledges his guilt in withholding his son from Tamar. Twins are born to her, and the narrative returns to Joseph in Egypt.

My impression is that many Latter-day Saints are uncomfortable with the sexuality inherent in this story. However, this discomfort stems largely from reading the chapter as though it took place today. Though speaking in a different context, Elder Oaks’s statement applies to this and other Old Testament stories: “We should judge the actions of our predecessors on the basis of the laws and commandments and circumstances of their day, not ours.”33 By Israelite standards, Tamar had justifiably manipulated Judah into carrying out
the responsibility he had shirked for many years, depriving her in the process of children, of inheritance, and of the opportunity to remarry. In retrospect, she had even prevented him from visiting a harlot. Judah acknowledges all this in verse 26 once her identity becomes known to him (King James Version “she hath been more righteous than I,” or my translation, “she has acted more rightly than I have”). Genesis records neither taint of illicitness in their offspring nor criticism of Tamar. Her actions were unusual but, once clearly understood, not immoral by “the laws and commandments and circumstances of [her] day.” Helping Latter-day Saints understand these laws, commandments, circumstances, and culture mitigates much of the discomfort with this chapter.

**Placement**

Though its insertion into the Joseph story seems random, the presence of several literary themes common to Genesis 37 and 39 (extending further into the Joseph story in some cases) demonstrates the deliberate and skillful placement of this episode. These include repeated wording and themes of deception, recognition, and reversal. Some themes link all three chapters together, some link 37 to 38, and others link 38 to what follows. Since these themes have been explored in depth elsewhere, I will summarize only two.

First is the theme of deception involving a piece of clothing. In Genesis 37, Judah proposes a plan, which he and his brothers carry out. They sell Joseph instead of killing him, then kill a goat, dip Joseph’s special coat in the blood, and bring it to their father, Israel. They present the coat to him and say *hakkōr-na*, “please recognize this, whether it is Joseph’s coat or not.” Thus is Israel deceived by means of Joseph’s coat. In Genesis 38, Judah, the deceiver, is in turn deceived as to Tamar’s identity by means of her veil. When Tamar is brought out to be burned, she presents the tokens of Judah’s identity (his staff, seal, and cord), ironically using the phrase from Judah’s plan against him: *hakkōr-na*, “please recognize to whom these belong.” Following Joseph’s final rebuff in Genesis 39, Potiphar’s wife deceives her husband by means of Joseph’s torn garment, resulting in his incarceration.

A second theme involves Judah’s personal development. In Genesis 38, he promises a calf to Tamar in payment but leaves tokens of his identity as a pledge of that payment. Later in the Joseph story, after years have passed, he will offer himself as a pledge that his brothers will return with Benjamin. Thus, Judah progresses from selfishness (offering tokens of himself as a pledge
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Teaching Suggestions

Since the circumstances and culture have changed significantly, students today may not see immediately how to reapply this to themselves, as Nephi teaches us to do in 1 Nephi 19:23. How can this information be made to serve a practical teaching purpose? Joseph is frequently used as an example of how to flee temptation and maintain sexual purity; Judah’s actions in the prior chapter can profitably serve as a foil to Joseph’s actions, as well as teach some lessons on their own. Under no pressure but personal appetite, Judah is immoral. Judah is juxtaposed and contrasted with Joseph, who is moral even when it would be to his advantage not to be. The following contrasts may prove useful.

1. In Genesis 38:1, Judah deliberately chooses to leave his brothers, and actively “went down” to dwell with the Canaanites, but Joseph was removed from his family by force and trickery and “was brought down to Egypt” (39:1). How do Judah’s choices of associates and surroundings influence him negatively in this story?

2. Judah, acting purely on the impulse of a moment and with no apparent second thoughts, takes the sexual offensive. Joseph, by contrast, defends himself repeatedly over many days from the propositions of his superior. Judah demonstrates what can happen when one consistently chooses less-than-ideal influences. Joseph, however, shows us that we have the ability to remain righteous and make good decisions when we find ourselves in negative circumstances through no fault of our own. We must avoid seeking temptation and sin when it is not pressed upon us as well as be able to resist temptation under circumstances we do not choose.

3. Joseph conceivably has something temporal to gain and everything to lose by not giving in to Potiphar’s wife, yet he does not. Judah has nothing to gain but temporary fulfillment of his sexual appetite, and much to lose. Joseph chooses to focus on the potential sin and does not rationalize his circumstances.

4. Judah takes Tamar as a prostitute, thus reducing a child of God to a nameless object and a means of temporary gratification. By contrast, Joseph
sees and treats his persistently would-be seductress as a person in her own right and his master's wife, placing her completely off-limits. Prophets have been clear about this aspect of selfishness and dehumanization: “One possessed of selfishness sees others as mere functions or objects to be used—or to be ignored—and not as humans to be helped, to be loved, or to be listened to.”40 “We must be different than other men. . . . Men of the world may disregard women or see them only as objects of desire or as someone to be used for selfish purposes. Let us, however, be different in our conduct and in our relationships with women.”41

Judah and Tamar have puzzled many commentators over the years, but once the cultural setting and the literary connections are understood, the foreignness of the story is lessened, and it becomes an asset and moral inspiration for both personal devotional study and in deriving lessons from Genesis. By juxtaposing Joseph's actions and attitudes with those of Judah, Joseph shines all the brighter. Students will find more strength in Joseph once they see him in contrast to Judah in the previous chapter. RE

Notes

1. “The stories of Genesis are often challenging and stimulating, but they seldom if ever propose simple models to be imitated” (John J. Collins, Introduction to the Hebrew Bible [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004], 90). Indeed, the Old Testament rarely, if ever, refers to the patriarchs as models to be emulated as Helaman did with his sons Lehi and Nephi in Helaman 5:6. Isaiah 51:2 says to “look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you,” but the emphasis is on God's power in blessing them.

2. This term, in essence, describes the ability to read and understand the story as an Israelite would have. See John Barton, Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 8–29; Marc Zvi Brettler, How to Read the Bible (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2005), 13–17.

3. “From Rabbinic times, the odd placement of Gen 38 has caused problems for biblical exegetes and commentators. At the beginning of the stories about Joseph, just when the plot begins to thicken, this chapter on Judah and his adventures seems a disturbing interruption of the narrative flow” (Johanna W. H. Bos, “Out of the Shadows—Genesis 38; Judges 4:17–22; Ruth 3,” Semeia 42 [1988]: 40).

4. I am not certain that Latter-day Saint commentators would have anything unique to say. Perhaps, from another perspective, some Latter-day Saint teachers could be encouraged to explore non–Latter-day Saint publications for help in understanding the Bible.

5. Joseph Smith's Commentary on the Bible has no entry for Genesis 38. See Kent P. Jackson, comp. and ed., Joseph Smith's Commentary on the Bible (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006).


7. From the LDS Infobase Collector's Library, the file GENAUTH. NFO. Tamar/Thamar does not appear at all in the Journal of Discourses. Ellis Rasmussen's Latter-day Saint
Commentary on the Old Testament (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993) has a brief reference on page 70.

8. Although the King James translators of the Bible were instructed that “the names of the prophets, and the holy writers, with the other names in the text [were] to be retained, as near as may be, accordingly as they are vulgarly [ie. commonly] used,” they did not consistently spell names the same way, nor “attempt to establish uniformity either of sound or spelling” (David Norton, A Textual History of the King James Bible [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 7, 9). Thus we find the spellings Enoch, Henoch, and Hanoch all for the same Hebrew name.

9. I find it interesting that Matthew includes Tamar and Ruth, two women whose offspring came primarily through application of the levirate institution. These two women and their stories “contribute in a direct way to the birth of the Messiah. Such an explicit connection with the birth of Jesus affirms that this royal lineage does not float above the maelstrom of life. This fact presents divine irony: God works in and through what appears weak and despised according to worldly standards in order to accomplish God’s purposes” (New Interpreter’s Bible, 606–7).

10. However, it is only fair to point out that Joseph also marries a non-Israelite (Genesis 41:45).


12. See John Welch, “Toward Becoming a Gospel Scholar,” This People magazine, summer 1998, 42–56. Again, since Latter-day Saint sources are nonexistent, one must consult non-Latter-day Saint sources for insight.


16. The Hebrew term for the levirate institution is yiḥabûm, related to yāḥām, “husband’s brother,” and yiḥäm, “to carry out the duty of a brother-in-law.”

17. Different parts of the Old Testament have clearly undergone later stages of editing, when these later perspectives could be introduced. Even if the traditional position of Mosaic authorship of the Torah is correct, Moses was not contemporary with all the events and stories recounted in Genesis and Exodus. Any account written or edited later can interject anachronistic perspectives.

18. Though today clearly demarcated nation/states with clear laws and a functional legal/justice system are taken for granted, such was not the case at this time, with the result that cultural norms, for all practical purposes, had the force of law.

19. Middle Assyrian and Hittite laws also included levirate legislation. A levirate marriage is also apparently attested at Nuzi (See Sarna, Genesis, 266).

20. Debate exists over whether permanent marriage was actually required at this time, or whether the male was responsible only to provide offspring. “If one assumes that the levirate custom demands not only conception of a child but marriage of the widow, then the story [of Judah and Tamar] has an unsatisfactory ending” (George Wesley Coats, “Widow’s Rights: A Crux in the Structure of Genesis 38,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 34 [1972]: 465–66).
21. Sarna, *Genesis*, 267. Sarna continues by saying, “The unusual emphasis given to the particular socio-legal background of the story shows that point at issue is the levirate obligation and not the general topic of birth control.”


24. The Hebrew literally reads “when he was comforted,” but we do not know how much time has actually passed. Robert Alter contrasts the clipped portrayal of Judah’s grief over his wife’s death with Israel’s lengthy mourning for Joseph (Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* [New York: Basic Books, 1981], 4-5, 7).


29. One scholar has proposed that the staff was not a walking staff, but the pin which secured the seal, allowing it to role freely over clay. See William W. Hallo, “As the Seal Upon Your Heart’ Glyptic Roles in the Biblical World,” *Bible Review* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 20-27.

30. Hallo, “As the Seal Upon Your Heart,” 20-27. No biblical data exists on whether similar strictures obtained in Israel, but the assumption is not an unreasonable one.

31. Scholars speculate on whether being burned was out of the ordinary at this time. The Torah later specifies stoning, unless the woman is a daughter of a priest (see Leviticus 21:9; Deuteronomy 22:21).


34. Sarna’s *JPS Torah* (263–70), Alter’s *Art of Biblical Narrative* (5–12), and Huddlestun’s “Divestiture, Deception, and Demotion” all provide more depth as well as further themes to be explored.


36. This pattern extends earlier into Genesis. Jacob deceives Isaac in Genesis 27:11–23.

37. Note also the presence of the goat in the Judah/Tamar story, another connection to the deception of Jacob.

38. Potiphar has no dialogue during his wife’s accusations, leading some to wonder if he saw through his wife’s deception.

39. See 1 Chronicles 5:2.


A Latter-day Saint Perspective on Biblical Inerrancy

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Few things make Latter-day Saints more suspect, in the Christian world at least, than their views of holy scripture. After spending the last twelve years in interfaith relations, after reading and talking and listening to the perceptions of those critical of Mormonism, after scores of efforts to explain why Latter-day Saints consider themselves Christians, and after standing before tens of thousands of people asking poignant and probing questions, it occurs to me that other than our ecclesiastical genealogy—the fact that we are not a part of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, or Protestantism—perhaps the most frequently raised issue is Joseph Smith’s view of the Bible and the need for continuing revelation, including an expanded canon of scripture. How do we dare claim to be Christian, critics ask, if we deny the sufficiency, infallibility, and, for some more conservative groups, inerrancy of the book of books?
The family of young Joseph Smith loved the Bible, and they read it regularly. It was, in fact, through pondering upon a biblical passage that Joseph began his quest to know the will of the Almighty. Most of his sermons, writings, and letters are laced with quotations or summaries of biblical passages and precepts from both the Old and New Testaments. Joseph once remarked that one can “see God’s own handwriting in the sacred volume: and he who reads it oftenest will like it best.” He believed the Bible represented God’s word to humanity, and he gloried in the truths and timeless lessons it contained.

As to the Bible’s sufficiency, to state that the Bible is the final word of God—more specifically, the final written word of God—is to claim more for the Bible than it claims for itself. We are nowhere given to understand after the ascension of Jesus and the ministry and writings of first-century Apostles that revelations from Deity, which could eventually take the form of scripture and thus be added to the canon, would cease. Thus Latter-day Saints would disagree with the following excerpt from the 1978 Chicago Statement on Inerrancy: “The New Testament canon is . . . now closed, inasmuch as no new apostolic witness to the historical Christ can now be borne. No new revelation (as distinct from Spirit-given understanding of existing revelation) will be given until Christ comes again.”

After speaking of how James 1:5–6 had made such a deep impression on his soul, Joseph wrote, “I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did . . . for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible” (Joseph Smith—History 1:12). Years later he stated,

From what we can draw from the Scriptures relative to the teaching of heaven, we are induced to think that much instruction has been given to man since the beginning which we do not possess now. This may not agree with the opinions of some of our friends who are bold to say that we have everything written in the Bible which God ever spoke to man since the world began, and that if He had ever said anything more we should certainly have received it. . . . We have what we have, and the Bible contains what it does contain: but to say that God never said anything more to man than is there recorded, would be saying at once that we have at last received a revelation: for it must require one to advance thus far, because it is nowhere said in that volume by the mouth of God, that He would not, after giving what is there contained, speak again; and if any man has found out for a fact that the Bible contains all that God ever revealed to man he has ascertained it by an immediate revelation.
In an 1833 letter to his uncle Silas Smith, Joseph wrote:

Seeing that the Lord has never given the world to understand by anything heretofore revealed that he had ceased forever to speak to his creatures when sought unto in a proper manner, why should it be thought a thing incredible that he should be pleased to speak again in these last days for their salvation? Perhaps you may be surprised at this assertion that I should say “for the salvation of his creatures in these last days” since we have already in our possession a vast volume of his word [the Bible] which he has previously given. But you will admit that the word spoken to Noah was not sufficient for Abraham. . . . Isaac, the promised seed, was not required to rest his hope upon the promises made to his father Abraham, but was privileged with the assurance of [God’s] approbation in the sight of Heaven by the direct voice of the Lord to him. . . .

I have no doubt but that the holy prophets and apostles and saints in ancient days were saved in the Kingdom of God. . . . I may believe that Abraham communed with God and conversed with angels. . . . I may believe that Enoch was taken to Heaven in a chariot of fire with fiery horses. I may believe that the saints saw the Lord and conversed with him face to face after his resurrection. I may believe that the Hebrew Church came to Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. I may believe that they looked into Eternity and saw the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; but will all this purchase an assurance for me, or waft me to the regions of Eternal day with my garments spotless, pure, and white? Or, must I not rather obtain for myself, by my own faith and diligence, in keeping the commandments of the Lord, an assurance of salvation for myself? And have I not an equal privilege with the ancient saints? And will not the Lord hear my prayers, and listen to my cries as soon as he ever did to theirs, if I come to him in the manner they did? Or is he a respecter of persons?4

Lee M. McDonald, an Evangelical pastor, posed some fascinating questions relative to the present closed canon of Christian scripture. “The first question,” he writes, “and the most important one, is whether the church was right in perceiving the need for a closed canon of scriptures.” McDonald also asks, “Did such a move toward a closed canon of scriptures ultimately (and unconsciously) limit the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the church? More precisely, does the recognition of absoluteness of the biblical canon minimize the presence and activity of God in the church today? . . . On what biblical or historical grounds has the inspiration of God been limited to the written documents that the Church now calls its Bible?” McDonald poses other issues, but let me refer to his final question: “If the Spirit inspired only the written documents of the first century, does that mean that the same Spirit does not speak today in the church about matters that are of significant concern?”5

I have my own set of questions to pose alongside McDonald:
1. Who authorized the canon to be closed? Does not such a move inhibit one’s search for new truth, block one’s openness to a later revelation from God, and, in essence, cause a people to be hardened and shut off from subsequent divine illumination? Nephi warned: “Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion! Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well! . . . Yea, wo be unto him that saith: We have received, and we need no more! And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness” (2 Nephi 28:24–25, 27–28).

2. Who decided that the Bible was and forevermore would be the final written word of God? Why would one suppose that the closing words of the Apocalypse represented the “end of the prophets”?

3. Latter-day Saints teach the same basic message that Jesus and Peter and Paul and John delivered to the unbelieving Jews of their day—that the heavens have once again been opened, that new light and knowledge have burst upon the earth, and that God has chosen to reveal himself through the ministry of his Beloved Son and the Master’s ordained Apostles. Do Latter-day Saints find themselves today in a hauntingly reminiscent position relative to the continuing and ongoing mind and will of God?

The fact of the matter is that no branch of Christianity limits itself entirely to the biblical text alone in making doctrinal decisions and in applying biblical principles. Roman Catholics turn to scripture, to church tradition, and to the magisterium for answers. Protestants, particularly Evangelicals, turn to linguists and scripture scholars for their answers, as well as to post–New Testament church councils and creeds. This seems, at least in my view, to be in violation of Sola Scriptura, the clarion call of the Reformation to rely solely upon scripture itself. In fact, there is no final authority on scriptural interpretation when differences arise, which of course they do.

The Bible is a magnificent tool in the hands of God, but it is too often used as a club or a weapon in the hands of men and women. For a long time now, the Bible has been used to settle disputes of every imaginable kind, even those that the prophets never intended to settle. Creeds and biblical interpretations in the nineteenth century served as much to distinguish and divide as they did to inform and unite.

**Infallibility**

What do people mean when they speak of biblical infallibility? The following are a few definitions of the word provided in theological dictionaries:
“The characteristic of being incapable of failing to accomplish a predetermined purpose... The Bible will not fail in its ultimate purpose of revealing God and the way of salvation to humans. In Roman Catholic theology infallibility is also extended to the teaching of the church (magisterium or dogma) under the authority of the pope as the chief teacher and earthly head of the body of Christ.6

“Commitment to a belief that the Bible is completely trustworthy as a guide to salvation and the life of faith and will not fail to accomplish its purpose. Some equate ‘inerrancy’ and ‘infallibility’; others do not. For those who do not, infallibility does not necessarily entail inerrancy.”7

“A reference to the doctrine that the Bible is unfailing in its purpose. In some usages of the term the Bible’s authority may be restricted to matters of salvation.”8

“Infallible signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe and reliable rule and guide in all matters.”9

Many Latter-day Saints would have no difficulty with such definitions of biblical infallibility. From our perspective, the essential message of the Bible is true and from God, and to that extent the Bible is accomplishing its divine purpose on the earth. The New Testament teaches powerfully and consistently that salvation is in Christ and that his is the only name by which that salvation comes (see Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:9–11). It teaches of the absolute necessity for faith in Jesus Christ and all that that faith entails (repentance, baptism and rebirth, obedient discipleship). In fact, we do believe that the hand of God has been over the preservation of the biblical materials such that what we have now is what the Almighty would have us possess. In the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “We cannot avoid the conclusion that a divine providence is directing all things as they should be. This means that the Bible, as it now is, contains that portion of the Lord’s word” that the present world is prepared to receive.10

Indeed, although Latter-day Saints do not believe that the Bible now contains all that it once contained, the Bible is a remarkable book of scripture, one that inspires, reproves, corrects, and instructs (see 2 Timothy 3:16). It is the word of God. Our task, according to President George Q. Cannon, is to engender faith in the Bible:

As our duty is to create faith in the word of God in the mind of the young student, we scarcely think that object is best attained by making the mistakes of translators
or transmitters] the more prominent part of our teachings. Even children have
t heir doubts, but it is not our business to encourage those doubts. Doubts never
convert; negations seldom convince. . . . The clause in the Articles of Faith regarding
mistakes in the translation of the Bible was never inserted to encourage us to spend
our time in searching out and studying those errors, but to emphasize the idea that
it is the truth and the truth only that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
accepts, no matter where it is found.11

In a revelation received in February 1831 that embraces “the law of the
Church,” the early Saints were instructed: “And again, the elders, priests and
teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are
in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gos-
pel” (D&C 42:12; emphasis added). In 1982 Elder McConkie explained to
Church leaders, “Before we can write the gospel in our own book of life we
must learn the gospel as it is written in the books of scripture. The Bible, the
Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants [and the Pearl of Great
Price]—each of them individually and all of them collectively—contain the ful-
ness of the everlasting gospel.”12

Inerrancy

What, then, do scholars mean when they speak of scriptural inerrancy? Note
the following definitions:

“The idea that Scripture is completely free from error. It is generally agreed
by all theologians who use the term that inerrancy at least refers to the trust-
worthy and authoritative nature of Scripture as God’s Word, which informs
humankind of the need for and the way to salvation. Some theologians, how-
ever, affirm that the Bible is also completely accurate in whatever it teaches
about other subjects, such as science and history.”13

“The theological conviction that the Bible is completely truthful and
accurate in every respect about all it affirms.”14

“The variously interpreted teaching that the Bible contains no error in
that which it affirms.”15

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy makes a crucial con-
tribution to this concept: “Since God has nowhere promised an inerrant
transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographi-
text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need of tex-
tual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the
text in the course of its transmission.”16 This is the same position taken by the
Evangelical Theological Society.17
In recent years Bart Ehrman at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has stirred much controversy through such books as *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (Oxford, 1996), *Lost Christianities* (Oxford, 2005), *Misquoting Jesus* (HarperCollins, 2005) and *Jesus Interrupted* (HarperOne, 2009). Ehrman’s basic thrust has been to demonstrate that scribal errors that occurred during the translation and transmission of New Testament (NT) manuscripts—whether intentional or unintentional—are so numerous that it is an intellectual and spiritual stretch for men and women today to have complete confidence in their present Bibles. In *Misquoting Jesus*, he waxes personal for a bit and explains how he as an Evangelical graduate student at Princeton lost his faith in the Bible. “I kept reverting to my basic question: how does it help us to say that the Bible is the inerrant word of God if in fact we don’t have the words that God inerrantly inspired, but only the words copied by the scribes—sometimes correctly but sometimes (many times!) incorrectly? What good is it to say that the autographs (i.e., the originals) were inspired? We don’t have the originals! We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways.” Once Ehrman agreed with one of his professors that perhaps “Mark just made a mistake,” he says, “The floodgates opened. For if there could be one little, picayune mistake in Mark 2, maybe there could be mistakes in other places as well.” Having later discovered how many different New Testament manuscripts there were (today some 5,700 Greek manuscripts) and how many variants there were (200,000 to 400,000), he put things into stark perspective: “There are more variations among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament.”

Christian apologists are quick to point out that Ehrman has lost his faith in Christianity and is therefore not a safe guide to follow in sacred matters. Other apologists eagerly rush forward to affirm that there may indeed be as many as 400,000 New Testament manuscript variants but calmly reply that few if any of the variants are substantive and almost none have doctrinal implications. Many times I have asked Christian colleagues how they can be so certain that the scribal errors are inconsequential. On several occasions the response has been some variation of this theme: “Well, they couldn’t be very significant, because God has all power, will not be thwarted in his divine purposes, and has surely seen to the preservation of the Bible. The Bible is inerrant.” This is, of course, circular reasoning. It is another way of saying, “I know the Bible is without error or flaw because I know the Bible is inerrant.”
Some Christian students have simply replied, “Why would God allow such a thing to happen to his holy word?” This question is, of course, related to the question of why God would allow evil and suffering in the world, a topic, by the way, that Ehrman addresses in one of his latest works, *God’s Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question—Why We Suffer* (HarperCollins, 2008).

It seems to me that the question is not whether there have been scribal errors through the centuries—there have been. The question is not whether the Bible is the word of God—it is. The question is not whether the Bible can be relied upon with confidence if, in fact, there have been errors—it can. Timothy Paul Jones, in a reply to Ehrman, has written: “Supposing that God *did* inspire the original New Testament writings and that he protected those writings from error—are the available copies of the New Testament manuscripts sufficiently accurate for us to grasp the truth that God intended in the first century? I believe that the answer to this question is yes. The ancient manuscripts were not copied perfectly. Yet they *were* copied with enough accuracy for us to comprehend what the original authors intended.”

Jones’s position resembles the one held by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We do not believe the Bible has to have come down in perfectly untampered fashion, but we do believe its teachings to be spiritually normative and eternally valuable. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “I believe the bible, as it ought to be, as it came from the pen of the original writers.” And yet errors in the Bible do not tarnish its image for Latter-day Saints. For that matter, while we accept the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price as holy scripture and as God-breathed, we would not rush to proclaim their inerrancy. The marvel is, in fact, the greater that an infinite and perfect Being can work through finite and imperfect humans to deliver his word to his children.

Joseph Smith believed, to be sure, that the message of the Bible was true and from God. We could say that he believed the Bible was “God’s word.” I am not so certain that he or modern Church leaders believed that every sentence recorded in the testaments contained a direct quotation or a transcription of divine direction. As Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, writes: “Even on the most conservative estimate of [the four Gospels’] accounts, there must have been episodes imperfectly seen or understood, episodes where direct eyewitness evidence was lacking, along with partially conflicting testimonies. To grant this is simply to allow that the inspiration of the Gospel
narratives is not the gift to the writers of a miraculous God’s-eye view. If Jesus’ life is a truly human one, the witness to his life must be human as well, and human witness is seldom straightforward or comprehensive.”

**Authority**

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that it is the spirit of revelation within the one called of God that is the energizing force. In most instances, God places the thought into the mind or heart of the revelator, who then assumes the responsibility to clothe the oracle in language. Certainly there are times when a prophet records the words of God directly, but very often the “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:12) whispers to the prophet, who then speaks for God. In short, when God chooses to speak through a person, that person does not become a mindless ventriloquist, an earthly sound system through which God can voice himself. Rather, the person becomes enlightened and filled with intelligence or truth. “What makes us different from most other Christians,” Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained, “in the way we read and use the Bible and other scriptures is our belief in continuing revelation. For us, the scriptures are not the ultimate source of knowledge, but what precedes the ultimate source. The ultimate knowledge comes by revelation.”

Nothing could be clearer in the Old Testament, for example, than that many factors impacted the prophetic message—personality, experience, vocabulary, literary talent. The word of the Lord as spoken through Isaiah is quite different from the word of the Lord as spoken through Luke, and both are different from that spoken by Jeremiah or Mark. Further, it is worth noting that stone, leaves, bark, skins, wood, metals, baked clay, and papyrus were all used anciently to record inspired messages. Latter-day Saint concern with the ancients is not the perfection with which such messages were recorded but with the inspiration of the message. More specifically, Latter-day Saints are interested in the fact that the heavens were opened to the ancients, that they had messages to record. In other words, knowing that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (see Hebrews 13:8) and the fact that he spoke to them at all (however well or poorly it may have been recorded) attests that he can speak to men and women in the here and now. After all, the Bible is only black ink on white paper until the Spirit of God illuminates its true meaning to us; if we have obtained that, there is little need to quibble over the Bible’s suitability as a history or science text.
For Latter-day Saints, the traditions of the past regarding scripture, revelation, and canon were altered dramatically by Joseph Smith’s First Vision in 1820. God had spoken again, and a “new dispensation” of truth was under way. The ninth article of faith states: “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.” We feel deep gratitude for the holy scriptures, but we do not worship scripture. Nor do we feel it appropriate to “set up stakes and set bounds to the works and ways of the Almighty.”

So often I encounter religious persons who state emphatically that their position is based entirely upon “the authority of scripture.” The fact is, God is the source of any reputable religious authority. In the words of N. T. Wright, “The risen Jesus, at the end of Matthew’s gospel, does not say, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth is given to the books you are all going to write,’ but ‘All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me.’” In other words, “scripture itself points—authoritatively, if it does indeed possess authority!—away from itself and to the fact that final and true authority belongs to God himself, now delegated to Jesus Christ.”

Conclusion

Believers in the Bible are all about the business of reading scripture and seeking to understand its meaning. I agree with Bart Ehrman’s statement that “reading a text necessarily involves interpreting a text. I suppose when I started my studies I had a rather unsophisticated view of reading: that the point of reading a text is simply to let the text ‘speak for itself,’ to uncover the meaning inherent in its words. The reality, I came to see, is that meaning is not inherent and texts do not speak for themselves. If texts could speak for themselves, then everyone honestly and openly reading a text would agree on what the text says. But interpretations of texts abound, and people in fact do not agree on what the texts mean.”

Randall Balmer at Barnard College, Columbia, has described the challenge faced by many in the Christian world:

Luther’s sentiments created a demand for Scriptures in the vernacular, and Protestants ever since have . . . insisted on interpreting the Bible for themselves, forgetting most of the time that they come to the text with their own set of cultural biases and personal agendas.

Underlying this insistence on individual interpretation is the assumption . . . that the plainest, most evident reading of the text is the proper one. Everyone becomes his or her own theologian. There is no longer any need to consult Augustine
or Thomas Aquinas or Martin Luther about their understanding of various passages when you yourself are the final arbiter of what is the correct reading. This tendency, together with the absence of any authority structure within Protestantism, has created a kind of theological free-for-all, as various individuals or groups insist that their reading of the Bible is the only possible interpretation.  

In speaking of the value of Church tradition in interpreting scripture, Scott Hahn, a man raised as an Evangelical Protestant but who later converted to Catholicism, wrote that

when our nation's founders gave us the Constitution, they didn’t leave it at that. Can you imagine what we’d have today if all they had given us was a document, as good as it is, along with a charge like, “May the spirit of Washington guide each and every citizen”? We’d have anarchy—which is basically what . . . Protestants do have when it comes to church unity. Instead, our founding fathers gave us something besides the Constitution; they gave us a government—made up of a President, Congress and a Supreme Court—all of which are needed to administer and interpret the Constitution. And if that’s just enough to govern a country like ours, what would it take to govern a worldwide Church?

Richard L. Bushman has written, “At some level, Joseph’s revelations indicate a loss of trust in the Christian ministry.” He adds, “For all their learning and their eloquence, the clergy could not be trusted with the Bible. They did not understand what the book meant. It was a record of revelations, and the ministry had turned it into a handbook. The Bible had become a text to be interpreted rather than an experience to be lived. In the process, the power of the book was lost . . . . It was the power thereof that Joseph and the other visionaries of his time sought to recover. Not getting it from the ministry, they looked for it themselves.”

“To me,” Bushman continues, “that is Joseph Smith’s significance for our time. He stood on the contested ground where the Enlightenment and Christianity confronted one another, and his life posed the question, Do you believe God speaks? Joseph was swept aside, of course, in the rush of ensuing intellectual battles and was disregarded by the champions of both great systems, but his mission was to hold out for the reality of divine revelation and establish one small outpost where that principle survived. Joseph’s revelatory principle is not a single revelation serving for all time, as the Christians of his day believed regarding the incarnation of Christ, nor a mild sort of inspiration seeping into the minds of all good people, but specific, ongoing directions from God to his people. At a time when the origins of Christianity
were under assault by the forces of Enlightenment rationality, Joseph Smith returned modern Christianity to its origins in revelation.”

I love the Bible. I treasure its teachings and delight in the spirit of worship that accompanies its prayerful study. My belief in additional scripture does not in any way detract from what I feel toward and learn from the Holy Bible. Studying the Bible lifts my spirits, lightens my burdens, enlightens my mind, and motivates me to seek to live a life of holiness. “When this fact is admitted,” Joseph Smith said in 1834, “that the immediate will of heaven is contained in the Scriptures, are we not bound as rational creatures to live in accordance to all [their] precepts?”

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Notes
18. Other books by Ehrman that are not as pertinent to this topic but raise questions regarding the historicity, reliability, canonicity, and present status of the Bible include *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (New York: Oxford, 2005), Peter,

19. Ehrman, Misquoting Jesus, 7, 9, 10, 88–90.

20. See, for example, Timothy Paul Jones, Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman’s Misquoting Jesus (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 43–44.


27. Ehrman, Misquoting Jesus, 216.


31. Smith, Teachings, 53.
Detail from Book of Abraham, Facsimile 1. See page 93 for full image.
In 1835 Joseph Smith began translating some ancient Egyptian papyri that he had obtained from an exhibitor passing through Kirtland, Ohio. He soon announced, “Much to our joy [we] found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham.” While we do not know how much the Prophet translated, we do know that some of his translation was published in serial form and eventually canonized as the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. For nearly one hundred years, it was thought that all these papyri had eventually made their way to the Wood Museum in Chicago, where they were destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

However, in 1967 New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art presented The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with portions of the papyri Joseph Smith had owned, which the museum had purchased some twenty years earlier. This small collection of eleven papyri fragments came to be known as the Joseph Smith Papyri. Because these papyri contained the drawing which became Facsimile 1 in the Book of Abraham, and because this facsimile is the first page of the Book of Abraham, most people assumed that...
the text adjacent to this drawing (drawings on papyrus are known as vignettes to Egyptologists) was the source for the Book of Abraham.

When the text that accompanied the vignette was translated, it turned out to be a common late Egyptian funerary text known as the Book of Breathings. It bore no resemblance to the Book of Abraham that Joseph Smith had translated from his papyri. Furthermore, Egyptological studies of the facsimiles drew conclusions about their meanings that were different than those Joseph Smith had presented. For many, this seemed to prove that Joseph Smith’s translation of the papyri and his interpretation of the vignettes were a fabrication and that he did not possess the ability to translate ancient documents. If this is the case, then his ability to translate Egyptian characters from the golden plates into the Book of Mormon is also put into question. If these two books of scripture are fabrications, are any of his revelations or teachings reliable? The credibility of all his revelations is thrown into question.

While these are reasonable questions, the scenario from which they stem is based on assumptions that deserve closer scrutiny—assumptions about the text of the Book of Abraham and about the facsimiles. We will find that in many cases we do not understand exactly what is going on. The evidence we have often does not allow for us to develop a clear picture, and scholars are in the midst of an intensive process of trying to understand the story behind the Book of Abraham. However, we will also see that while we do not necessarily have a definitive answer, it is clear that the answers put forth by the critics of the Prophet are problematic, for the evidence does not generally support their assumptions.

**The Source of the Book of Abraham**

We should begin by asking what segment of the whole body of manuscripts was the source of the Book of Abraham. As noted above, most critics have assumed that the source of the text is the hieroglyphs adjacent to Facsimile 1 on the papyri, but a closer look at the ancient sources themselves and contemporary accounts of Joseph Smith’s translation process brings that assumption into question.

To begin with, we must ask if vignettes are always associated with the adjacent text in other Egyptian papyri from this time period. We know with some degree of precision the dating of the Facsimile 1 papyrus (also known as Joseph Smith Papyrus 1, or JSP 1), because we know exactly who the owner of this papyrus was. He lived around 200 BC and was a fairly prominent priest
in Thebes. (Incidentally, this priest is not alone as a practitioner of Egyptian religion who possessed or used Jewish religious texts. We can identify others, particularly priests from Thebes). During this period, it was common for the text and its accompanying picture to be separated from each other, for the wrong vignette to be associated with a text, and for vignettes and texts to be completely misaligned on a long scroll. Frequently there is a mismatch between the content of a vignette and the content of the text, or the connection is not readily apparent. This is particularly common in Books of Breathings, the type of text adjacent to Facsimile 1 on the Joseph Smith Papyri. Incongruity between texts and adjacent vignettes is endemic to papyri of this era. Thus, the argument that the text of the Book of Abraham
had to be translated from the hieroglyphs next to the vignette is not convincing when compared with ancient Egyptian texts from the same period.

Besides the relationship of vignette and text, we also have to ask what portion of the papyri Joseph Smith translated from, according to his contemporaries. Eyewitness accounts describe both the papyri collection and which part of the collection was the source of the Book of Abraham. W. W. Phelps writes of “two papyrus rolls, besides some other ancient Egyptian writings.”10 We can identify five different ancient owners of the papyri from the fragments and facsimiles we have today, which indicates that there were at least five different sets of papyri, at least two of which were scrolls.11 Other contemporary witnesses describe a number of fragments of papyrus contained under glass12 (also described as “glazed slides”),13 a “long roll” on which the Book of Abraham was reported to be written,14 and “another roll,”15 thus confirming Phelps’s account of several fragments (adding the information that at some point they had been put in framed glass) and his report of “two papyrus rolls” (specifying that one was longer than the other).

Descriptions of the vignettes as framed fragments or as glazed slides match the descriptions of the papyri fragments that ended up in the Metropolitan Museum.16 In fact, one of the fragments in the Met’s collection was still in its frame. It seems that at least some of these slides, probably including the one that contained Facsimile 1, came from the frayed ends of the outside wrap of a papyrus scroll, for outside wraps of scrolls receive the most damage. These ends were likely cut off and put under glass to protect them.17 Facsimile 1 seems to have been separated from the rest of its scroll in order to protect it, and later owners caused further separation by selling it to the Metropolitan Museum while the scroll from which it was cut went elsewhere.

The other vignettes on the long rolls as described by witnesses match the description provided by the catalog of the Wood Museum of the scrolls they received from Joseph Smith’s collection.18 Those who saw the papyri in Joseph’s day agreed that the long roll was the source of the Book of Abraham, even accounts from after the time Facsimile 1 had been separated and framed in glass. Because we know the long roll was destroyed in the Chicago fire, assumptions that the Book of Abraham came from the Metropolitan Museum fragments run contrary to contemporary eyewitness accounts. Judging from these accounts, it seems the Book of Abraham came from the scroll, not the fragments.

Was the “long roll” long enough to contain both the Book of Breathings and the text of the Book of Abraham? While it is difficult to reconstruct the
original length of the scrolls, the most accurate attempt to do so comes from John Gee’s application of a formula used by other Egyptologists by which the circumference of the roll and how tightly it was wound can be used to calculate the original length of a papyrus roll.19 Employing this mathematical formula to the long scroll from which Facsimile 1 was cut, Gee has estimated its length at forty-one feet.20 If this calculation is correct, the scroll was undoubtedly long enough to contain the Book of Breathings, the Book of Abraham, and other texts. Long scrolls were not unusual in Egypt in this time period.21 While it was common for papyrus scrolls to be written on both sides, we cannot currently know if this was the case with the “long roll.” If it was, then according to the formulaic calculation there could be as much as eighty-two feet of writings on this scroll. Long scrolls like this typically contained a variety of texts.

Kirtland Egyptian Papers

Many critics feel there is other evidence for asserting that the hieroglyphs next to Facsimile 1 are the source of the Book of Abraham. Their argument stems from a group of papers known as the Kirtland Egyptian Papers. These poorly named documents are an eclectic collection of papers, 16 of which are associated with Egyptian characters or with the Book of Abraham. A few of these papers contain the text of the Book of Abraham written in English by several individuals with a single Egyptian character written next to each paragraph in the left margin. Because these Egyptian characters match characters from the Book of Breathings, critics have assumed that these manuscripts record the translation process. Supposedly the translator looked at a few characters from the Book of Breathings and derived the Book of Abraham from them.22 This premise assumes that the characters were written first and that the text written next to them was created afterward as an attempt to translate the characters’ meaning.

There are, however, a number of problems with this assumption: (1) Scribal errors and other critical textual clues make it very clear that these papers represent later copies of the text of the Book of Abraham, not the original translation; they were probably not even first- or second-generation copies. Thus the characters at the right were not characters they were trying to work through on these papers; they must mean something else. (2) The Egyptian characters appear to sometimes overwrite the English. If this is the case, then it is clear they were later additions. (3) Eyewitness accounts
establish that the long roll, not the glazed slide containing Facsimile 1, was the source of the Book of Abraham. Modern-day theories about the Kirtland Egyptian Papers must reconcile with eyewitness accounts rather than ignore them.23 (4) We have reason to believe that while Joseph Smith was involved in creating some of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers (two of the sixteen pages contain Joseph’s handwriting), at other times his associates did this work without him. The pages whose composition we can date come from a period when the Prophet was out of town and the School of the Prophets seemingly went on without him. Adding up all these scraps of evidence, it seems highly improbable that this collection of papers represents Joseph’s original translation.

So what are these papers? Do they represent an attempt on the part of a group who was very interested in ancient languages to create an Egyptian grammar after Joseph had translated the Book of Abraham? Do the Egyptian figures serve as fanciful and archaic bullet points? Were the Egyptian characters placed beside the text to excite the minds of potential readers in hopes of increasing the book’s circulation? At the present, we do not have enough evidence to discern what these papers represent, but it seems unlikely that they represent an English translation of the Egyptian characters written on the side. The evidence points away from this conclusion. Thus, while we cannot present an answer as to what these papers are, we can say the evidence does not support the critics’ claims.

**The Text of the Book of Abraham**

When trying to determine the authenticity of any text, we must examine the contents of the text itself. We have two possibilities. Does the text exhibit characteristics of the period it claims to be from or of the time when it was first published? Many have protested that the Book of Abraham contains nineteenth-century anachronisms.

Some critics have claimed that the planetary system described in Abraham chapter 3 displays characteristics of a Newtonian understanding of the universe, which was common in Joseph Smith’s day.24 The most detailed examinations of the system described in the Book of Abraham cannot yield a firm conclusion as to what known astronomic model is represented, but the Newtonian system is the least similar. Some scholars have argued that the third chapter of Abraham, with its astronomical descriptions, represents the geocentric model that was common in Abraham’s day.25 But equally strong evidence points to an astronomic model similar to that subscribed to by
today’s astronomers, going well beyond Newtonian physics. While both of these models match the Book of Abraham description of astronomy better than a nineteenth-century model, neither is fully capable of accounting for all aspects of Abraham. Perhaps this is because the text describes astronomy from an altogether different paradigm that we cannot understand. Perhaps this is allegorical astronomy—not an accurate astronomical paradigm but a model that conveys doctrinal principles. In any case, the explanation that most poorly fits the facts is the one put forward by critics.

Similarly, questions about the use of the term “Chaldees” and the employment of strange words in the Book of Abraham have been answered satisfactorily. These are just some examples of the critiques of the text of the Book of Abraham itself. I am unaware of any that have not been answered to my satisfaction.

Some have maintained that the heading to the Book of Abraham (“The writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand, upon papyrus”) means that Abraham himself produced the writings on the papyrus that the Prophet Joseph had. However, since we know that the papyri date to over a millennium and a half later than when Abraham was in Egypt, the papyri could not have been written by Abraham himself. The critics have confused the difference between a text and a manuscript. A text, however many copies of it exist in the world, is written by one author. However, each copy of that text is its own manuscript. When the heading notes that the text was written by Abraham’s own hand, it notes who the author is, not who copied down the particular manuscript that came into Joseph’s possession.

While critics pounce on what they see as anachronisms, what they ignore are textual elements that support an authentic Abrahamic context. Space permits only one example: Abraham mentions that the altar on which he was nearly sacrificed was located in a valley called Olishem. During Joseph Smith’s day, this name was completely unknown. However, since then an Egyptian text roughly contemporary with Abraham, which outlines geographic areas in the Levant, names an Olishem. Further, this Olishem is in the same area as a likely candidate for the city Ur. The odds that Joseph would make up a random name that happened to match a real ancient place in the correct time and region are extremely slight.

Critics also disregard textual elements within the Book of Abraham that are corroborated in other ancient traditions. A substantial number
of elements that are not found in the Bible are found in both the Book of Abraham and in other ancient texts (for example, the idolatry of Abraham’s father and Abraham’s near sacrifice and divine deliverance). In all there are too many corroborating elements in other ancient traditions to be easily discounted. Furthermore, an investigation into the common knowledge about Abraham in Joseph Smith’s day found that the Book of Abraham contained things unlike anything Joseph’s contemporaries were teaching. None of the writings contemporary with Joseph Smith emphasized covenants, a literal promised land, Egypt, the idolatry of Abraham’s father, or Abraham’s near sacrifice. Additionally, an Abrahamic creation account is totally unique to the Book of Abraham. It does not appear that this book is a product of nineteenth-century thinking.

The Facsimiles

What about the facsimiles, with their mysterious explanations provided by Joseph Smith? The possible interpretations of the facsimiles are complicated and numerous. What are we to make of them? Typically people have asked what the Egyptians would say these drawings meant, and how this compares with what Joseph said they meant. Here a distinction must be observed, for when this question is asked, it is answered not by ancient Egyptians but by modern Egyptologists. This is, of course, understandable because we do not have access to any ancient Egyptians, and we assume modern Egyptologists are reliable replacements. But we know that Egyptologists are often wrong regarding what Egyptians would have said on the subject. One study demonstrated that in the few instances where we have found Egyptian labels about various figures in hypocephali (the type of drawing that Facsimile 2 is), they hardly ever match up with what Egyptologists say. Thus it is problematic to look to modern Egyptologists for what ancient Egyptians would have said various drawings represented.

Furthermore, we cannot be sure that we should be looking to the Egyptians to know how to interpret these symbols in the Book of Abraham. What if Abraham’s descendants took Egyptian elements of culture and applied their own meanings to them? We know that his numerous offspring did so on many occasions. For example, Jesus himself did this when he gave the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, which clearly draws from the Egyptian tale of Setne-Kamwas. The Apocalypse of Abraham and Testament of Abraham are two more examples of Semitic adaptations of Egyptian religious traditions.
Thus, is it not possible that we should look for a Jewish interpretation of the Egyptian drawings, rather than for an Egyptian interpretation? Or what if the drawings were originally done in Jewish/Israelite artistic style, but when they were recopied in the second century BC by an Egyptian, the Egyptian artist redrew them according to his artistic customs? Where should we then look to know how to interpret these drawings? It is apparent that there are serious problems with trying to verify or disprove Joseph’s explanations of the facsimiles by comparing them to Egyptological explanations.

If we do try to make sense of the facsimiles, what do we find? Let us start with Facsimile 1. While many detractors have said it is a typical drawing accompanying Books of Breathings (and thus could not represent Abraham being nearly sacrificed), this claim is inaccurate. This is the only known example of this type of drawing being adjacent to, or connected in any way with, a copy of the Book of Breathings. While drawings somewhat similar to Facsimile 1 are well known, association with a Book of Breathings is unparalleled. This drawing has no resemblance to drawings ordinarily associated with breathing texts. What are we to make of this anomaly? The most obvious conclusion is that Facsimile 1 is not adjacent to the text it should be associated with.

Some scholars have suggested that Facsimile 1 is a typical embalming scene rather than being a depiction of Abraham on an altar. Yet this vignette is as different from other embalming scenes as it is similar to them. The only similarities are that a person lies on a lion couch with another person standing nearby. Others suggest that this scene’s closest parallels are from a series of depictions on the walls of a temple in Denderah and that the figure on the couch ought to be associated with Osiris. The closest iconographic parallel at Denderah is accompanied by a caption that reads that the goddess Bastet has commanded those who follow her to “slaughter your enemies,” which means that the closest iconographic match to Facsimile 1 also matches what the scene is supposed to be about in the Book of Abraham, namely that someone in the scene was in danger and received protection.

Other lion couch scenes at the Denderah Temple depict Anubis and the sons of Horus defending someone from his adversaries; list Shesmu, a god associated with human sacrifice, as being part of the scene; or discuss being hacked to pieces, being burned, or being sent to the slaughterhouse. While I am not certain that the scenes at Denderah are real parallels to Facsimile 1, if critics want to associate them with the facsimile, they must also be willing
to associate them with the sacrificial elements of the Denderah scenes, which parallel Joseph’s interpretation of this facsimile.

The similarities notwithstanding, Facsimile 1 is unique among lion couch scenes in a number of ways. In this scene the figure is neither in mummified form nor naked, as is the case in the supposed parallels. Also, in this scene the figure on the couch has two hands raised in a position that almost certainly denotes a struggle. And though one cannot tell this from the printed facsimile, on the original papyrus it is clear that the priest is standing between the legs of the person on the altar and the altar itself. I have been unable to imagine a reason for this unless the person on the altar was trying to get off. If the priest were helping him get on the altar, he would not be between his legs; this is equally true for any other scenario of which I can conceive. The unique features of this depiction denote some kind of movement, a feature not found in parallel scenes. An embalming scene or a scene having to do with the Book of Breathings would not include the kind of struggle or movement suggested by the outstretched arms and moving legs.

It is also worth noting that there is a papyrus from the Roman period with a person on a lion couch whom the Egyptians themselves labeled as Abraham. This confirms that Egyptians sometimes associated a figure on a lion couch with Abraham.

Critics have also claimed that Joseph’s interpretations of Facsimile 1 could not be correct because the Egyptians did not engage in human sacrifice. However, according to the text, the depicted near-sacrifice of Abraham did not take place in Egypt. Though Abraham tells us that it was done after the manner of the Egyptians (see Abraham 1:11), it may have been a Levantine kind of sacrifice performed with Egyptian trappings. Moreover, we have solid evidence that the Egyptians did in fact engage in human sacrifice, and typically for the same kinds of reasons that the Book of Abraham says brought Abraham to the altar. The ancient owner of JSP 1 was a priest who performed rituals that sometimes included human sacrifice. This is a topic which I and others have addressed in print and in talks. In my opinion, it is now well established that the Egyptians sacrificed humans, and their practices have striking similarities to the story presented in the Book of Abraham.

Similar arguments can be made for the other two facsimiles as well. While the current venue does not permit space to delve into details, it is worth noting that both Facsimiles 2 and 3 have elements which match up well with Joseph Smith’s interpretations, and each has typically been very misunderstood by
critics. Even more significantly, both of these kinds of drawings were associated by the Egyptians themselves with Abraham. These associations are roughly contemporary with the Joseph Smith Papyri. For example, the Egyptians called Facsimile 2 a wedjat eye, while elsewhere they described Abraham as a pupil of the wedjat eye. The Egyptians typically identified Osiris as the figure who sits on the throne in near-parallels of Facsimile 3, yet at times they labeled this figure as Abraham. To me it is compelling that each facsimile is a type of drawing that the ancient Egyptians themselves associated with Abraham. Coincidence cannot account for all three cases.

As was pointed out above, there are many concepts having to do with the Book of Abraham that we are still trying to understand. Do we currently have all the answers? Certainly not. Do we have better answers than our critics? Unabashedly yes. Do we understand as much as we would like? No, and this is part of why we are in such an intensive study of the Book of Abraham. There are so many things we want to understand and so many fruitful avenues of research. I expect that I will spend my life trying to better understand this wonderfully complex book and its accompanying story. Will questions arise in the future for which we will not immediately have answers? Undoubtedly. Are there questions that arise from the facsimiles that I cannot explain now? Yes. Joseph identifies certain people in Facsimile 3 and points out that their names are indicated by the hieroglyphs over their heads. As I translate these hieroglyphs, they do not match Joseph’s interpretations. There are some facts that cast light on this. I am not disturbed by Joseph labeling Figure 2 as a male when the picture and text identify a female. This happened more often in Egyptian papyri than one would think. Strikingly, the ancient owner of Facsimile 3 was pictured as both a male and female in his own Book of the Dead. Yet this does not fully satisfy my questions about how I understand the labels Egyptologically as opposed to how Joseph Smith understood them.

While I am not satisfied with the answer thus far, I am not concerned. During more than a decade of research on this subject, I have often found that I have misunderstood the Book of Abraham and made incorrect assumptions about it. Even more frequently I have found mistakes and inaccuracies in my own professional discipline, Egyptology. We are a fairly young discipline, and just as research on the Book of Abraham is a work in progress, so is Egyptology as a whole. Our history as a discipline is full of gaffes, mistakes, stumbles, and wonderful discoveries and corrections. Many of these corrections have been immensely helpful in my efforts to understand the Book of Abraham.
Thus, while there are questions which have not been fully answered, I know that the search for answers is part of scholarly progress. As an Egyptologist I have far more unanswered questions regarding Egyptian history than I have regarding the Book of Abraham. I was once dissatisfied with the question of human sacrifice as depicted in Facsimile 1, and no answer appeared to be forthcoming. But we have learned more, and now I am satisfied. I once was dissatisfied with explanations of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers, but as we have done further research I have become satisfied (though I still have questions as to what they really represent). Claims of textual anachronisms once gave me pause, but research has answered each of these questions. How grateful I am that I did not abandon my faith over these questions, for they have now been answered so well. As we wrestle with these issues, undoubtedly both critics and defenders will make missteps along the way. Most likely there will be questions for which we will not find answers in my lifetime. Perhaps we will in the next. We have eventually found answers to past questions, so I research furiously but wait patiently for answers to current ones.

Notes


in *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt*, ed. Morris L. Bierbrier (London: British Museum, 1997), 74. While Nibley and Ritner prefer the later Roman period date, the earlier date espoused by Gee, Quaegebeur, and Coenen is almost certainly correct.


11. For information on the ancient owners, see John Gee, “The Original Owners of the Joseph Smith Papyri” (FARMS Paper GEE-99a, 1999).


17. According to Caswall, *City of the Mormons*, 22, JSP 1 was already mounted under glass in a “glazed slide.”


22. See Larson, By His Own Hand, 41.

23. Brian M. Hauglid, A Textual History of the Book of Abraham: Manuscripts and Editions (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Studies, forthcoming). This conclusion has been reached independently by Brian Hauglid and by John Gee. Based on my careful examination of high-quality and enlarged photographs of the manuscripts and papyri, I agree with this conclusion.

24. See Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, “Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Cosmology,” in The Word of God, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 218 n. 78; and Palmer, Insider’s View, 24–25. Palmer’s writings show that he accepted the view of anti-Mormon writers without actually critically looking at the evidence himself. This is all too common.


29. See Michael D. Rhodes, “The Joseph Smith Hypcephalus—Seventeen Years Later” (FARMS Paper RHO-94, 1994) for examples of words with confirmatory etymological roots we recognize. See Gee, “Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob,” 77, for examples of words in other Egyptian papyri which no one recognizes and which sound outlandish.


41. See Gee, “Some Puzzles,” 120.
42. While some have doubted this idea, the latest treatment by a non-LDS Egyptologist supports it (see Lanny Bell, “The Ancient Egyptian ‘Books of Breathing,’ the Mormon ‘Book of Abraham,’ and the Development of Egyptology in America,” in Egypt and Beyond: Essays Presented to Leonard H. Lesko upon His Retirement from the Wilbour Chair of Egyptology at Brown University June 2005, ed. Stephen E. Thompson and Peter Der Manuelian [Providence: Brown University Press, 2008], 28).
43. Bell, “Ancient Egyptian ‘Books of Breathing,’” 27, states that “every proposed reconstruction of the vignette of P. JS 1 entails attributing to it at least one ‘unique’ element.”

49. It is not Facsimile 2 in particular that is identified as a *wedjat* eye, but this type of drawing in general.


Modern General Authorities appreciate and delight in the words of Abraham Lincoln because they help portray gospel concepts in an imaginative and practical manner that appeals to common people.
In general conference addresses, a pattern can be identified of quoting famous individuals for pedagogical purposes. Over the years, General Authorities have utilized the words of such well-known figures as C. S. Lewis, Robert Browning, William Shakespeare, Mother Teresa, and George Washington to illustrate gospel principles. This practice among Church leaders shows a willingness to find examples of truth from many sources. By using the words or examples of notable personalities, General Authorities show that gospel truth is ubiquitous rather than exclusive to the standard works and authoritative writings of the Church.

Abraham Lincoln’s is one of the secular names heard most often over the pulpit at general conferences; his name is even more commonly used than that of the United States’ first president, George Washington. In the history of general conferences, Lincoln is quoted more often than Ralph Waldo Emerson (twenty-four times), Winston Churchill (fifteen times), and Thomas Jefferson (eight times). The sixteenth president of the United States has been quoted 124 times from the general conference pulpit, thirty-nine of those references taking place between 1960 and 1980. From 1960 to 1980
there were approximately 1,660 conference addresses given, meaning Lincoln was quoted in more than two percent of general conferences during that time. Although the number of talks given in each general conference has diminished and the number of General Authorities has simultaneously increased over the years, we believe these statistics still present an accurate indication of the frequency with which Lincoln has been quoted.

In *Lincoln in American Memory*, historian Merrill D. Peterson argues that Lincoln’s image has been shaped to suit Americans’ own agendas, trends, and concerns.² The reverence current Church leaders have for Lincoln parallels Lincoln’s current national reputation among various religious, government, and social leaders. However, such respect and esteem was not given to Lincoln by General Authorities who were his contemporaries. Latter-day Saint leaders once considered this man an enemy, but by the end of the twentieth century they considered his life to be one worthy of emulation.

We will examine the cause of this shift and the gradual elevation of Lincoln’s reputation in the minds of Latter-day Saints. In addition, this article will explore whether Church leaders coat-tailed the national explosion of Lincoln hagiography of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries or if their usage of Lincoln’s words was unique and independent. As we explore Church leaders’ frequent references to Lincoln’s words, we wish to point out that this study is not exhaustive, as it is centered on official reports of general conferences. However, we believe that it does represent an accurate portrayal of the predominant LDS view of Abraham Lincoln. We will explore the correlation between Church leaders’ usage of Lincoln quotations to historical events and their personal backgrounds and experiences. Our study is categorized into four areas: references to Lincoln by his LDS contemporaries, declarations by Church leaders that Lincoln was inspired by God, statements of Lincoln quoted by Church leaders to support gospel principles, and stories about Lincoln referred to by Church leaders to illustrate gospel principles.

“Old Abe” and Contemporary Church Leaders

Latter-day Saint leaders who were Lincoln’s contemporaries did not speak about him in a reverential manner, perhaps because he had been affiliated with the Whig Party, known for its “anti-Mormon stance.”³ In the 1838 presidential election, most Latter-day Saints voted for all of Benjamin Harrison’s electors except Abraham Lincoln. “In order to keep the Democrats in good
humor, the Mormons scratched the last name on the Whig electoral ticket (Abraham Lincoln) and substituted that of a Democrat.4

In contrast, Democrat Stephen A. Douglas had given attention to the Latter-day Saints and quickly built strong friendships with Church leaders. While Douglas asserted that Mormons should have the rights to worship as they pleased,1 Lincoln was seen as somewhat irreligious. Lincoln once sarcastically said of himself, “No Christian ought to go for me because I belonged to no church, was suspected of being a Deist, and talked about fighting a duel.”6 Such a statement would likely have done little to win over the citizens of Nauvoo.

In 1858, Lincoln and Douglas debated each other throughout the state of Illinois.7 Douglas, who was by that time identified with the Mormons, “became a target for many of the opposition’s blasts” by appointing “partisans of the Church to court positions in Hancock County, thus helping arouse the intense anti-Mormon opposition in Warsaw.”8 Whigs accused Douglas of “openly courting the Mormon vote.”9 Whig Party journals publicized the Prophet Joseph Smith’s favorable attitude toward Douglas in 1842, and Douglas was cast for the next several years as a friend of the Mormons. It was obvious that Douglas was their choice over Lincoln.

Because of this early tension between the Saints and Lincoln, it would likely surprise early Church members to see Joseph Smith’s name later linked to Abraham Lincoln’s by his successors. For instance, Elder Charles H. Hart (1924) of the Seventy defended Lincoln’s apparent aloofness toward organized churches and associated Lincoln’s situation with that of Joseph Smith, in that they were both led to “prayer and to the truth.”10 Elder Orson F. Whitney (1913) wondered how Lincoln could not have followed the advice of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “I have often marveled why those great men who came in contact with the Prophet Joseph Smith, men like . . . Abraham Lincoln, men of intelligence, men of character, men whose motives were pure and worthy for the most part—why they were not converted to the Gospel[,] the religion that Joseph Smith preached and represented.”11 Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the First Quorum of the Seventy also compared the two leaders on account of their assassinations.12

Over the years as authors have occasionally slandered the name of Lincoln, LDS leaders have in turn openly defended him. Elders Joseph E. Robinson (1908)13 and Albert E. Bowen (1946)14 publicly renounced those who maligned Lincoln’s character. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1982) explained that those who saw Lincoln as lacking did not have the whole
picture: “Abraham Lincoln was a gangling figure of a man, with a long and
craggy face. There were many who looked only at the imperfections of his
countenance. There were others who joked over the way he walked, and
kept their eyes so low that they never saw the true greatness of the man. That
enlarged view came only to those who saw the whole character—body, mind,
and spirit—as he stood at the head of a divided nation.”15 Such a defensive
stance likely would have been surprising to Latter-day Saints who lived dur-
ding the Civil War. In fact, one who did not see this “enlarged view . . . [of
Lincoln’s] whole character—body, mind, and spirit” was Brigham Young, as
well as those who followed him to the Great Basin.

News of Lincoln’s election in the Deseret News on November 14, 1860,
received a concerned response from Latter-day Saints. An editorial entitled
“Prospective Dissolution” stated: “The day is not far distant, when the United
States Government will cease to be, and that the Union, about which the
politicians have harped and poets sung, will be no more.”16 This was only one
of many forecasts of doom that had been uttered for months by Church lead-
ers in connection with Lincoln’s rise to the presidency. A member of the First
Presidency, George A. Smith, also referred to Lincoln’s election in less than
glowing terms, asserting that Lincoln was put into the office by “the spirit of
priestcraft” and that this force would control him “to put to death, if it was in
his power, every man that believes in the divine mission of Joseph Smith, or
that bears testimony of the doctrines he preached.”17

Shortly after the election, when Lincoln was asked how he planned to
address the “Mormon question” in the Utah Territory, he replied, “I intend
to treat it as a farmer on the frontier would treat an old water-soaked elm log
lying upon his land—too heavy to move, too knotty to split, and too wet to
burn. I’m going to plow round it.”18 Nibley reports Lincoln as saying, “That’s
what I intend to do with the Mormons. You go back and tell Brigham Young
that if he will let me alone, I will let him alone.”19 However, Church leaders
did not seem to believe that Lincoln would plow around or leave them alone.
On July 9, 1861, it was reported that Brigham Young commented in his office:
“Old ‘Abe’ the President of the U.S. has it in his mind to pitch into us when he
had got through with the South.”20 Brigham Young saw Abraham Lincoln as
the head of a federal government evidently bent on eventually destroying the
Saints. When word reached Latter-day Saints that federal tax agents had been
sent to the Great Basin, President Young’s response was recorded by Wilford
Woodruff (1861):
Abe Lincoln has sent these men here to prepare the way for an army. An order has been sent to California to raise an army to come to Utah. This is the reason why Bell came back. I pray daily that the Lord will take away the reins of government of the wicked rulers and put it into the hands of wise good men. I will see the day when those wicked rulers are wiped out. The governor quoted my sayings about the Constitution. I do and always have supported the Constitution but I am not in league with such cursed scoundrels as Abe Lincoln and his minions. They have sought our destruction from the beginning and Abe Lincoln has ordered an army to this territory from California and that order passed over on these wires. A senator from California said in Washington a short time since that the Mormons were in their way and must be removed. The feelings of Abe Lincoln is that Buchanan tried to destroy the Mormons and could not. Now I will try my hand at it.21

Despite President Young’s leeriness of Lincoln’s motives, when the overland telegraph line was completed he sent the following positive message on October 18, 1861: “Utah has not seceded but is firm for the constitution and laws of our once happy country.”22 And when the Territory of Deseret was asked to send men to guard the overland mail route, President Young promptly responded affirmatively.23

A change in perception at the time of Lincoln’s assassination. Some may be surprised to learn that Lincoln was not unanimously supported; neither his political party nor the public as a whole gave him their loyalty. Lincoln biographer David Donald reminds us: “To most men of his own day Lincoln . . . was simply a rather ineffectual President. It is hard to remember how unsuccessful Lincoln’s administration appeared to most of his contemporaries.”24 One comment by a member of Congress reveals that Lincoln’s support was not widespread among his fellow Republicans any more than it was among Latter-day Saints: “‘The decease of Mr. Lincoln is a great national bereavement,’ conceded [U.S. House] Representative J. M. Ashley of Ohio, ‘but I am not so sure it is so much of a national loss.’ Within eight hours of his murder Republican Congressmen in secret caucus agreed that ‘his death is a godsend to our cause.’”25

Unlike these responses to Lincoln’s assassination, the LDS and general American population’s perception of the man seemed to change at his death: they looked upon it as a great loss. Before his death, Lincoln’s words were not highly valued. Lincoln historian Douglas S. Wilson explained, “Only with his death . . . did it begin to dawn on his contemporaries that Abraham Lincoln’s words were destined to find a permanent place in the American imagination.”26 Perhaps Lincoln’s image improved after his death because American citizens regretted that he would never see the fulfillment of his aspirations.
Much of this shift in perception could have also been due to the nature of the president’s demise. Historian Merrill D. Peterson deduced, “The assassination of the President at any time would have caused an avalanche of emotion in the country; but because it came with dramatic, indeed theatrical, suddenness—a bolt in the clear sky—at the hour of victory, its force was multiplied a hundred times.”

Immediately after his death, eulogistic Lincoln biographies were written by those who had known him. The story of “the Pioneer Boy, and how he became President” became popular and surely resonated with the LDS pioneer community. With “the emotional impact of devastating war, hard-won victory, and calamitous assassination,” the LDS and other American hearts may have softened with each new biography. That rush to the pen has not diminished: “Since 1865 on an average fifty books have been published each year about the Martyr President.”

No other biography had the enormous impact as did Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life, written by William Henry Herndon in 1893. Previous to publishing this biography, Herndon forecasted that “Lincoln will be, in the not distant future, the ideal man of America, if not of all the English speaking peoples, and every incident of his life will be sought for, read with pleasure, and treasured up in the memory of men.” Herndon’s portrayal was exclusively a “Western Lincoln portrait” which the LDS in the Western frontier certainly related to: “From the very beginning Herndon conceived his biography of Lincoln as a study in Western character; he consciously planned it to illustrate the ‘original western and south-western pioneer—the type of . . . open, candid, sincere, energetic, spontaneous, trusting, tolerant, brave and generous man.” Latter-day Saints who had not known him as their president began to identify with this Lincoln.

A season of relative silence. It took some time for Lincoln to become a permanent fixture in the LDS landscape. Our research shows that from 1860 to 1900, Church leaders made few statements regarding Lincoln. The dissonance between the LDS faith and United States laws may claim responsibility for the absence of such references. The Morrill Act, which was signed by Lincoln, and the subsequent Edmunds Act, which outlawed polygamy in the United States, caused considerable distress for Latter-day Saints to the point that President John Taylor and most other Church leaders went into exile in order to avoid arrest.
It may not be coincidental that President Wilford Woodruff, who received the revelation ending polygamy (see Official Declaration 1), took the first steps toward presenting a positive view of Lincoln. In 1877, before the declaration was released, Woodruff presided over the ordinance work in which Lincoln and others were baptized and endowed by proxy in the St. George Temple.34

While Lorenzo Snow was the President of the Church, Lincoln was quoted for the first time in general conference (1899).35 As LDS contemporaries of Abraham Lincoln passed on, indifferent and negative feelings about the sixteenth president apparently dissipated, and positive references began to surface with increasing rapidity.

**From Scoundrel to Saint**

By looking at historical contexts, we can understand the frequency of references to Lincoln’s name by General Authorities.

![LDS leaders who said Abraham Lincoln was inspired by the Spirit of God (1880–2008)](image_url)

The first two decades of the twentieth century saw a remarkable increase in Church leaders’ statements about Lincoln as an admirable man. The course of General Authorities’ attitudes about Lincoln—from bitterness to veneration—closely resembled national trends: “A reform movement called
‘Progressivism’ arose. Its goals included greater democracy and social justice, honest government, and more effective regulation of business.  

Led by Theodore Roosevelt at the start of the twentieth century, the movement grew along with a notable increase of references to Lincoln in general conference. When the Republicans were in control, they continually claimed Lincoln as their founder. Roosevelt, a Republican, especially wanted to be associated with Lincoln, and “What Would Lincoln Do?” became his catchphrase during the 1912 election campaign. Roosevelt’s name also connected with Lincoln’s at least among Latter-day Saints; his name was mentioned in association with Lincoln’s by Church leaders on two occasions. Several additional events may have brought Lincoln back into the public memory in the first decades of the twentieth century: the commemoration of Lincoln’s one hundredth birthday (1909), the approval of placing his image on the penny (1909), and the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC on Memorial Day (1922).

The first Church President to refer to Lincoln as inspired was Joseph F. Smith (1906) when he pointed out that Christ had inspired all great philosophers, including Lincoln, who was guided “in emancipation and union.” Elders Hyrum M. Smith (1905) and Charles Nibley (1925) expressed similar sentiments and said that Lincoln was “raised up” to do God’s will. Elder Melvin J. Ballard (1930) said that God “was with Lincoln.” Elder Richard R. Lyman (1919) called Lincoln the “man of his hour” and said that inspiration rested upon him. Elder Rulon S. Wells (1919) referred to Lincoln as the “the human instrument in God’s hand of preserving [the] precious principles [of human liberty].”

The events of World War I (1914–18) encouraged patriotism and the celebration of earlier American leaders such as Lincoln, and many began to use his life to embody democracy. For instance, Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States during World War I, was often referred to in connection with Lincoln. In addition, Allied forces shaped American ideals, giving a new dimension to Lincoln’s fame. The Big Three (Woodrow Wilson, David Lloyd George, and Georges Clemenceau) considered Lincoln a favorite topic of conversation. The popularity of Lincoln biographies by historian Carl Sandburg, who introduced Lincoln as the “the Strange Friend and the Friendly Stranger,” also influenced Lincolnology. During the 1920s and 1930s, Sandburg once again revived appreciation for Lincoln through his biographies, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* and *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*. One Church
leader suggested that reading these works would be beneficial for all Saints.
President Hugh B. Brown (1965) counseled: “If one will become familiar . . .
with the history of Abraham Lincoln as written by Carl Sandburg, he will
there learn how to live, what to do and what to refrain from doing. He will
be given courage to meet life’s problems.” By this time Lincoln was securely
revered and honored in LDS forums.

From 1921 to 1940, Church leaders made even more Lincoln references
in which they portrayed him as a representative of the American objectives
which the Church was actively supporting at the time. Over time the position
of Lincoln in the eyes of Latter-day Saints was solidified by a declaration of
President Heber J. Grant (1928) that “all Latter-day Saints believe firmly [that
Lincoln] was raised up and inspired of God Almighty” and that his presidency
was “under the favor of our Heavenly Father.” Other Church leaders reiter-
ated the same sentiment. During President Grant’s tenure, many declared that
Lincoln was inspired, including Charles W. Nibley (1917, 1925), Rulon S.
Wells (1919, 1926), Melvin J. Ballard (1919, 1930) and David O. McKay
(1922). Elder Richard R. Lyman (1924) escalated this trend when he called
the God that Latter-day Saints worship “the God of Lincoln.”

During this time President Grant, one of the General Authorities who
quoted Lincoln most often, developed the LDS Welfare Program and tried
to establish friendships with national business leaders. President Grant, dis-
concerted by “the federal dole,” frequently said that Lincoln heralded work
ethic. He quoted these Lincolnisms: “Let not him who is houseless pull down
the house of another” (1920) and “The prudent, penniless beginner in the
world labors for wages for awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy land or
tools for himself, then labors for himself another while, and at length hires
another new beginner to help him” (1938).

Also between 1920 and 1940, President Franklin Roosevelt established
the New Deal, which led the nation to economic and political change by
giving subsidies to farmers, promoting workers’ rights, and improving pub-
lic lands. Both Grant and Roosevelt worked to ease the effects of the Great
Depression and World War II, though their methods and philosophies were
very different. It is pertinent to note that when both the Church President
and the U.S. president worked toward mutual goals, Lincoln was referred to
more often in conference addresses than when this wasn’t the case.

As both the nation and Church endeavored to rebuild Europe after
World War II, America formally adopted the Marshall Plan. From 1945 to
1951, President George Albert Smith directed Church funds toward welfare projects in Europe. President Smith promoted the Boy Scout program within the Church and encouraged members to fulfill other civil responsibilities aligned with the national government.

In the 1960s, Lincoln’s popularity soared among U.S. citizens, and Church leaders were no exception. The Vietnam War caused many to become wary of corruption in the government; therefore, people tended to look to strong political leaders of the past, like Lincoln, for examples of integrity. Furthermore, many young people of this era rebelled from their parents and experimented with new lifestyles. We argue that the prophets of this era used Lincoln’s legacy to illustrate the value of tradition to youth.

Lincoln was mentioned more by Church leaders in the years between 1960 and 1980 than in any other period. President David O. McKay (1968), who asserted that Lincoln was inspired by God,53 emphasized the importance of family life and education. President McKay used Lincoln’s legacy to support the ideals of education and families. President McKay nearly leads all General Authorities in how frequently he quoted Lincoln, and he often called Lincoln a “good example.”

President McKay’s associates followed suit. Elder Mark E. Petersen (1969) cited Lincoln numerous times and testified that he “was one of the great men of all time, of all nations.” Peterson added that greatness such as Lincoln’s “leaves an indelible righteous stamp upon the world” and that such greatness “points to the divine destiny which God has provided for mankind.” Furthermore, Elder Petersen taught that Lincoln “knew the Almighty was his Father who had raised him up for a special mission.” He even cited John Wesley Hill’s comparison of Lincoln to biblical prophets, stating that he was of the same fiber and that his “priestly functions [were] essential to the service of his nation and time.”54 In 1976, the American bicentennial year, Elder Neal A. Maxwell implied that the Lord’s hand was manifest in the timing of Lincoln’s birth by declaring: “If you’ve got only one Abraham Lincoln, you’d better put him in that point in history when he’s most needed—much as some of us might like to have him now.”55 Such declarations elevated Lincoln to the stature of one of the valiant spirits chosen and foreordained by God before birth to uphold his designs.

The frequency of remarks from LDS leaders about an inspired Abraham Lincoln increased from 1960 to 1980. During these years Lincoln was quoted by General Authorities more times (forty-three) than he was during any
other period. In addition, the largest number of LDS leaders (ten) said he was inspired by God, and the most references (twenty-three) were made to his example.

In 1978, President Spencer W. Kimball received the revelation extending the Melchizedek Priesthood to all worthy male members, including African-Americans. This revelation may have caused people to see parallels between Presidents Kimball and Lincoln because of Lincoln’s role in implementing equal status for African-Americans. During President Kimball’s presidency, African-Americans initiated the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, groups such as Native Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and women also sought equal rights. By this time Lincoln was seen as the personification of justice and equality, so it was natural for him to be cited on a regular basis in such a setting. In short, the explosion of Lincoln references in the years from 1960 to 1980 can be attributed to attitudes revolving around the Vietnam War, youth rebellion, and the Civil Rights Movement.

Since this peak period between 1960 and 1980, the regularity of Lincoln’s name appearing in the discourses of Church leaders at general conferences has persisted but waned slightly. Ezra Taft Benson, who followed Spencer W. Kimball as Church President, cited Lincoln’s words more times (eleven) during his tenure than did any other Church leader. This admiration of Lincoln was likely partly due to Benson’s position as secretary of agriculture in Eisenhower’s cabinet: “Lincoln was a storybook hero for Dwight D. Eisenhower. A copy of the famous Alexander Hesler photograph of 1860 hung from the wall of his office. . . . He quoted him repeatedly.” 56 This association with Eisenhower, who was fascinated with Lincoln, undoubtedly influenced Benson. “The overt religiosiy of the Eisenhower presidency . . . called attention to the paradox that . . . despite the law and the tradition of separation of church and state, the United States was, as G. K. Chesterton had said, ‘a nation with the soul of a church.’”57 One of President Benson’s favorite Lincoln quotes (1962, 1968) was, “If [wickedness] ever reaches us, it must spring up among us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of freemen, we must live through all time or die by suicide.”58 The following graph shows President Benson as the most prolific among General Authorities in his use of Lincoln quotes in general conference.
Several insights can be extracted from the graph. First, of the fifteen General Authorities who quoted Lincoln the most, all but four (Lyman, Grant, Smoot, and Hart) served as General Authorities during the period from 1960 to 1980. Note that Marion G. Romney, N. Eldon Tanner, and Hugh B. Brown were all raised outside the United States, yet they quoted Lincoln multiple times.

Instances where General Authorities quoted Lincoln in conference (1899—2008)

Since the 1980s, the mention of Lincoln at the general conference pulpit has diminished slightly, again following the national trend of Lincolnology. Merrill Peterson tells us that Lincoln, a national “natural resource, still appeared inexhaustible in the last decade of the twentieth century. His memory had lost some of its clarity, warmth, and power among Americans, but it exerted more appeal than that of any other national saint or hero.”

As President Gordon B. Hinckley took the reins of Church leadership in 1995, he emphasized the international nature of the Church. During his tenure, for the first time more Latter-day Saints lived outside the United States
than within its borders and more temples were built worldwide. Because the Church was no longer largely confined to North America, the remarks of the General Authorities were more directed and applicable to members throughout the world. Although Lincoln remains an important figure for Americans, this focus on an international Church is a plausible explanation for the reduced numbers of Lincoln quotes used by Church leaders.

When Barack Obama became U.S. president in January 2009, he referred to Lincoln numerous times during his inaugural address. Perhaps more Lincoln quotes will appear at future general conferences due to this national exposure.

Using Lincoln Quotes to Illustrate Gospel Principles

While it is valuable to know who quoted Lincoln, it is vital to look at the specific Lincoln passages that General Authorities have found relevant to the message of the restored gospel. An examination of Lincoln statements quoted by Church authorities illustrates the kinship they felt with this man whom they perceived as God’s foreordained servant. Church leaders have suggested that Lincoln eloquently defended many principles found in LDS doctrine, though an examination of Lincoln’s words in their original context contradicts this notion.60

In many instances when Church leaders have sought to teach LDS doctrine, Lincoln’s statements and anecdotes served as excellent references. However, one thing is very clear about the way General Authorities used Lincoln to support gospel principles: in the 124 instances in which Church leaders cited Abraham Lincoln, his words were never used as the source of or as a confirmation of doctrine, only as a supplement. In addition, Lincoln was never singled out as a person equal in authority with Church officials, as a replacement for living prophets, or as a source of priesthood. Nor have leaders of the Church ever used Lincoln’s wisdom as the basis of their testimony of any gospel principle. To paraphrase LDS scholar Joseph Fielding McConkie, General Authorities obtain doctrinal insights from outside sources (such as Abraham Lincoln); however, they do not use these sources “to obtain the gospel or look to [them] as the source of [their] testimony.”61

General Authorities quoting Lincoln. The first General Authority to quote Lincoln in general conference was Elder Rudger Clawson (1899), citing the Lincoln maxim, “God must love the poor because he has made so many of them.”62 This quotation has been referred to by Church leaders on three other occasions, although not with much accuracy. Elder Bryant S. Hinckley (1916)
quoted Lincoln as saying it was “plain people” whom God loved, while President J. Reuben Clark Jr. (1960) and Elder Milton R. Hunter (1964) quoted Lincoln as saying the Lord must love “common people.” Apparently, whether God loves the poor, plain, or common, LDS leaders agreed with Lincoln. There are other discrepancies in the Lincoln quotes used by General Authorities; sometimes Church leaders inaccurately referenced or even failed to reference a quote at all. We do not believe it was the intention of General Authorities to forgo proper citation; rather, we see it is an indication of their general acceptance of Lincoln’s thoughts and words. These examples advocate biographer David Donald statement: “The Lincoln of folklore is more significant than the Lincoln of actuality.” In an essay, “The Words of Lincoln,” Don E. Fehrenbacher suggested that in addition to their meanings “within a definite historical context, some of Lincoln’s words have acquired transcendent meaning as contributions to the permanent literary treasure of the nation.”

Lincoln portrayed his mother as the ideal of motherhood and those who wrote about him perpetuated this claim. Donald wrote: “Regardless of origins, the biographers were sure of one thing. Lincoln loved his angel-mother. It is characteristic of the American attitude [and subsequently the LDS attitude] toward family life and of the extreme veneration for the maternal principle that the utterly unknown Nancy Hanks should be described as ‘a whole-hearted
Christian, ‘a woman of marked natural abilities,’ of ‘strong mental powers and deep-toned piety,’ whose rigid observance of the Sabbath became a byword in frontier Kentucky—in short, ‘a remarkable woman.’ Lincoln’s mother became “a carefully manipulated [symbol]” to Americans and LDS leaders. All that I am or ever hope to be I owe to my angel mother” has been reiterated four times in General Authority addresses. Elder Sterling W. Sill (1962) commented on Lincoln’s mother more than any other Church leader, once sharing the advice Lincoln received from his mother on her deathbed: “Abe, go out there and amount to something.” Sill declared that this advice had a great impact on Lincoln’s life and then claimed: “That is exactly what he did by forming an attachment for great people and great books and great ideals. The memory of his mother and the influence of the Holy Bible probably made the greatest contribution toward making Lincoln what he was.”

Wilson reiterated Fehrenbacher’s thoughts: “Americans have for a long time turned to Lincoln’s words not only for inspiration but to understand their own history. To ask the question ‘What are American values and ideals?’ is inevitably to invite an appeal to some of Lincoln’s most illustrious words.” But those words, as Fehrenbacher reminds us, came out of concrete historical circumstances, having been devised in response to specific situations.” Lincoln biographer David Donald adds: “The historian may prove that the Emancipation actually freed a negligible number of slaves, yet Lincoln continues to live in men’s minds as the emancipator of the Negroes. It is this folklore Lincoln who has become the central symbol in American democratic thought; he embodies what ordinary, inarticulate Americans have cherished as ideals. As Ralph H. Gabriel says, he is ‘first among the folk heroes of the American people.’ From a study of the Lincoln legends the historian can gain a more balanced insight into the workings of the America mind.”

Likewise, by looking at Lincoln as presented by Church leaders we can gain insight into the workings of the LDS mind. The Brethren derive Church doctrine through the revelations, but like all good teachers they use various sources, including Lincoln, to support their message and intrigue their audience. Specifically, they have used Lincoln’s metaphors to portray theology dealing with principles such as home, motherhood, law, the Constitution, liquor, slavery, friendship, work ethic, labor, and the Bible.

Lincoln’s reverential views on the laws and the Constitution of the United States were often admired. In an address delivered during the bicentennial anniversary of the Constitution, President Ezra Taft Benson (1986) referred
to Lincoln’s exhortation, “Let the Constitution . . . become the political religion of the nation.”

Although Lincoln’s public life was often embroiled in contentious issues, LDS leaders discovered and stressed that his personal views were against strife and violence. For instance, Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1973) quoted Lincoln’s words concerning the treatment of enemies: “President Abraham Lincoln was once criticized for his attitude toward his enemies. ‘Why do you try to make friends of them?’ asked an associate. ‘You should try to destroy them.’ ‘Am I not destroying my enemies,’ Lincoln gently replied, ‘when I make them my friends?’”

Along these same lines, President Thomas S. Monson (1997, 2001) taught the brethren of the Church: “Abraham Lincoln offered this wise counsel, which surely applies to home teachers: ‘If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend.’”

Considering the importance of the Word of Wisdom in the Church, it is not surprising that Lincoln’s repulsion toward liquor is also cited. President Spencer W. Kimball (1967) mentioned that “Abraham Lincoln refused to allow liquor served in his home to the delegation that came to give him the official notice of his nomination for the presidency, even though the liquor was free.” President Kimball also cited Lincoln’s admonition, “Liquor has its defenders, but no defense” and said Lincoln not only supported an emancipation from slavery but also an emancipation from liquor. President Kimball related this event: “On the day of Lincoln’s assassination, he said to Major J. B. Merwin of the United States Army, a guest at the White House, ‘Merwin, we have cleaned up, with the help of the people, a colossal job. Slavery is abolished. After reconstruction, the next great question will be the overthrow and abolition of the liquor traffic. You know, Merwin, that my head and heart, and hand and purse will go into that work.’”

**Stories about Lincoln That Illustrate Gospel Principles**

Much emphasis has been placed on Lincoln as a storyteller. However, those who knew him well did not consider him a storyteller. Lincoln biographer Horace Greeley “knew Lincoln for sixteen years and never heard him tell a story.” It was also “a side of the President that Frederick Douglass never observed.”

David Donald tells us:

> By the centennial year of Lincoln’s birth the frontier stories that had been considered gamy and rough by an earlier generation had been accepted as typical Lincolnisms;
and on the other side, the harshness of the Herndonian outlines was smoothed by
the acceptance of many traits from the idealized Lincoln. The result was a “compos-
ite American ideal,” whose “appeal is stronger than that of other heroes because on
him converge so many dear traditions.” The current popular conception of Lincoln
is “a folk-hero who to the common folk-virtues of shrewdness and kindness adds
essential wit and eloquence and loftiness of soul.”82

Donald stated that in Lincoln’s oft-repeated stories “the facts were at most
a secondary consideration. Acceptance or rejection of any Lincoln anecdote
depended upon what was fundamentally a religious conviction. Even today
this attitude is sometimes found.”83 Many General Authorities, following the
pattern that Donald provides above, have used Lincoln stories to support
their own religious convictions.

The most frequently quoted Lincoln story at general conferences deals
with one of his conversations and has been cited by several Church leaders
(1903, 1914, 1917, 1918, 1939, 1970) to illustrate principles such as obedi-
ence and faith: “I hope that the Lord is on our side” a friend of Lincoln or
sometimes a minister says. Lincoln responds, “I do not worry about that at
all; I know that the Lord is always on the side of right. What worries me most
is to know if we are on the Lord’s side.”84

Another oft-quoted story by Church leaders (1944, 1949, 1960, 1962)
involves General Sickles, who fought at Gettysburg:
General Sickles had noticed that before the portentous battle of Gettysburg, upon the result of which, perhaps, the fate of the nation hung, President Lincoln was apparently free from the oppressive care which frequently weighed him down. After it was all past the general asked Lincoln how that was. He said: “Well, I will tell you how it was. In the pinch of your campaign up there, when everybody seemed panic-stricken and nobody could tell what was going to happen, oppressed by the gravity of affairs, I went to my room one day and locked the door and got down on my knees before Almighty God and prayed to him mightily for victory at Gettysburg. I told him that this war was his, and our cause his cause, but we could not stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville. Then and there I made a solemn vow to Almighty God that if he would stand by our boys at Gettysburg, I would stand by him, and he did stand by our boys, and I will stand by him. And after that, I don’t know how it was, and I cannot explain it, soon a sweet comfort crept into my soul. The feeling came that God had taken the whole business into his own hands, and that things would go right at Gettysburg, and that is why I had no fears about you.”

This story confirms to many that Lincoln believed in God. After relating this event, speakers offered encouragement to appeal to God for answers through prayer as Lincoln did.

A third story comes from a letter Lincoln wrote to a grieving mother who had lost five sons during the Civil War.

Dear Madam:

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully, A. Lincoln.

Other General Authorities have related various stories about Lincoln regarding his faith in God exhibited during the Monitor and Merrimac battles (1952), his independence and tenacity in the writing of the “House Divided against Itself” speech (1974), his mother requesting him not to use liquor (1944), and his numerous failures in running for political office before achieving success (1974).

Considering the frequency of General Authorities’ references to Lincoln, some may assume that Lincoln agreed with Church doctrines, which is not necessarily true. Indeed, it should be noted that this “soldier of his Captain
Christ” did not belong to any church. However, in the same way we can appreciate Mozart’s music and not agree with his lifestyle, General Authorities utilize Lincoln’s power of exposition although his religious philosophy did not always concur with LDS doctrine. These quotes can engage our imaginations and make gospel principles more accessible. President Boyd K. Packer (1977) of the Quorum of the Twelve tells us when an “intangible ideal can be transposed into something tangible and teachable . . . there is a formula we can use.” Abraham Lincoln was a master of this “formula”; perhaps this is the reason so many Church leaders use the imagery of his words to teach a variety of gospel concepts.

References to the example of Abraham Lincoln. In addition to citing Lincoln’s statements and stories, Church leaders have referred to aspects of Lincoln’s life as exemplary for Latter-day Saints.

The citations displayed in this graph identify specific instances where Lincoln’s characteristics were presented as worthy of emulation. For example, there are more than a dozen references citing Lincoln’s example as a man who prayed. Lincoln’s impoverished background has been frequently mentioned to show how one could overcome humble beginnings. His goodness or greatness has also often been referred to and he has been cited as being a great statesman or leader as well as a liberator or emancipator. Furthermore, on at least six occasions Lincoln’s honesty or integrity was cited in general conference addresses. Other characteristics of Lincoln that General Authorities
have encouraged members to emulate include dedication,\textsuperscript{99} reverence for the Lord’s name,\textsuperscript{100} courage,\textsuperscript{101} duty,\textsuperscript{102} and obedience.\textsuperscript{103} Elder Dallin H. Oaks (2001) praised Abraham Lincoln for his “wise and inspired use of a limited amount of information.”\textsuperscript{104}

Of course, not all of Lincoln’s personality traits should be mirrored. As Donald tells us:

The Lincoln ideal offers an excellent starting-point for the investigation. As the pattern has gradually become standardized, the folklore Lincoln is as American as the Mississippi River. Essentially national, the myth is not nationalistic. It reveals the people’s faith in the democratic dogma that a poor boy can make good. It demonstrates the incurable romanticism of the American spirit. There is much in the legend which is unpleasant—Lincoln’s preternatural cunning, his fondness for Rabelaisian anecdote, his difficulties with his wife—yet these traits seem to be attributed to every real folk hero.\textsuperscript{105}

The following graph illustrates the many instances where General Authorities cited Lincoln’s characteristics as exemplary:

![Graph showing references to Lincoln as an example (1860–2008)]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church leaders who referred to Lincoln as an example (1860–2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leaders</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard B. Lindahl</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efraim Talmage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David O. McKay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark E. Packer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hugh B. Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton G. Kimball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harold B. Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sterling S. Sullens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alex Scopes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henry E. Taylor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph L. Wellborn</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Single references to Lincoln as an example to learn from include**

- Lewis Anderson
- Melvin J. Ballard
- Albert E. Bowen
- Sylvester Q. Cannon
- James R. Clark
- Matthew Cowley
- Royden G. Derrick
- Paul H. Dunn
- James E. Faust
- David B. Haight
- Charles H. Hart
- Milton R. Hunter
- Orson Hyde
- Anthony W. Ivins
- Nephhi Jensen
- Spencer W. Kimball
- Francis W. Kirkham
- Harold B. Lee
- John Longden
- Neal A. Maxwell
- Thomas S. Monson
- Dallin H. Oaks
- George Albert Smith
- Reed Smoot
- Walter Slover
- John A. Tvedtines
- Rulon S. Wells
Conclusion

A story from an Apostle can help us to make some conclusions:

As [Elder Bruce R. McConkie] waited for [a] flight to be announced, [he] buried himself in a book by a renowned New Testament scholar. He was delighted to discover material by a sectarian scholar that constituted a marvelous defense of Mormonism. As he boarded the flight he met Marion G. Romney, then a member of the First Presidency. He said, “President Romney, I have got to read this to you. This is good,” and proceeded to share his newfound treasure. When he was finished, President Romney said, “Bruce, I have to tell you a story. A few years ago I found something that I thought was remarkable written by one of the world’s great scholars. I read it to J. Reuben Clark, and he said, ‘Look, when you read things like that, and you find that the world doesn’t agree with us, so what? And when you read something like that and you find they are right on the mark and they agree with us, so what?’”

In summary, we must ask, “If Church leaders quote Abraham Lincoln and his words seem to support LDS doctrine, so what?” There is adequate evidence to show that Abraham Lincoln has become an effective pedagogical voice for many General Authorities and that his anecdotes have been firmly supported by Church leaders in general conference addresses. When members of the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve, and Seventy quote Abraham Lincoln’s words, many members of the Church take notice and may even feel that his ideas are inspired. Lincoln is respected and thus quoted by Church leaders and members.

However, the admiration afforded Lincoln should not be equal to that shown to prophets and apostles. Although Church members and leaders alike esteem Lincoln and ensured that his proxy baptism and endowment were performed, Church members should not assume that these facts have necessarily given him a place as a member of the Church. One must remember that he did not accept the restored gospel when he was alive. His words are not used by General Authorities as if they were scriptural or prophetic, nor do General Authorities portray Lincoln as someone who has obtained prophetic stature. The use of his words by Church leaders does not give the Church credibility, because General Authorities do not need Lincoln’s word to support divine revelation.

On the other hand, we have established that many General Authorities cite Lincoln to illustrate doctrines that they have already obtained from the fountainhead of revelation. They appreciate and delight in the words of Abraham Lincoln because of his ability to portray gospel concepts in a manner
that appeals to common people. They relate his imaginative declarations in practical ways for the cause of the Restoration. This examination of Lincoln’s statements as quoted by General Authorities illustrates the kinship felt by many Church leaders and Saints with this American hero as they use his apperceptions to further illustrate the truths of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.
### Appendix A. Conference Quotes Not Already Listed in Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Authority</th>
<th>Conference Address</th>
<th>Abraham Lincoln Quote Used</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heber J. Grant</td>
<td>June 1919</td>
<td>Take all of the Bible upon reason that you can, and the balance on faith, and you will live and die a better man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heber J. Grant</td>
<td>June 1919</td>
<td>Never send a wrathful letter—burn it, and write another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heber J. Grant</td>
<td>June 1919</td>
<td>Teach men that what they cannot take by an election they cannot take by war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heber J. Grant</td>
<td>June 1919</td>
<td>The question recurs “how shall we fortify against it?” The answer is simple. Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution never to violate, in the least particular, the laws of the country, and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of seventy-six did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and laws, let every American pledge his life, his property and his sacred honor. Let every man remember that to violate the law, is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the charter of his own, and his children's liberty. Let reverence for the law be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap. Let it be taught in schools, in seminaries and in colleges. Let it be written in primers, in spelling books and almanacs. Let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay of all sexes and tongues and colors and conditions sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles H. Hart</td>
<td>April 1921</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Albert Smith</td>
<td>October 1922</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard R. Lyman</td>
<td>October 1930</td>
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<td>George S. Romney</td>
<td>October 1932</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clifford E. Young</td>
<td>April 1934</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. Eldon Tanner</td>
<td>October 1965</td>
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<td>General Authority</td>
<td>Conference Address</td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln Quote Used</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heber J. Grant</td>
<td>April 1920</td>
<td>That some should be rich shows that others may become rich and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise. Let not he who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him work diligently and build one for himself, thus by example insuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>October 1938</td>
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<td>Joseph L. Wirthlin</td>
<td>October 1944</td>
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<td>Thorpe B. Isaacson</td>
<td>October 1962</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reed Smoot</td>
<td>October 1924</td>
<td>This love of liberty which God has planted in us constitutes the bulwark of our liberty and independence. It is not our frowning battlements, our bristling sea coasts, our army and our navy. Our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, everywhere. Destroy this spirit, and we have planted the seeds of despotism at our very doors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>David O. McKay</td>
<td>April 1942</td>
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<td>October 1961</td>
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<td>October 1963</td>
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<td>Mark E. Petersen</td>
<td>April 1968</td>
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<td>Marion G. Romney</td>
<td>October 1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heber J. Grant</td>
<td>October 1928</td>
<td>Bad laws, if they exist, should be repealed as soon as possible; still while they continue in force for the sake of example, they should be religiously observed.</td>
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<td>October 1930</td>
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<td>Richard R. Lyman</td>
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<td>N. Eldon Tanner</td>
<td>October 1965</td>
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<td>October 1975</td>
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<td>General Authority</td>
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<td>Abraham Lincoln Quote Used</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard R. Lyman</td>
<td>April 1929</td>
<td>We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have been preserved these many years, in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. . . . God rules this world—It is the duty of nations as well as men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow . . . and to recognize the sublime truth that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.</td>
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<td>David O. McKay</td>
<td>October 1942</td>
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<td>October 1968</td>
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<td>Ezra Taft Benson</td>
<td>October 1944</td>
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<td>April 1952</td>
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<td>April 1954</td>
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<td>October 1956</td>
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<td>April 1963</td>
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<td>April 1976</td>
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<td>Matthew Cowley</td>
<td>October 1951</td>
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<td>October 1952</td>
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<td>Sterling W. Sill</td>
<td>April 1958</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. Eldon Tanner</td>
<td>October 1967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anthony W. Ivins</td>
<td>April 1930</td>
<td>[paraphrased] Resolve that the faith in God manifested by our fathers, who bequeathed to us the priceless heritage of liberty which we now enjoy in this chosen land, shall not perish from the earth, but endure forever. This done we are secure, without it we have no guarantee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orson F. Whitney</td>
<td>October 1930</td>
<td>Government of the people, by the people, for the people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David O. McKay</td>
<td>April 1940</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard R. Lyman</td>
<td>April 1943</td>
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<td>J. Reuben Clark Jr.</td>
<td>April 1957</td>
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<td>General Authority</td>
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<td>Abraham Lincoln Quote Used</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levi Edgar Young</td>
<td>April 1932</td>
<td>With malice towards none, with charity for all.</td>
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<td>Don B. Colton</td>
<td>October 1933</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard R. Lyman</td>
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<td>Joseph F. Smith</td>
<td>April 1946</td>
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<td>Gordon B. Hinckley</td>
<td>October 1980</td>
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<td>April 1982</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levi Edgar Young</td>
<td>April 1935</td>
<td>Pray that we be spared further punishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard L. Evans</td>
<td>October 1938</td>
<td>[paraphrased] He who molds public sentiment does more than he who enacts laws or hands down decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heber J. Grant</td>
<td>October 1938</td>
<td>You will never get me to support a measure which I believe to be wrong, although by doing so I may accomplish that which I believe to be right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed Smoot</td>
<td>October 1940</td>
<td>One rainy night I could not sleep. The wounds of the soldiers and sailors disturbed my very bones, pierced my heart, and I asked God to show me how they could have better relief. After wrestling some time in prayer he put the plans of a sanitary commission in my mind and they have worked out pretty much as God gave them to me that night. You ought to thank your kind heavenly Father and not me for the sanitary commission.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ezra Taft Benson</td>
<td>October 1944</td>
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<td></td>
<td>April 1954</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thorpe B. Isaacson</td>
<td>April 1961</td>
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<tr>
<td>N. Eldon Tanner</td>
<td>October 1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark E. Petersen</td>
<td>April 1967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Devere Harris</td>
<td>October 1984</td>
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<td>General Authority</td>
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<td>Abraham Lincoln Quote Used</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heber J. Grant</td>
<td>October 1944</td>
<td>Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas S. Monson</td>
<td>April 1986</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph L. Wirthlin</td>
<td>April 1949</td>
<td>I went to my room one day and locked the door and got down upon my knees before Almighty God and prayed to him mightily for victory at Gettysburg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen L Richards</td>
<td>April 1950</td>
<td>You can't fool all the people all the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph L. Wirthlin</td>
<td>October 1951</td>
<td>If I ever have a chance to strike this thing [slavery], I will strike it hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion G. Romney</td>
<td>April 1952</td>
<td>The discipline and character of the national forces should not suffer, nor the cause they defend be imperiled, by the profanation of the day or name of the Most High.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion G. Romney</td>
<td>April 1952</td>
<td>I have had so many evidences of his direction, so many instances when I have been controlled by some other power than my own will, that I cannot doubt that this power comes from above. I frequently see my way clear to a decision when I am conscious that I have not sufficient facts upon which to found it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thorpe B. Isaacson</td>
<td>April 1961</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark E. Petersen</td>
<td>April 1967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alma Sonne</td>
<td>April 1958</td>
<td>I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what light I have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sterling W. Sill</td>
<td>October 1974</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorpe B. Isaacson</td>
<td>October 1963</td>
<td>To sin in silence when protest is good makes cowards out of men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elray L. Christiansen</td>
<td>October 1963</td>
<td>No people can ever become greater by lowering their standards, no society was ever improved by adopting a looser morality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma Sonne</td>
<td>October 1964</td>
<td>This Great Book... is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Russell Ballard</td>
<td>April 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Authority</td>
<td>Conference Address</td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln Quote Used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion D. Hanks</td>
<td>October 1976</td>
<td>When I do good I feel good, and when I don’t do good I don’t feel good . . . and when I do bad I feel bad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezra Taft Benson</td>
<td>October 1974</td>
<td>I still have confidence that the Almighty, the Maker of the Universe, will, through the instrumentality of this great and intelligent people, bring us through this as he has through all other difficulties of our country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David O. McKay</td>
<td>October 1968</td>
<td>[paraphrased] “How many legs would a sheep have if we called the tail a leg?” When the answer, “Five,” was given, he corrected it by explaining that just calling the tail a leg didn’t make it one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John H. Vandenberg</td>
<td>April 1970</td>
<td>I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold B. Lee</td>
<td>April 1971</td>
<td>I accept all I read in the Bible that I can understand, and accept the rest on faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John H. Vandenberg</td>
<td>October 1971</td>
<td>I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up into the heavens and say there is no God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marvin J. Ashton</td>
<td>October 1976</td>
<td>It is difficult to make a man miserable when he feels he is worthy of himself and claims kindred to the great God who made him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 1989</td>
<td>If we do not do right, God will let us go on our way to ruin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark E. Petersen</td>
<td>October 1976</td>
<td>. . . conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce R. McConkie</td>
<td>April 1978</td>
<td>I will prepare, and perhaps my chance will come.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard W. Hunter</td>
<td>April 1978</td>
<td>The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Authority</td>
<td>Conference Address</td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln Quote Used</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marvin J. Ashton</td>
<td>April 1982</td>
<td>Stand with anybody that stands right. Stand with him while he is right and part with him when he goes wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell M. Nelson</td>
<td>April 1989</td>
<td>Quarrel not at all. No man resolved to make the most of himself can spare time for personal contention. . . . Better give your path to a dog than be bitten by him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lloyd P. George</td>
<td>April 1994</td>
<td>Die when I may, I would like it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle, and planted a rose where I thought a rose would grow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neal A. Maxwell</td>
<td>April 1999</td>
<td>. . . thirts and burns for distinction, and if possible . . . will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves or enslaving freemen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lance B. Wickman</td>
<td>April 2008</td>
<td>. . . gave the last full measure of devotion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

1. See graph 3.
10. Charles H. Hart, in Conference Report, October 1924, 34. Hart said: “The explanation of attributing infidelity [meaning an infidel who did not believe in God] to Lincoln is given by the author of the book, *The Son of Abraham Lincoln*. He suggests that it was the contention of the different denominations . . . that may have distracted Abraham Lincoln, just as
we know at about the same time it distracted the Prophet Joseph Smith and led him to prayer and to the truth.”


22. As quoted in Leonard J. Arrington, Brigham Young: American Moses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 294. This occurrence was mentioned in general conference by Melvin J. Ballard (October 1914, 67), Richard W. Young (October 1919, 148), and David O. McKay (October 1953, 97).


27. Peterson, Lincoln in American Memory, 8.


29. Donald, Lincoln’s Herndon, 371.

30. Donald, Lincoln’s Herndon, 368.


32. Donald, Lincoln’s Herndon, 371.

33. Donald, Lincoln’s Herndon, 371.

34. Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 369.

35. Rudger Clawson, in Conference Report, April 1899, 4.


37. Peterson, Lincoln in American Memory, 165.


41. Richard R. Lyman, in Conference Report, October 1919, 120.
42. Rulon S. Wells, in Conference Report, October 1919, 208.
46. Charles W. Nibley, in Conference Report, April 1917, 144; April 1925, 24.
47. Rulon S. Wells, in Conference Report, October 1919, 206; October 1926, 134.
51. Heber J. Grant, in Conference Report, April 1920, 10.
52. Heber J. Grant, in Conference Report, October 1938, 5.
60. See appendix A.
73. Sill, “Your Hall of Fame,” 3.
74. Wilson, *Lincoln’s Sword*, 7.
98. Richard R. Lyman, in Conference Report, October 1927, 98; J. Reuben Clark Jr., in Conference Report, April 1934, 109; Romney, “Integrity,” 75; Royden G. Derrick, “By Their

100. Henry D. Taylor, in Conference Report, April 1964, 89.
106. McConkie, *Here We Stand*, 114.
Paradox is a sign of richness and plenitude. It is Adam and Eve reaching for both godly aspiration and childlike submission.
Paradox and Discipleship

Terry L. Givens

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Previous versions of this talk were given to the Association of Mormon Letters Conference on February 2, 2009, and to the BYU Religious Education faculty.

G.K. Chesterton wrote famously that “the circle is perfect and infinite in its nature; but it is fixed for ever in its size; it can never be larger or smaller. But the cross, though it has at its heart a collision and a contradiction, can extend its four arms for ever without altering its shape. Because it has a paradox in its centre it can grow without changing. The circle returns upon itself and is bound. The cross opens its arms to the four winds; it is a signpost for free travelers.”

I am not as much a mystic as Chesterton. For instance, I do not believe, as he wrote in the same passage, that “as long as you have mystery you have health; when you destroy mystery you create morbidity.” Nevertheless, I think his remarks on Christianity provide a useful starting point for some reflections about paradox at the heart of Joseph Smith’s thought. My intention is to suggest some new ways we may want to think about Latter-day Saint faith, doctrine, and culture.
The honeybee has an important place in our culture. Part of Utah’s state seal, the beehive has become so identified with Mormonism that it has become a “communal coat of arms.”¹ Ironically, perhaps, the honeybee also serves as a powerful emblem of the scope and ramifications of the most radical paradigm shift of the nineteenth century: the Darwinian revolution. The honeybee, as Darwin points out in his *Origin of Species*, has a glaring defect as a creature. Its poison is effective in killing predators, enabling it to defend itself and its nest, but the bee’s sting comes at the cost of its own life. Darwin speculates that this is because the bee’s stinger was originally “a boring and serrated instrument,” probably used for extracting food from fibrous sources. It is therefore “not perfected for its present purpose” of defense.² The question is, why not? Why did the evolutionary process cease, and why did natural selection not accomplish its end of making the bee as perfect as possible? Certainly a bee that *can* kill without sacrificing its life would be an improvement over one that cannot. A simple smoothing of the stinger’s serrated edge would do the trick quite nicely and efficiently. Why was the bee’s progress toward species perfection aborted so precipitously and—in the case of a myriad of individual bees and even full hives—calamitously?

This is Darwin’s explanation: “Natural selection tends only to make each organic being as perfect as, or slightly more perfect than, the other inhabitants of the same country with which it comes into competition. And we see that this is the standard of perfection attained under nature.” Then he adds this declaration: “Natural selection will not produce absolute perfection.”³ What he means is this: the law of natural selection, what Herbert Spencer called “survival of the fittest,”⁴ ensures that any competition for limited resources will favor those who are in any way advantaged over their competitors. It will weed out those who are inferior, or even mediocre, and allow those who have greater strength, agility, speed, or survival skills to prevail. The long-term effect of this principle is the creation of beings that are, in Darwin’s terms, “more perfect” than their peers.⁵ But the law of natural selection also has a striking limitation, and this is what Darwin means by saying it can never produce absolute perfection. This limitation is perfectly illustrated by the honeybee. In the struggle for survival, the bee’s development, even with a flawed stinger, was sufficient to securely establish its position in the natural world. Once it achieved species equilibrium, it lacked the conflict and opposition required to further challenge, stimulate, and refine its development; its progress was essentially halted.
To some extent, any religious belief that raises its head unabashedly in a secular society is bound to encounter resistance and hostility. The conflicts between Darwinism and supernaturalism, between the intellectual heritage of Enlightenment and liberal humanism on the one hand and Tertullian reveling in absurdity and modern fundamentalist anti-intellectualism on the other; and between the brute authoritarianism of institutionalized religion and the heady freedoms of radical individualism—these and kindred collisions have driven a reasonable, old-fashioned life of faith underground and have driven many Latter-day Saint students and scholars into exile.

But there are reasons to think that such conflicts may be particularly acute in Mormonism. First is the simple anecdotal evidence that graduate programs take a heavy toll on Latter-day Saint intellectuals; delving into Church history, professionally or otherwise, takes a further toll. Second, there is the problem of Latter-day Saints’ antipathy to theologizing. Unlike Catholic and Protestant traditions, which have spent centuries systematizing their belief systems, sorting out wrinkles, resolving contradictions, and moving toward a harmonious whole, Latter-day Saints long considered theology a dirty word, resisted dogma, and even debated whether publishing Joseph Smith’s revelations was a bad precedent. Orson and Parley P. Pratt made tentative steps in the direction of a grand synthesis, but B. H. Roberts’s further work was stymied, and subsequent leaders have not shown particular interest in synthesis, reconciliation, or clarification of historical and theological discontinuities. Finally, I want to argue that many of these cultural and personal consequences might be construed as a tragedy of misapprehension. We may have mistaken tension and discordance for richness and dynamism, insolubility for complexity, and intractable contradiction for mere paradox. But paradox, I believe, only seems to be contradiction. Paradox is the sign of a healthy universe, voracious enough to insist on having its cake and eating it too. Paradox is a sign of richness and plenitude. It is Adam and Eve reaching for both godly aspiration and childlike submission; it is priesthood that is power without compulsion; it is an infinitely powerful God who is sovereign of the universe but is also as vulnerable to pain as a widow with a wayward son; it is a triumphant Christ whose victory was in his meekness.

Those not intellectually adventuresome enough to embrace such paradox find easy refuge falling to one side or the other of the tightrope. Capitulating to blind faith is no faith, and posturing as the enlightened apostate who grew out of his innocence is neither enlightened nor innocent. Eliminating
alternatives is certainly easier than finding a way to “stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss.”

I am reminded of a country church I passed on a road to Boston a few months back. On the marquee outside the church the pastor had put these words: “Soft pews; No hell.” How comforting to body and mind alike!

A biographer said of the great philosopher Spinoza, “He rejected the orthodoxy of his day not because he believed less, but because he believed more.” That, in a nutshell, is my challenge to you. Be as voracious as Mercy’s father in the monumental work of Virginia Sorenson, *A Little Lower Than the Angels*. Incredulous at her father’s capacity for belief, Mercy asked enviously, “But you believe it, Father, you really do?” “I believe all I can, Mercy girl, all I can. Everywhere I go I’m looking for more good things to believe. Even if it’s the be-all and the end-all here, then we’d better keep busy believing good things. Hadn’t we?”

Fredrick Barnard quotes Herder’s observation that a people “may have the most sublime virtues in some respects and blemishes in others . . . and reveal the most astonishing contradictions and incongruites.” Therefore, Barnard writes, “A cultural whole is [not] necessarily a way of referring to a state of blissful harmony; it may just as conceivably refer to a field of tension.”

A field of tension seems to be a particularly apt way to characterize Latter-day Saint thought. It may be that all belief systems that are rooted in the notion of a God who dies have, as Chesterton suggests, “a collision and a contradiction” at their heart. Yet Mormonism, a system in which Joseph Smith collapsed sacred distance to bring a whole series of opposites into radical juxtaposition, seems especially rife with paradox, or tensions that only appear to be logical contradictions.

**Freedom and Authority**

There are four paradoxes that have been powerful catalysts in the formation of Latter-day Saint identity and culture. The first paradox is the polarity of authoritarianism and individualism. It is in the context of these two competing values that Latter-day Saint artists and intellectuals have had to negotiate their place in our culture. The consequence of these two traditions in Latter-day Saint culture—one emphasizing authority and the other individual freedom—is an ever-present tension without parallel in modern Christianity. This tension between submission to ecclesiastical authority and
an emphasis on and veneration for the principle of individual moral agency produces contention so pronounced that it leads even careful observers into major misperceptions (we are frequently accused of Pelagianism, for example). Without moral independence, “there is no existence” (D&C 93:30). Compare this with Adam’s answer to the angel who asks him, “Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord?” Adam replies, “I know not, save the Lord commanded me” (Moses 5:6). For intellectuals and artists, this tension is especially stark. Intellectual inquiry and artistic exploration should thrive in a culture that opposes any “attempt to deprive us in the slightest respect of our free agency.”14 At the same time, Latter-day Saint artists and intellectuals find themselves constrained by the Church’s insistence that all inspiration is not equal and may feel that the same prophetic prerogatives that impeded Oliver Cowdery’s exercise of autonomy cramp the style of maverick intellectuals and artists today.

The resulting collision of views and valuations is inevitable. No consensus is ever likely to emerge in the Latter-day Saint community about the proper reconciliation of authority and independence, faithfulness and freedom. The cultural divide between so-called “Iron Rodders” and “Liahona Mormons” is not always neat and precise, but more importantly (according to Richard Poll), the divide is one that, at some level, operates within thoughtful Mormons as much as among them.15 That is why both institutional conflict and personal anguish will continue to characterize artists and intellectuals who struggle to find a comfortable place within a culture where proponents of opposing views each cite scripture and prophetic precedent for support.

**Exile and Election**

The Latter-day Saint emphasis on election is traceable to the first recorded spiritual experience of the young Joseph Smith. Long before he ever heard the word Mormon or had an inkling of what his life or ministry would stand for, he learned what he was to be set against. Having knelt in a wooded grove on his family’s farm and inquired of God what church he should join to find salvation, he learned that he was not to be a member of any Christian congregation then existing: “I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt” (Joseph Smith—History 1:19). Like many religious revolutionaries, Joseph early on saw his relationship to the world in thoroughly adversarial terms. “I
was destined to prove a disturber and an annoyer of [Satan’s] kingdom; else why should the powers of darkness combine against me? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy?” (Joseph Smith—History 1:20). Less than two years before his death, Joseph wrote, “Deep water is what I am wont to swim in. It all has become a second nature to me; and I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation” (D&C 127:2). Jonathan Edwards similarly gloried, “I am born to be a man of strife,”16 and Luther’s self-conception was famously an embattled one.

What was different about Joseph’s posture was how effectively he imbued an entire people with this same sense of separation from a hostile world. Individually and institutionally, Latter-day Saints continue to work through the paradox of an existence that is both Eden and exile, that embraces difference even as it yearns for integration. The cost of a “chosen” status appears recurrently in the Latter-day Saint psyche as both nostalgia and alienation; Mormon art and literature reveal a recurrent unease with such differences. Isolation is often felt as a burden of exclusion and is frequently transformed into a quest for connections and universal truths. Latter-day Saints insist on the need for a gospel restoration, but then feel the sting of being excluded from the fold of Christendom.

Millennia ago, the ancient Israelites were faced with a similar challenge. They too were imbued with a belief that they were “an holy people unto the Lord [their] God . . . chosen . . . to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6). Yet, exclusivity and self-sufficiency are hard to maintain through a history of bondage, occupation, and the realpolitik of international affairs. Israel found a powerful solution and potent type for resolving such tension as they prepared to depart from Egypt. At God’s urging, the fleeing Hebrews availed themselves of their captors’ “jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment” (Exodus 3:22), and thus accrued the heathen materials that they would mold and fashion into the accoutrements, wealth, and resources of their exiled civilization. Centuries later, artists and intellectuals of Europe would justify their emulation of pagan models by referencing this archetypal “spoiling of the Egyptians.”

In the dispensation heralded by Joseph Smith, the Saints were, like the Hebrews before them, admonished to “stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world” (D&C 78:14). At the same time, as Brigham Young declared, “We believe in all good. If you can find a truth in
heaven, earth or hell, it belongs to our doctrine. We believe it; it is ours; we claim it.” So, like their exiled predecessors, without the benefits of social stability, abundant resources, or a prosperous prehistory, the Saints were surrounded by the cultural riches of a host society that offered both temptation and promise. Once again, the challenge would be to exploit the accoutrements of that host culture without suffering contamination or loss of mission and identity in the process. The difficulty in “spoiling the Egyptians” has always been the same: to turn the plundered riches into temple adornments rather than golden calves.

The Sacred and the Banal

The third paradox refers to one of the most culturally and theologically potent innovations of the Mormon worldview, one that is more a collapse of polarities than a tension between them: the disintegration of sacred distance. With God as an exalted man, man as a God in embryo, the family as a prototype for heavenly sociality, and Zion as a city with dimensions and blueprints, Joseph rewrote conventional dualisms as thoroughgoing monisms. The resulting paradox is manifest in the recurrent invasion of the banal into the realm of the holy, and the infusion of the sacred into the realm of the quotidian. Brigham Young saw this paradox in highly favorable terms. “When I saw Joseph Smith,” he wrote, “he took heaven, figuratively speaking, and brought it down to earth; and he took the earth, brought it up, and opened up, in plainness and simplicity, the things of God; and that is the beauty of his mission.” The New York Herald’s James Gordon Bennett expressed the situation a little differently; he said that the Mormons “are busy all the time establishing factories to make saints and crockery ware, also prophets and white paint.”

The principal danger here is that the sacred as a category threatens to disappear altogether (and with it, perhaps, worshipful reverence). That is because in this metaphysical monism transcendence is virtually annihilated as a possibility. As the poet Samuel Coleridge put the case, “The very ground of all Miracle [is] the heterogeneity of Spirit and Matter.” But even this ontological distinction is vanquished by Joseph’s unrelenting metaphysical monism: “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; We cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter” (D&C 131:7–8).

If God is shorn of ineffability and transcendence, or is construed in human terms, how does one find the reverential awe that moves one to true

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worship? If Jesus is our “big brother,” how can he be our Lord and God? Reverence before the Almighty demands new ways of conceiving in such a reconfigured heaven and earth. But the dilemmas for the artist are especially vexing: in a universe devoid of transcendence and sacred distance (at least as conventionally constructed), how can wonder flourish?

Elizabeth Barrett Browning made this poetic observation:

Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes—
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.21

Our own experience in cultural Mormonism would seem to attest that only burning bushes can tolerate such proximity to unmasked glory without becoming consumed on the one hand, or too familiar on the other.

**Certainty and Searching**

The Prophet Joseph emphasized the possibility of epistemological certainty even as he elaborated a theology of audacious scope and a program of eternal learning. Smith made intellectual pursuit a quest of holiness, founding the School of the Prophets, establishing a fledgling university, and devoting himself to the study of ancient languages and lore even as he claimed to bypass the learning systems of men with his powers of seership and translation.22 So it is that Latter-day Saints today inherit a tradition that is relatively recently rooted in concrete artifacts like gold plates verified by eleven witnesses, in accounts of resurrected beings laying physical hands on founding prophets, and in Joseph Smith’s testimony of the audible words and visible appearance of Deity. Latter-day Saints inhabit a rhetorical world where members do not give assertions of fervent belief, but public testimony that they have spiritual knowledge of those events as historical realities. At the same time, such credentials do not attest to personal salvation or blessedness, but only betoken the commencement of an eternal quest for saving knowledge and the burden of endlessly seeking perfection. The mix of intellectual certitude and intellectual insatiability Joseph exuded has left a mixed heritage for aspiring Latter-day Saint artists and intellectuals to reckon with. While Joseph’s relentless eclecticism, syncretism, and system building could provoke and inspire, great works of the mind and heart have seldom emerged in the context of the spiritual complacency and sense of plenitude that his system building could provoke.
That which Latter-day Saints know, they are sure they know, and personally and institutionally it is beyond compromise or negotiation. But that which they do not know will occupy them in schoolrooms of the life beyond for “a great while after [they] have passed through the veil.” One problem in a church almost entirely lacking creeds or formal theology is that the two realms—the settled and orthodox, and the unfixed and unfathomed—are not clearly demarcated.

This tension is perhaps the most urgent one facing our religion because it is the one with the highest spiritual stakes and it is productive of some of the most profound spiritual, emotional, social, and cultural angst. Of all the paradoxes, this is the one that I find to be most lopsided, most weighted in favor of certainty, and least appreciative of its counterpart: seeking and searching faith. I fear we often make too little room for those who say in the anguish of their heart, not “I know,” but “I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24). We read that “to some is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”; but some stop reading just before coming to the counterweight: “to others it is given to believe on their words” (Doctrine and Covenants 46:13–14; emphasis added).

“Art is born of humiliation,” and it may be in that very space surrounding the security born of possessing precious certainties, the abject smallness before the magnitude of an almost unquenchable ignorance, and the groping in the darkness that Latter-day Saint thought finds a tension productive of a genuinely religious art and intellectual expression.

**Originality and Assimilation**

I want to add a fifth paradox to those I have surveyed. I would refer to it as a hallmark of the modus operandi of Joseph Smith—the twin imperatives of originality and assimilation, or revelation of what is new and syncretism based on what is already present. I see this duality beautifully enacted in the way Joseph Smith commences his exposition of doctrinal belief, the Articles of Faith. He begins by affirming an entirely conventional Christian deity: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in his Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost” (Articles of Faith 1:1). How reassuring. How consoling. How bridge-building. How utterly orthodox. Nothing original there; it is transparently familiar doctrine. Then he immediately follows this up with the second article of faith, an utter repudiation of the doctrine of original sin. Unlike virtually every Christian denomination extant during his time, Joseph
propounds a theory of man as inherently innocent, at odds with centuries of orthodoxy and predicated only upon revelations vouchsafed to him as an ordained prophet and authorized oracle of God. Joseph the syncretist; Joseph the Prophet.

In seeing our day, the prophet Moroni seemed to fear that we would be too quick to condemn, criticize, or ignore those inspired words and teachings that come from sources other than the Ensign or Church manuals. Moroni’s admonishment is an injunction to discretion in what voices disciples of Christ should listen to. But notice that Moroni is as concerned about us refusing the good and beautiful as he is about us imbibing the corrupt: “Every thing which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God. Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which . . . is good and of God to be of the devil.” And then he adds, “If ye will lay hold upon every good thing, and condemn it not, ye certainly will be a child of Christ” (Moroni 7:13–14, 19).

I recently completed a major study of the idea of premortality in Western thought. You are familiar with this idea as one of the doctrines of the Restoration. In May of 1833, Joseph Smith received a revelation (see D&C 93) that covered a smattering of subjects: the testimony of John, the Spirit of truth, and Christ’s presence with the Father from the beginning. And then, with no warning or elaboration, comes this bombshell: “Ye were also in the beginning with the Father” (v. 23). Only a few additional words of clarification are provided: “Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (v. 29). Then, before Joseph or the reader of the revelation can digest the impact of one of Joseph’s most momentous revealed truths, the section goes on to give a reprimand to Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams, directions about translating the Bible, and so forth. The section contains no elaboration of the doctrine of premortal existence, no exploration or discussion of its relevance to a host of perplexing theological dilemmas, just a casual observation left to float in intellectual isolation.

The Latter-day Saint faith may be the only Christian denomination teaching this doctrine today. But it turns out that dozens—perhaps even hundreds—of poets, mystics, philosophers, theologians, and pastors have taught this same principle across the centuries. Together, this symphony of inspired men and women have provided a diverse—and profoundly inspired—series of insights and lessons that can enrich and expand our understanding of and appreciation for this sublime teaching. “It is the business of the Elders of this
“Church,” said Brigham Young, “to gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to life and salvation, . . . wherever [they] may be found in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, and bring it to Zion.”

We want to think that Joseph Smith started with a clean slate, repudiating the entire Christian past and starting out afresh, only teaching that which came to him directly from the heavens. But he emphatically resisted any such conception. His was a generous mind, unafraid to embrace truth wherever he found it and bring it home to Zion. It takes humility of spirit to be taught; but notice the example of Joseph in this regard. He showed the world he could translate gold plates written in reformed Egyptian, then hired a Jewish schoolmaster to teach him Hebrew. He took practices of the Masons and openly adapted them to the temple ceremony, putting them back into what he considered their proper and inspired context. He planned a library and museum for Nauvoo that he wanted to fill with all the choicest fruits of Western culture. A Nauvoo newspaper described his plans: The Seventies’ Library “has been commenced on a footing and scale, broad enough to embrace the arts and sciences, everywhere: so that the Seventies’ [sic] while traveling over the face of the globe, as the Lord’s ‘Regular Soldiers,’ can gather all the curious things, both natural and artificial, with all the knowledge, inventions, and wonderful specimens of genius that have been gracing the world for almost six thousand years.”

I have encountered several “specimens of genius” in my studies, inspired fragments from a church in the wilderness. Generations of theologians, philosophers, mystics, and inspired seekers have found premortality to be the key to explaining “the better angels of our nature,” including the human yearning for transcendence and the sublime. Premortality makes sense of why we know what we should not be capable of knowing, whether in the form of a Greek slave’s grasp of mathematics, the moral sense common to humanity, or the human ability to recognize universals. Well beyond the borders of the restored Church, premortality has been invoked to explain human bonds that seem to have their own mysterious history, has salved the wounded sensibility of a host of thinkers who could not otherwise account for the unevenly distributed pain and suffering that are humanity’s common lot, and has been posited by philosophers and theologians alike to salvage the principle of human freedom and accountability.

Latter-day Saints may be under an injunction to appreciate what is powerful, authoritative, and unique about Joseph Smith’s revelations. At the same
time, we must work toward capacious minds and generous hearts, following the admonition of Moroni to love and celebrate truth, goodness, and beauty wherever they are to be found and bring these truths home to Zion.

So we add one more tension to the mix. The tension and disequilibrium between exceptionalism and generous universalism, the paradox that caused Joseph Smith to be called upon to bring lost ordinances and authority back to earth from heaven, even as he was inspired to find and assemble scattered gems of truth from a thousand earthly gardens. This sometimes confusing burden that Saints feel called upon to bear, to teach with conviction even as they are enjoined to learn with humility, like the tensions between searching and certainty or independence and discipleship, is to be celebrated, not lamented. It is a sign that we are, as we should be, unwilling to relinquish either worthy ideal. The agonizing struggle to pursue both bears testimony to our love of both. God’s heart is infinitely capacious. Our mind must stretch accordingly. That will, of necessity, be a little painful. RE

Notes
2. Chesterton, Orthodoxy, 48.
8. The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, ed. Dean C. Jessee (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 436; spelling modernized.
12. Chesterton, Orthodoxy, 50.
27. Abraham Lincoln, first inaugural address, March 4, 1861.
“Late one night, the boy was driving home from work through a dark, wooded area, and suddenly it happened. No one was drinking; no one was driving too fast—it just happened.”
Hope through a Windshield

Susan Balcom Walton

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“And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2 Nephi 9:21).

Some years ago, before I was sidetracked into corporate public relations, I was a college English teacher. One of my favorite writing assignments was a little exercise in which I asked my students to reflect back on an experience that lasted only a few moments but seemed to go on forever. I would then ask them to spend several pages capturing as much detail about that experience as they could remember. I always gave this assignment to help my student writers develop their descriptive and narrative skills. While most of the essays I received over the years were fairly routine, a few of them made a significant impact on both me and my students.

One student, a single mother, had been diagnosed with a serious illness and had been hesitant to talk about this news with her family. Through writing the essay on her experience of hearing the diagnosis, she was able to find
the words to express her thoughts and feelings and be strengthened by the support of her loved ones.

Another student had witnessed a crime but had been reluctant to go to the authorities. But through recounting the story in the essay, the student found courage—and a voice. The crime was reported, and the offender was prosecuted.

But of all the essays I ever received for this assignment, the one that touched me the most profoundly was a story by one of my young students who wrote about a car accident. Car accidents were a frequent subject of this essay assignment, probably because they are often the quintessential example of an experience that happens quickly but can play out very slowly and deliberately in our consciousness. I was always amazed at how many details my students could remember about their car crashes—the song playing on the radio, the startled expression on the other driver’s face as their two cars skidded towards each other across an icy intersection.

The student who wrote this most memorable essay had been in his accident when he was a high-school student. He read his paper aloud to our class, and this is how the story went. Late one night, the boy was driving home from work through a dark, wooded area, and suddenly it happened. No one was drinking; no one was driving too fast—it just happened. A shape loomed up out of the darkness in the middle of the road. And before my student could even react and put on the brakes, he had struck someone. The body was thrown up on the hood of the car, and directly in front of him through the windshield, he could make out an unblinking eye staring at him.

What made this essay so gripping was not the heart-stopping introduction, but the description that followed. Rather than choosing to describe the sights or the sounds of the accident, my student chose to describe the thoughts that raced through his mind during those few split seconds that it took him to slow down and stop the car. I do not now remember the exact words that he spoke, but as I recall it, this was the essence of his thoughts: As that car skidded to a stop, that boy believed with all his heart that the happy, peaceful life he had always known was over forever. He had hit and most likely killed someone—and nothing would ever be the same.

He thought about his parents, and he wondered if they would be sued and lose everything they had. He thought about himself—whether he would go to jail, or whether he would simply walk through the rest of his life with a heart and a conscience stained with the guilt of knowing he had taken a life.
But most of all, he thought about the victim on the hood of the car, and he was quite certain that he would never be forgiven for what he had just done.

At that moment, of course, the boy didn’t know the outcome of all those fears—but as he frantically pumped the brakes and looked at that eye staring through the windshield, of this he was certain: that any chance of future happiness in his life had died—just as surely as he was convinced that the victim on the hood of the car had died. And I remember quite clearly the last sentence he read before pausing: “And I knew my life was over.”

The student looked up and stopped before reading the last line of his story. Our classroom was silent as we all sat there, slack-jawed. At that moment, every one of us was behind the wheel of that car with him, feeling what it is like to be seventeen years old and to believe that you will never, ever be happy again.

The boy then picked up his paper and finished the final line of the essay. It read—and I quote—“And then the deer jumped down off the hood of the car and ran off into the woods.”

For several months afterwards, I couldn’t shake off that story—and it wasn’t because it had been a suspenseful narrative with an “everyman’s tragedy” sort of theme and a surprise plot twist at the end, although it was all of those things. I finally realized that what troubled me so much about this story was the idea of that boy, behind the wheel of his car, really believing, however briefly, that his life was over. And I thought to myself again and again, *What if it hadn’t been a deer? What if all the things he feared that night had actually happened? Would he really have believed that he could never be happy again?*

Did he have a knowledge of and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the Atonement—a faith that would have enabled him to see past this seemingly overwhelming tragedy and go on? Would he have understood that the Savior was there, as he promises in 2 Nephi 9:21, “to suffer his pains”? Would that boy have found comfort when he stared through that windshield, or would he have given in to despair? The thought of a young person drowning in such hopelessness, even for just a few seconds, nearly broke my heart. And here lies the lesson for all of us: one of the most precious blessings that the Lord has given us is the knowledge that peace and happiness can be ours, even in the most trying of times, through Jesus Christ and his Atonement.

As an educator at a public college, I could not pull my student aside in that class and have that loving, heartfelt conversation with him. But many years later, as a religious educator, I now can—and I must. I can help my students...
understand that there will be times in their lives when they run smack into problems—the big, complicated kind that do not jump down off the hood of their cars and run away into the night. They just sit there.

These challenges are different for all of us. We do not know what all our students’ challenges will be. But we know they will have them. Many of my students, by the time they find their way to my classes, have already experienced profound challenges in their young lives. And whatever these challenges have been, or what they may be, the discouragement that comes from thinking that there is no way out of them is one of Satan’s greatest weapons.

When we are discouraged, we are more susceptible to temptations and less motivated to keep the commandments with exactness. And when Satan is able to make our problems and challenges appear so huge that we can’t see around them, he successfully conceals from our view one of the gospel’s greatest gifts—the gift of eternal perspective.

In times like these, an understanding of the Atonement—and of the great love of our Heavenly Father—is our greatest support. Do we have that testimony, and do we share it with our students? Do our students know that the Lord loves them and is there to help them through any challenge that life throws at them? Do our students know that, even in the midst of their worst problems, when the whole world might look different to them, or they might look different to themselves, our Heavenly Father sees them just the same—as his precious children? At the times when it is so easy to feel no hope, do they have the assurance that there is always hope in the Atonement of Jesus Christ?

Many of us—and our students—probably learned a little rhyme in our childhood, called “Going on a bear hunt.” In the rhyme, we chant:

“We’re going on a bear hunt; we’re going on a bear hunt; we’re going on a bear hunt; we’re gonna catch a bear.”

Then the brave bear hunters come to some geographic obstacle that they need to overcome to continue the hunt, such as a river:

“Here we have come to a river. . . .
Hmmm. . . .
Can’t go over it, can’t go under it, can’t go around it—gotta go through it.”

Then you make swimming motions or hold your nose and go “glub-glub-glub” (depending on how you learned this song), and you go through the river and continue on the hunt.
Problems and challenges work a lot like that too.

“Well, here we have a problem, . . . a challenge.

Hmmm. . . .

Can't go over it, can't go under it, can't go around it—
gotta go through it.”

As we go through life, we learn that we not only can, but will, get through these challenges and continue on our life’s journey. When the first family—Adam and Eve—were driven out of the Garden of Eden, they walked out. On the other side of their challenge, their missed opportunity, their lost paradise, there was a road—and the road went on. And on the other side of our challenges, through the miracle of the Atonement and the sealing power of the temple, the road not only goes on—the road also goes back—back to the Heavenly Father who loves us.

Christ did indeed suffer “the pains of all men” so that “he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice” (2 Nephi 9:21). As religious educators, it is our sacred trust to help our students find that truth, and that hope, in every aspect of their lives—even through a windshield.
Part of our role as teachers is to help our students understand their role as learners. They must know that no matter how much information we have, no matter how skilled we are at teaching, learning still depends on them.
In a recent CES fireside to religious educators, Elder Richard G. Scott stated:

One of the greatest concerns that President Hinckley has expressed to me personally, which I have repeatedly felt myself, is the number of students who attend class without internalizing “in the fleshy tables of the heart” the instruction given. Such do not appear to associate what you teach with their personal choices in life. They can answer test questions well but do not retain in their minds and hearts the principles and truths taught. In times of trial or testing, they often seem to follow the world rather than the truths taught them. They do not appear to realize that what you share is not something of casual interest but are powerful truths that, when understood and applied, will help them resolve the defining challenges they face hourly. . . . It is almost as if what is taught is temporarily recorded on a tape, maintained until the exam is passed, and then deleted from the permanent storage in the mind and heart.

I am afraid that we have a few students who think all that is needed is to get the material from your notes into their notebooks without encumbering their minds or memories. . . .

I implore for each of you to correct this tragic misunderstanding when it occurs.¹
Elder Scott continued: “Will you pray for guidance in how to have truth sink deep into the minds and hearts of your students so as to be used throughout life? As you prayerfully seek ways to do that, I know that the Lord will guide you. The solution will vary for different individuals, but you will come to understand how to do it. Make your objective to help students understand, retain, and use divine truth. Keep that objective foremost in every aspect of your preparation and teaching.”

Note that in this short excerpt Elder Scott asked us to do two things. First, he implored us to correct the “tragic misunderstanding” that our job is simply to get the material into the students’ notebooks without encumbering their minds and memories. Second, he invited us to pray for guidance in getting the truth to sink deeply into the minds and the hearts of our students. Elder Scott has given us, as teachers, a call to action. He is, in a sense, asking us once again to do more. The objectives he gives are clear. We are to

1. Help students understand divine truth.
2. Help students retain divine truth.
3. Help students use divine truth.

**Defining the Word Understand**

Although the objective as stated by Elder Scott is threefold, it is the first part of the objective, that of helping students understand divine truth, that I wish to discuss. This is not the first time an Apostle speaking to CES has given such a mandate. President Henry B. Eyring has continually discussed the need to get the gospel into students’ hearts. He recalled how one time President Hinckley pointed his finger at President Eyring’s chest and asked how they could get the truth into the students’ hearts.

As I have been trained on my mission, in the seminary and institute program, in various leadership callings, and now at BYU, the plea of the Brethren seems to sink deeper and deeper into my own heart. I have struggled with how to most effectively be an instrument in the Lord’s hand to help students understand the gospel. I have analyzed teaching, observed students and teachers, pondered and reflected on my own teaching, and recognized many of my own weaknesses in bringing this objective about. As I was working on my PhD in instructional psychology and technology, while at the same time analyzing teachers’ implementation of the Seminaries and Institutes of Religion’s Teaching Emphasis, teaching seminary, and working with an incredible
seminary faculty, my mind was constantly on the simple nuances of learning and teaching. I found that the Brethren, many of whom had little or no formal training in education, understood the process of true learning, teaching, and conversion better than all of the greatest educational professionals. Studying all of these topics with the words of the Brethren as my foundation was of great benefit. General and specific questions began to flow as I worked to become an effective instrument in the hands of the Lord in teaching and helping others teach his children. I learned many great principles of education and leadership throughout this process and continue to learn as I express the desire accordingly. I have so far yet to go.

One of the great things I have learned is that there is often a subtle difference between the world’s definition of certain words and the Lord’s definition of them. Although pride, for example, may have some positive connotations according to the world, there is no righteous pride to the Lord, according to President Ezra Taft Benson. Educational terms are very similar. For example, there is a gap between the world’s definition of understanding and the Lord’s definition. The world’s definition of understanding is mental or cognitive; although usually there is a deeper connotation than a simple knowledge of something, this definition does not adequately reach the deeper level of the Lord’s definition.

From my own personal study of the word understanding, in correlation with Elder David A. Bednar’s talk entitled “Understanding Is a Wellspring of Life,” I have come to see understanding in a new light. Understanding is the internalization of divine truth by the Spirit; it is associated with knowledge and wisdom but has distinctive qualities as well. Understanding, when applied, is wisdom.

Gaining understanding is based upon divine principles. First, although basic understanding can come as a result of discussing, reasoning, and learning truth, true understanding is tailored to each individual and granted by the Spirit. Second, understanding is dependent on the worthiness or state of the heart of the individual. Third, understanding is granted by the Lord based upon the spiritual desire of the individual and usually requires actions such as asking, studying, and praying in humility. Understanding is a process granted to each individual line upon line. Fourth, an action of some sort—the making and keeping of covenants, for example—often follows understanding. Understanding results in edification, rejoicing, and power.
If we as teachers are to help our students understand divine truth, we must do so using the Lord’s principles of teaching and learning. Many of these principles of education are used and widely known in the secular world and are found throughout educational texts, seminars, and so forth. I was surprised as I attended an international conference on the improvement of education and saw many similarities between the principles used by secular professionals and those used by CES. Although much of the methodology (group work, pair and share, and case studies) is the same, in a religious setting these methods are used because of a divine mandate, and they are accompanied by the Spirit. In other words, these methods may lead to understanding as man defines it, but with the inspiration and guidance of the Spirit we can use these same methods to help our students truly understand, according to the Lord’s definition of understanding.

The methodology used by many educational entities, from kindergarten to graduate school, including medicine, law, and engineering, is often referred to as “active student learning.” Some teachers in CES have assumed that these methodologies were unique to Seminaries and Institutes of Religion or BYU, but they are not. The secular concept of “active student learning” allows students to act and not merely to be acted upon in the classroom. Rather than having a talking head, or a lecturer, dominate in the classroom setting, students are involved in group work, pairing activities, student presentations, and so on. In the secular world, it has been shown that this type of student involvement increases student understanding and knowledge of the field of study and also provides many other benefits.

In a religious setting the benefits of such methodology go far beyond mere cognitive growth. When students are allowed to act rather than be acted upon, the Spirit is invited to enter “into” and not just “unto” the heart of a learner. When the student is given responsibility and the freedom to act, the Spirit is better able to teach and testify of divine truth. The Lord, through his divinely inspired Brethren and the scriptures, has given many examples of how the Spirit comes “into” us or testifies of divine truth when the student acts rather than being acted upon.

Look for what the Lord teaches us about understanding in 3 Nephi 17:1–3: “Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand. I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this
time. Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again."

What do we learn about understanding from these verses? Is it possible that, although there may have been those in the multitude who thought they understood what Jesus had said, he perceived that they were not getting all of it? Perhaps Christ knew there was something about the place of home and the process of pondering and praying and preparing one’s mind that would create an even deeper influence on the people’s understanding. Perhaps their preparation and their action would allow the Holy Ghost to bring the truth not only “unto” but “into” their hearts, as Elder Bednar taught. The Savior understood the role of the Holy Ghost and an individual personal preparation in creating understanding.

Note that the Savior did not say, “I perceive that you are weak, and that you cannot understand, so listen carefully to me as I continue to explain.” No, he sent them home with specific instructions to follow:

1. Ponder upon the things which I have said.
2. Ask the Father, in my name, that ye may understand.
3. Prepare your minds for the morrow.

The Savior recognized that the real learning would be what they would get through prayer, through the Spirit, and well beyond even Christ’s own words. If the Savior recognized the role of the Spirit in gospel learning and sent his people home to be taught by the Spirit rather than continuing his discourse, think about how much the Spirit can teach our students beyond our own capacity.

In a recent talk at Campus Education Week, Elder Scott stated:

Most of the teaching in the world is based on one of the five senses—hear, see, touch, smell, or taste. In your classroom you can teach by the power of the Spirit.

Such communication begins by your encouraging each one you teach to participate rather than be a passive listener. In this way you can assess their understanding of what is taught, create a feeling of ownership, and also learn from them. More important, their decision to participate is an exercise in agency that permits the Holy Ghost to communicate a personalized message suited to their individual needs. Creating an atmosphere of participation enhances the probability that the Spirit will teach more important lessons than you can communicate.

Some of my most enjoyable teaching moments have been when I watched students teach each other. I remember one of these moments happening in a
released-time seminary classroom. On this specific occasion, I discussed with the students the importance of their roles as teachers—not just learners—in the classroom and their ability to help each other learn and teach by the Spirit. Then I set the stage for a special group activity and turned the class loose. As they explained, shared, and testified of principles and doctrines to each other, the brightness of their eyes, the joy in their countenances, the truth that was being shared, and the loving feeling in the room were priceless. Although it is difficult to measure the influence of the Spirit in the classroom, it was obvious to me that the Spirit was there and teaching the students. I honestly wished the moment would not end, that the Spirit would continue to help them understand. As we debriefed following the experience, it was obvious that the students’ learning had gone far beyond cognitive gain. Much truth that day was caught, not taught.

President Boyd K. Packer echoes this principle, saying that “a testimony is to be found in the bearing of it.” This principle emphasizes the need to have students share their testimonies with each other while they are with us. One institute student stated, “I am a convert to the Church and feel uncomfortable sharing my testimony with others. My family has no desire to listen to what I think about gospel topics, and sharing with them is very uncomfortable and seems contentious. The only place I feel comfortable sharing my testimony is in institute. I have noticed that when I share, not only do I better understand what I am thinking, but the Holy Ghost confirms to me that it is true. I also am able to learn from and grow closer to people my own age who believe in the same things.”

As I see it, if a testimony is gained in the bearing of it, and my responsibility is to help my students gain testimonies, then I must allow students plenty of opportunities to bear their testimonies. If I am the one doing the testimony bearing, then I am the one gaining a greater testimony. This is not to say that the Spirit cannot testify of truth as it is being learned, but somehow the very action on the part of an individual in bearing testimony increases spiritual confirmation.

Confusing Means and Ends

It is important to recognize that having students bear testimony is not the end purpose, but rather it is to help the students gain and strengthen their testimonies through bearing them. Keeping the end in mind, then, is critical to planning effective classroom methodology. I have participated in a number
of in-service and training meetings in and out of CES where the primary objective was to help the teachers get the students involved and participating. Participation is good, but it is a means to an end. When participation itself is the desired outcome, this often leads to “split and spill” or “pooling of ignorance” activities. Group work or pair-and-share activities done solely for the purpose of participation often do not lead to understanding any better than a straight lecture does.

Understanding is the ultimate end purpose. After a recent in-service meeting, I had a conversation with a religion teacher who stated with conviction that what was taught in the meeting would work in someone else’s class but not in his. His classes were different, he said, so he would simply continue to lecture because that was the only way his students could actually learn the material. Then, as if to give support to his conviction, he misquoted President Packer’s famous quote, saying, “True doctrine changes attitudes and behavior, quicker than a study of behavior.” He was missing a key word: “True doctrine, understood,” said President Packer. There is a large difference here. Satan himself knows doctrine (depending on the definition of know); he just does not understand it. Perhaps this teacher would have changed his entire teaching approach if he realized the importance of understanding, not just hearing the doctrine.

Let’s return to 3 Nephi 17. In verses 3–4, the Savior does not just send the multitude home to fulfill an assignment. He does not just tell them to go home and ponder; he gives them a reason to do so. He does not, as many of us have a tendency to do, confuse the means with the end. He tells them to go home and ponder and ask the Father in his name that they may understand. There is a purpose behind the command. He is requiring them to be prepared to receive something of greater benefit because of what they are doing at home.

Some teachers give assignments to students simply because they are told to do so. They ask questions, even well-thought-out questions, because they have been told that asking questions is a great way to begin a discussion. They have their students read because they are supposed to have their students read. They do the methodology well, but sometimes the methodology is not in line with the desired outcome. For what purpose are the students in groups? Is it to take time, to get them participating, or to help them share their testimonies, knowing that a testimony is gained in the bearing of it?

One student, after being asked if his teacher had him read at night, replied, “My teacher has us read, but I don’t think he cares that I’m reading.
We check it on a box or in our grading sheets. I wish he would ask me what I read instead of just asking me if I read. I think he just asks to ask.” Here is another example of getting the methodology and the means confused with the end. Scripture study is just one example, but there are many ways in which the means and the end can be confused. It is vital for teachers to constantly keep the objective in mind.

**Methodologies That May Lead to Understanding**

It must be understood that even though it is important to keep the end in mind, the “how,” or the methodology we use to get ourselves and our students there, is critical. President Packer stated: “In the course of my efforts to teach His gospel, I have come to know Him, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father. I stand in reverence before Him with deep regard for what He taught, and with deep regard for how He taught. It is not untoward for any of us to aspire to teach as He taught. It is not untoward for any of us to aspire to be like Him. He was not just a teacher; He was the master teacher.”

As I have observed classrooms of religious instruction over the years, I have seen many methodologies that can help lead to greater understanding. Although group work and pair-and-share activities are fantastic means-to-end activities, they are not the only effective activities. A simple question to ask is, “What will be the most effective way of helping my students understand [remembering the Lord’s definition of understand] the divine truth that the Lord would have them learn?” Other activities that give students the opportunity to act rather than to be acted upon include writing, studying, participating in class discussions, exploring case studies, and role-playing. Although many of these activities, such as studying, pondering, and writing, are often done alone or at home, they can also be effective in helping students be converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ “while they are with us,” as President Eyring says.

**Writing.** Writing has been applauded by educators for years as a way of helping students better understand what they are taught. For the Lord, however, writing is even more than that. Elder Scott taught, “Knowledge carefully recorded is knowledge available in time of need. Spiritually sensitive information should be kept in a sacred place that communicates to the Lord how you treasure it. That practice enhances the likelihood of receiving further light.” Where does further light come from? From the Lord, through the Spirit.
In other words, the likelihood of gaining additional understanding can be enhanced through writing.

I once had a student who, after graduating, came back to visit our seminary class regularly before his mission. He would come in quietly and respectfully, sit in the back of the class by the window, and study, listen, share, and especially write. Curtis was well known and well liked by the other students in the school, but many of the incoming sophomores did not know him. On one occasion, a sophomore boy noticed how much Curtis was writing and asked him about it. I watched and listened as Curtis pointed to the quote by Elder Scott, as stated above, which was hanging on the wall, and said simply, “I have learned by doing that Elder Scott was right, and I need all the light I can get before I leave for my mission.” Not wanting that teaching moment to pass too quickly, I had Curtis share with the class why he was writing so much. He went on to explain his process of coming to understand the importance of writing. He said that he used to not write at all because he thought it was a bother. After reading that quote and being challenged by another student to put it to the test, he did. It didn’t take long, he said, for the Spirit to confirm to him that not only was the precept true but that many of the things he was learning about were true as well. He found that the more he wrote, the more he learned, and the more he learned the more he wrote. He recognized the importance of what he was learning through this process. It was so important to him that he wanted to capitalize on it while he could before he left for his mission. After testifying of the principle, he offered a short and simple challenge to those in that classroom to put it to the test and confirm the promise of Elder Scott for themselves.

**Studying.** One of the best ways to help a student understand the principles of the gospel is to give them time in class to actually study the scriptures. So little quiet time is given in class for study. It is true that such study can be done at home, and I have heard many say that you should only do in class what you cannot do at home. However, I once heard a teacher tell his students as they were leaving the classroom, “There is nothing we did today that you cannot do at home.” While students can study at home, many have not been trained how to do so effectively. Although the home is the ideal training ground for scripture study, our classes of religious education can be ripe training grounds as well. Part of the effectiveness of this type of learning experience comes in recognizing who causes true understanding to occur. A teacher who believes that this type of activity is a waste of time and that the students have come
only to hear the teacher lecture should take the time to remember who the Teacher really is.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland admonished us, “Encourage your students to . . . read more slowly and more carefully and with more questions in mind. Help them to ponder, to examine every word, every scriptural gem. Teach them to hold it up to the light and turn it, look and see what’s reflected and refracted there.”11 The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “The things of God are of deep import[ance]; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out.”12

Give your students time to ponder in class. Allow them time to think. We talk so much about what they should do in order to get revelation, but rarely do they have a chance to practice it. It is true that often there is such little time to get through all of the material that needs to be covered that day, but what is our real goal? Elder Scott reminded us: “Remember, your highest priority is not to get through all the material if that means that it cannot be properly absorbed. Do what you are able to do with understanding. Determine, according to the individual capabilities and needs of your students, what is of highest priority. If a key principle is understood, internalized, and made part of the students’ guidebooks for life, then the most important objective has been accomplished.”13

One of my favorite quotes I use to train my students in their scripture study comes from Elder Scott. He advised, “As you seek spiritual knowledge, search for principles. Carefully separate them from the detail used to explain them. Principles are concentrated truth, packaged for application to a wide variety of circumstances. A true principle makes decisions clear even under the most confusing and compelling circumstances. It is worth great effort to organize the truth we gather to simple statements of principle.”14

I once observed CES couple missionaries being trained before leaving for their various assignments throughout the world. The excitement in the room was contagious as these couple missionaries, who were highly experienced with the gospel, took on a completely new way of studying their scriptures. Rather than just reading aloud with each other for fifteen minutes as they were accustomed to doing or just reading through the scriptures to finish a chapter, they were now specifically searching for principles. As the principles were discussed in a group, one man, excited and refreshed, stated, “I’ve been studying this book my entire life, and it has never meant so much to me and applied to my life so much as it does right now!” He, at a late stage in his life,
was doing for the first time what the Brethren have asked us to teach our students to do in their early teenage years.

Our students live in a go-go, me-me world. They are entertained to the max with the most modern media. Too often I have observed teachers trying to mimic this kind of entertainment. When teachers become entertainers, very little understanding takes place. As the moon can block the sunlight in a solar eclipse, so teachers can get between the Spirit and the students. I believe that our students are craving and hungering for the things of the Spirit. They want time in class to read, study, and ponder. One seminary teacher shared with me an experience that he had in having his students read a talk by one of the Brethren. He gave them fifteen minutes of silent time to read the talk, which addressed the principles they were studying in the scriptures that day. When the teacher asked if the students were ready to move on, they responded that they were not; they wanted more quiet time to read and study. They continued for more than half an hour. The teacher told me that they could have gone on for much longer, but he wanted some time to distill what they were learning. Some of the insights, personal likening, and questions that came as a result of that study time were far beyond any entertainment he could have provided. Note that this type of learning usually requires the teacher to give the students some type of training on how to study. This does require extremely mature students, but I have come to realize more and more that student maturity in the classroom is often (although not always) a direct reflection of the teacher’s expectation of them.

Prayer: Doctrine and Covenants 68:28 says, “Teach [them] to pray, and to walk uprightly before the Lord.” How can we teach our students to pray? Aren’t most of them members of the Church? Haven’t they been taught how to pray by their parents and Sunday School teachers? How can we help them to pray? We can talk with them about their prayers. We can help them in their prayers through training. We can invite them to think about what they are saying in their prayers. We can teach them to really think before they pray. What was the Lord getting at when he asked us to teach them to pray?

I remember on one occasion telling my class of early-morning seminary students that I had heard them pray so many times to be blessed as they crossed the street that I did not want to hear it anymore—that instead they should be praying that those across the street at the high school should feel inspired to come to the building. The next morning the mother of one of the students was crossing the street, got hit by a car, and had to be taken to the
hospital in an ambulance. I no longer tell my students specifically what to and what not to pray for. Instead, we learn together the principles associated with prayer. We study scriptures on prayer, look at how prophets have prayed, and read the counsel and advice they give. As we determine whom we pray to, why we pray, and in whose name we pray, we not only improve the sincerity of the prayers in class, but I hope we improve the prayers of the students in private as well. Helping students understand the principles of prayer and inviting them to apply these principles in their lives will increase their ability to learn from the Spirit as they study the scriptures and even as they pray.

Class discussion. Helping students testify, talk, explain, and share allows them to practice acting on promptings, thus allowing the Holy Spirit to work in them. Elder Scott stated:

> Their decision to participate is an exercise in agency that permits the Holy Ghost to communicate a personalized message suited to their individual needs. Creating an atmosphere of participation enhances the probability that the Spirit will teach more important lessons than you can communicate.

> That participation will bring into their lives the direction of the Spirit. . . . Participation allows individuals to experience being led by the Spirit. They learn to recognize and feel what spiritual guidance is.16

Again, as President Packer states, “A testimony is gained in the bearing of it.” Although raising hands or explaining principles may not be considered actions relevant to whichever principle is being taught, participation is a part of the pattern of receiving revelation. They are therefore engaged in the process of receiving revelation.

I have heard many teachers describe the difficulties of class discussions, saying things like, “I don’t have time in my class to get through all of the material if my students talk,” or, “I feel like when I allow class discussion, I lose control of the class.” Some teachers, not familiar with the doctrine, are concerned that they may not have answers to students’ questions. Other teachers feel that the students are to learn from the teacher and not from other students. Still others have shared frustration that the more outgoing students take up too much time. Rather than spending time discussing each of these concerns, I would simply suggest that perhaps teachers could spend more time trying to make class discussion work. If Elder Scott says that no class should be taught without some type of participation and that this enhances the Spirit, perhaps we should try to figure out how to do so more effectively.
Training students to use the words of the prophets is a great way to help them become mature gospel learners, and it helps them to see that gospel principles are not the teacher’s ideas, but that they come directly from the Lord. For example, the Doctrine and Covenants teaches that when all have spoken, all may be edified of all. This does not say, *when those who like to talk have spoken*, or *when those who have something important to say*; it says, “when *all* have spoken” (D&C 88:122; emphasis added). During my first week of teaching a class of eighty-plus students, I noticed that as we discussed significant principles in the first few chapters of the Book of Mormon, I was getting answers from the same students. After discussing this verse, I told the class that I was going to start calling on students who we had not heard from yet. I also told them that if they really did not want to share, all they needed to do was say “pass.” Easy. Next, I gave the class a moment to think of the important principles we had discussed. All of the students quickly prepared to share a comment about the principle of greatest value to them. Then I called on the quietest, shiest-looking student in the class. She spoke quietly, nervously, and methodically as she shared a principle she had identified about receiving personal revelation and testified of its value in her life. Her shaky voice caught the attention of the class, and as she finished, a number of the students commented on what a great principle she had shared. Rather than discussing the principle further, the class instead discussed the importance of each person in the class, how much their comments meant to each other, and how the Spirit can work through classmates for the benefit of others in the class.

On one occasion, I had a seminary student who was frustrated, stating during a lesson that nothing he said to the class seemed to be very important and that he would rather hear from me than the other students. Before I could jump in and defend the class, another student, a freshman boy, raised his hand. As I called on him, he flipped through his journal and read several comments that the first young man had made in class. Then he told the other young man that he had written those comments down because they were important to him. The other class members were shocked by this young freshman boy and were curious to know if he had written anything down about them. I do not know if he had written down comments from everyone, but as he continued to read statements and coinciding names, the students’ realization of their importance to each other raised significantly. It was a tender mercy of the Lord.
In determining the methodology that will lead to the desired outcome, it is crucial to remember that each teacher, each classroom of students, and each student is unique. Elder Scott stated:

I am convinced that there is no simple formula or technique that I could give you or that you could give your students that would immediately facilitate mastering the ability to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Nor do I believe that the Lord will ever allow someone to conceive a pattern that would invariably and immediately open the channels of spiritual communication. We grow when we labor to recognize the guidance of the Holy Ghost as we struggle to communicate our needs to our Father in Heaven in moments of dire need or overflowing gratitude. Each time we do that we are taking another step in fulfilling the purpose of our being here on earth.17

Just as there is no formula or technique that will produce the ability to be guided by the Holy Ghost, I also believe that there is no simple formula or technique that will produce understanding and conversion. This requires diligence, desire, experimentation, and prayer on the part of the teacher as well as the student.

**Responsibility of the Teacher**

President Eyring stated, “It is wise to fear that our own skills are inadequate to meet the charge we have to nourish the faith of others. Our own abilities, however great, will not be enough. But that realistic view of our limitations creates a humility which can lead to dependence on the Spirit and thus to power.”18

As teachers, we must do all we can to know, understand, and live the principles of the gospel. This includes everything from personal worthiness to genuinely loving the Lord and our students, to teaching with an eye single to the glory of God, to studying and knowing the doctrines of the kingdom of God, to improving our methodology in the classroom. All help to create an environment in the classroom and in ourselves that allows the Spirit to teach. The importance and the responsibility of the teacher to be spiritually, mentally, and physically prepared cannot be underestimated in assessing the effectiveness of a teacher.

One professor I spoke with made the following comment about this understanding:

The sobering part is the thought that I can be filled with knowledge as a teacher and it can just be dripping out of my eyeballs in terms of how much I know, and though I can dispense it left and right, understanding may not take place because my heart is wrong, or mean-spirited, or I’m judgmental, or I’m haughty. That’s the sobering part from the teacher’s perspective. Though God has blessed me with great insight,
if my life is not in order, the spiritual part of understanding may not take place in the students' lives. If they do not feel and perceive something in the classroom, they will not likely want to go home and do something so simple, but so real themselves.

I have noted that even the amount of sleep I get as a teacher has direct influence on the classroom environment and my ability to help students understand. It really is often the small and simple things that make all the difference in our abilities to help our students become converted.

President Harold B. Lee stated, “If you want to be an effective teacher of the gospel, you have to live the principles that you propose to teach. The more perfectly you live the gospel, the more perfectly you will be able to teach the gospel.”19

Living the gospel includes living the principles of teaching, as Christ himself so beautifully demonstrated. Christ taught us much about the role of a teacher through his example. He is the perfect example of allowing his students to do as much as they can do. When teaching the people of Nephi after he came to the Americas, Christ taught the children, and then “he did loose their tongues, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, even greater than he had revealed unto the people” (3 Nephi 26:14). After raising Lazarus from the tomb, Christ himself could have loosed his burial clothes, but instead, he gave the opportunity to others, saying, “Loose him, and let him go” (John 11:44). Imagine the blessing that this opportunity to act could have been for that person. Christ could do for us all of those things we do in teaching, leading, and acting in the Church, but instead he has delegated that authority to us. Christ could do it better than any of us; he knows more than all of us, he is more skilled, and it would take less time, but I believe that there is something about him letting us do it that increases our learning and understanding and leads us back to him.

How We View Our Students

John S. Tanner, BYU academic vice president, stated that we as teachers need to “focus less on what we teach and more on what they learn.” He continued, “This can be a difficult paradigm shift for those of us who sometimes indulge exclusively in the ‘sage-on-the-stage’ model of teaching. It is, however, a paradigm shift that for more than a decade has radically altered the landscape of higher education.”20

To effectively help the students understand their role as learners requires the teachers to understand something about their students. They must know
who their students are and they must expect from their students as much as
the Lord does. They must strive to see their students as the Lord does.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr. taught: “Our youth are not children spiritu-
ally; they are well on towards the normal spiritual maturity of the world. To
treat them as children spiritually, as the world might treat the same age group,
is therefore and likewise an anachronism. . . . There is no need for gradual
approaches, for ‘bed-time’ stories, for coddling, for patronizing, or for any of
the other childish devises used in efforts to reach those spiritually inexperi-
enced and all but spiritually dead.”21

President Eyring similarly taught: “One of the dangers of the times we
are passing into is that we might be tempted to lower our expectations for
ourselves and for those young people we serve. As the world darkens, even a
partial conversion and a few spiritual experiences may seem more and more
remarkable, compared to the world. We might be tempted to expect less. The
Lord has given another signal, clear and powerful. It is that we can expect
more, not less, of youth. . . . It begins with expectations, yours and theirs.”22

We as teachers must view our students with an eye single to the glory
of God. President Eyring teaches us that our students have seen visions, that
they are special for a reason. How does knowing that our students are see-
ing visions, that they are having spiritual experiences, shape the way in which
we teach the gospel? Rather than asking, for example, “Does anyone have an
example to share?” the question could be formatted, “Who here has an exam-
ple or an experience to share?” We have to trust that what President Eyring
said about them is really happening.

**Responsibility of the Student**

Nephi teaches us, as Elder Bednar so carefully instructed:

> “When a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost the power of the Holy Ghost
> carrieth [the message] unto the hearts of the children of men” (2 Nephi 33:1). Please
> notice how the power of the Spirit carries the message *unto* but not necessarily *into*
> the heart. A teacher can explain, demonstrate, persuade, and testify, and do so with
great spiritual power and effectiveness. Ultimately, however, the content of a mes-
sage and the witness of the Holy Ghost penetrate into the heart only if the receiver
allows them to enter.”23

Part of our role as teachers is to help our students understand their role
as learners. They must know that no matter how much information we have,
no matter how skilled we are at teaching, it is still dependent on them to learn,
to be prepared and willing to allow the Spirit to take the knowledge of the gospel and give them understanding. The Spirit will take the gospel only unto their hearts; it is dependent on the students to get it into their hearts. They must have that desire; they must do as the Lord commands—be worthy, ponder, study, and pray—in order to create an environment within themselves for the Spirit to teach.

Joseph Fielding McConkie spoke expertly on this point:

The prophetic efforts of Joseph Smith did not center in sharing his spiritual experiences but rather in the effort to qualify us to have our own spiritual experiences. The emphasis of his ministry was not on what he had seen but on what we could see. . . . Critics of the Church have made a lot of fuss about the fact that we have so few contemporary accounts of the First Vision. But that rather makes the point. Joseph was talking more about what we could do than what he had done. We have a dozen revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants that invite us to see God. Joseph invited us to check him by having our own Sacred Grove experience. The validity of an experiment is if it can be repeated. A good seed not only bears good fruits but it always bears the same fruits—regardless of who plants it.24

We as teachers are to do what Joseph Smith and the prophets of old have done. We are to have spiritual experiences ourselves and then to help our students have such experiences as well. This desire to help our students have spiritual experiences is an admonition given to us by President Packer: “Teach your students to see with the eyes they possessed before they had a mortal body; teach them to hear with ears they possessed before they were born; teach them to push back the curtains of mortality and see into the eternities.”25

The Lord is the perfect mentor. He sees our imperfections and gives us tailor-made opportunities to grow. The Prophet Joseph Smith stated, “You have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves . . . the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you . . . are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power.”26

It is probable that God could have made us all gods, but some experiences and actions are necessary, no matter how much we understand. Christ himself knew cognitively about the Atonement, but not experientially. We learn through experience. It is one thing to be told to do something or to discuss action, but it is another thing to actually experience that action. The classroom is an ideal place for practice and instruction, where students can
gain knowledge and understanding and apply the principles of the gospel in their lives.

We are then, once again, teaching them to understand. We are teaching them to see, to hear, and to feel. We are teaching them, even as we are learning ourselves and are applying the principles of understanding, to reach out beyond this mortal world into the eternities. The process of gaining these experiences has been discussed throughout the scriptures and by modern-day prophets. It is vital to understand the desired outcome of this process and not just the actions themselves. We must know who our students are, trust that the Lord will fulfill his promises, recognize and act on the principles ourselves, and create an environment for these experiences to take place.

Elder Scott gave us our objective as well as ideas about how to fulfill this objective. He taught that a talking head is least effective; participation is crucial. Various prophets have taught us as teachers to help our students understand through experience. They have taught us the critical process involved in helping our students understand divine truth.

It is important that we know this, but it is perhaps equally important that our students know it. They must know what our desired outcome is and know that this desired outcome comes from prophets in scriptures and in latter days.

Blessing

Elder Scott asked each of us, “Will you pray for guidance in how to have truth sink deep into the minds and hearts of your students so as to be used throughout life? As you prayerfully seek ways to do that, I know that the Lord will guide you. The solution will vary for different individuals, but you will come to understand how to do it. Make your objective to help students understand, retain, and use divine truth. Keep that objective foremost in every aspect of your preparation and teaching.”27 As a teacher I have been greatly overwhelmed by the responsibility of teaching Heavenly Father’s children. I have feared and have recognized that my own skills are not enough. It is for this reason, along with many others, that I believe Elder Scott gave us the following apostolic blessing, for which I am grateful: “Humbly, I invoke a blessing upon each of you that as you do your best, the Lord can guide and strengthen your efforts to help each student understand and live the truths you teach.”28
Notes

5. Richard G. Scott, “To Learn and to Teach More Effectively,” address at BYU Campus Education Week, August 21, 2007.
7. Packer, Mine Errand from the Lord, 307; emphasis added.
8. Packer, Mine Errand from the Lord, 337.
16. Scott, “To Learn and to Teach More Effectively.”
17. Scott, “To Learn and to Teach More Effectively.”
The central tenet of multiple intelligences (MI) is that people have different types of intelligences. If educators utilize their students’ strongest intelligences, students will learn better.
Multiple Intelligences in the Gospel Classroom

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In a worldwide training broadcast, Elder W. Rolfe Kerr taught, “We cannot expect our students to learn all that we hope they will learn by just hearing a concept or principle one time. Multiple presentations, utilizing various approaches, often appealing to multiple senses, increase the likelihood of our students actually learning and internalizing the concepts we teach.”

Using variety and finding different ways to present material have long been established as valuable pedagogical practices. In 1920 Elder John A. Widtsoe observed that the temple ceremony utilizes several different teaching approaches:

The wonderful pedagogy of the temple service, especially appealing to me as a professional teacher, carries with it evidence of the truth of temple work. We go to the temple to be informed and directed, to be built up and to be blessed. How is all this accomplished? First by the spoken word, through lectures and conversations, just as we do in the class room, except with more elaborate care, then by the appeal to the eye by representations by living, moving beings; and by pictorial representations. . . . Meanwhile, the recipients themselves, the candidates for blessings, engage actively in the temple service as they move from room to room, with the progress of the course of instruction. Altogether our temple worship follows a most excellent
Educational research has also shown that tapping into multiple senses is more than just a good idea. Using multiple means of presentation increases the likelihood that students will be able to learn in ways that are meaningful to them. In fact, people may have different types of intelligences, and pedagogical approaches that appeal to their intelligence will allow them to learn better. Dr. Howard Gardner, a professor of education at Harvard University, propounded the theory of multiple intelligences (MI), which describes specific intelligences, or ways that students learn. This paper addresses how religious educators can use MI in their classrooms to increase student learning. I will first explain the basic concept of MI and then examine different ways the theory could be applied in the classroom.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences

The central tenet of MI is that people have different types of intelligences. If educators utilize their students’ strongest intelligences, students will learn better. This theory has important implications for the way the mind and brain work as well as the way in which people frame their learning. By understanding the different intelligences, religious educators can use a variety of intelligences and also personalize their pedagogy for individual students. Gardner has identified the following intelligences:

“Linguistic intelligence involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals.”

“Logical-mathematical intelligence involves the capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically.”

“Musical intelligence entails skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns.”

“Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence entails the potential of using one’s whole body or parts of the body (like the hand or the mouth) to solve problems or fashion products.”

“Spatial intelligence features the potential to recognize and manipulate the patterns of wide space (those used, for instance, by navigators and pilots) as well as the patterns of more confined areas (such as those of importance to sculptors, surgeons, chess players, graphic artists, or architects).”
“Interpersonal intelligence” denotes a person’s capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people and, consequently, to work effectively with others.8

“Intrapersonal intelligence” involves the capacity to understand oneself, to have an effective working model of oneself—including one’s own desires, fears, and capacities—and to use such information effectively in regulating one’s own life.”9

Naturalist intelligence includes abilities within the natural world, such as classifying various species or working well with animals.10

Each individual may have a unique blend of these intelligences. The purpose of the MI is not to label students as “linguistically smart” or “interpersonally challenged”; rather, the theory can help teachers recognize that there are multiple ways of learning. When teachers utilize a variety of approaches, they will be more successful in helping their students learn and become converted.

Using Multiple Intelligences as Entry Points

Using a variety of intelligences can be challenging when teaching the scriptures. Because much of scripture study is a literary activity involving the written word, the use of linguistic methods tends to dominate classroom pedagogy. A simple way that teachers can apply MI is to use a variety of intelligences as entry points into the lesson material. For example, if a teacher was going to teach Daniel 1, the following entry points could be used. Although each of the following ideas involve linguistic intelligence, notice how they also involve a different intelligence, which can help spark a student’s ability to pay attention and relate to the material being studied.

Linguistic intelligence. Students write a case study in which they show how people in modern society could be in situations in which they are pressured to break the Word of Wisdom. They then silently read Daniel 1:8–16 to see how Daniel refused to partake of harmful substances.

Logical-mathematical intelligence. The teacher writes the following statements on the board: “Resist peer pressure.” “Blessed for obedience.” “Make a personal commitment to obey.” Students are invited to put these statements in the order that seems most logical to them. Read Daniel 1:8–16 and look for the order in which these elements appear in Daniel’s experience.

Musical intelligence. Students sing the hymn “In Our Lovely Deseret” and then read Daniel 1:8 to look for how this verse could relate to the hymn that was just sung.
Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. Students are each given a handful of “pulse” to eat (Daniel 1:12). They then read Daniel 1:15 and look for what happened to those who ate pulse.

Spatial intelligence. As the teacher slowly reads Daniel 1:8–16 out loud, students draw a picture that describes the story being read. After reading the verses, the teacher shows the picture of Daniel 1 from the Gospel Art Picture Kit and asks students to compare it to how they depicted the story.

Interpersonal intelligence. Students are put into small groups and asked to come up with a role-play situation in which two people are pressuring another person to violate the Word of Wisdom. After one or two groups perform, read Daniel 1:8 and look for how Daniel avoided peer pressure.

Intrapersonal intelligence. Ask students to ponder a time in which they have refused to give in to peer pressure. Have students mark the phrase “purposed in his heart” (Daniel 1:8) and invite them to think about decisions that they have purposed in their hearts.

Natural intelligence. Ask students what they have observed when animals eat different types of food. Are some types of food better for animals than others? Use the experience they have had with animals as a springboard to explain why Daniel refused to eat certain kinds of food.

Even though each of these activities will lead into the use of the linguistic intelligence, utilizing different intelligences as entry points could invigorate students’ ability to engage in the material being taught. Similar examples could be given for any block of scripture. Many teachers have found that creating entry points based on the different intelligences stimulates their creativity and often leads them to methodologies that they would have otherwise not considered.

Using Multiple Intelligences throughout a Semester

Another way teachers can apply MI in a classroom is to keep track of which intelligences they use in individual lessons. Though teachers will probably not utilize all nine intelligences in each lesson, ideally they could draw on two or three. By keeping a record of which intelligences they use each day, educators can measure whether there are some intelligences they are neglecting and make necessary adjustments.

If teachers consistently draw on a particular intelligence in their teaching, they may be focusing on their strongest intelligence. For example, one teacher reported that every time he planned a lesson, nearly all of his ideas for lesson activities were linguistically based. He wanted the students to write a case
study, to respond to questions, and to read various texts. This is the way he likes to learn. Understanding MI has helped him try not to overprivilege his strongest intelligence. Because he recognized that his preferred learning style may not be his students’, he was able to set aside some of his linguistic lesson ideas and think about how the same concepts could be taught in ways that appeal to other intelligences.

Some teachers have found that using a chart is helpful in keeping track of the intelligences and specific techniques that they utilize. Such a chart might look like the one below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic</th>
<th>Times used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewrite a verse in your own words.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create rhyming phrases to help remember key scriptures or concepts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give a brief talk on a scriptural topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use a scriptural story to write a response to a “Dear Abby”-style question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarize a scripture story in a sentence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical-mathematical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn a verse into an “if-then” statement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place verses into categories (In which verses is Nephi sad? In which does he rejoice?).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a numbered list of commandments given or blessings received from a specific scripture block.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a time line to organize events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to a song that relates to the scripture block.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put a verse to the music of a hymn and sing it together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select a hymn that connects with the topic of the scripture block.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect a modern song with what is being taught in the scriptures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodily-kinesthetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do a physical performance that connects to the block (e.g., braid a rope in John 2).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perform charades to illustrate a principle from the scriptures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use finger gestures to learn (e.g., the Ten Commandments can be learned using finger motions).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clap when a certain word is repeated in the scripture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical action as a readiness (e.g., thumb wrestle your neighbor, talk about thumb war strategy, turn to Alma 48).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Awareness that students have different intelligences can encourage a broadening of the lesson activities used in class. As teachers recognize their students’ favored ways of learning, teachers will be better able to provide their students with the instruction they need.

### Using Multiple Intelligences to Allow Students to Choose

Part of the educational power of MI is that it helps teachers recognize that students may have diverse ways of learning and that teachers can greatly facilitate the students’ learning by providing opportunities for students to utilize the intelligences with which they feel most comfortable.

When possible, teachers may want to provide students with a variety of options to choose from in completing assignments that will allow them to tap into the intelligence of their choice. For example, one teacher created a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spatial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draw or examine maps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show a short video clip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare paintings of scripture with the actual account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw what you see in the scriptures (e.g., what would it look like to “shake at the very appearance of sin”?).</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role-play (e.g., missionary-investigator, active friend–less-active friend, leader-youth, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorm as a group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share scripture insights with a partner.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Intrapersonal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ponder an experience that you have had that relates to the scripture block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set a personal goal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give students a choice of which activity they prefer to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Think about what in the class today was most meaningful to you personally.</td>
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<th>Natural</th>
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<tr>
<td>Create nature-based analogies (e.g., what is something in nature that could be likened to repentance?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick an animal that you think best represents something from the scripture block (e.g., a scriptural character).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain how things in nature could testify of Christ.</td>
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</table>
final project assignment for his seminary students to complete. This assignment could take several different forms—a research paper, a collage, a musical number, or any significant project that was meaningful to the student. This project also had to be high quality and was graded on how likely it was that the student would keep and use it in his or her daily life.

Because students were given flexibility in the type of project they did, they had the opportunity to learn in a way which was most powerful for them. Some students who would have struggled to write a report composed beautiful visual or musical pieces, creating something through an intelligence that was more meaningful to them. This same method of providing choices could be used in smaller projects as well.

Conclusion

The *Teaching the Gospel* handbook states, “Part of human nature is the desire for variety and change. When students complain about classes being boring, part of what they often mean is sameness. Even a persuasive teaching technique may become boring if overused.”11

MI can help teachers use more variety in their classroom by using it as framework of how to teach in different ways. This can be done using the different intelligences as entry points and throughout the semester. Perhaps even more significantly, the use of MI theory can help students utilize ways of learning that are personally meaningful, and thereby increase the benefit they gain from the classroom experience. 

Notes

5. Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed*, 42.
Paulo Renato Grahl is the Church Educational System (CES) area director and a counselor in the São Paulo Brazil Missionary Training Center presidency.
The Church in Brazil: An Interview with CES Director Paulo Grahl

Paulo Renato Grahl (grahlpr@lds.org) is a Church Educational System (CES) area director and a counselor in the São Paulo Brazil Missionary Training Center presidency.

Roydon Olsen (olsenroydon@yahoo.com) is an instructor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at BYU.

The Church reached the million-member milestone first in the United States, followed by Mexico, and then Brazil. Church growth in Brazil has been particularly astounding, and the national media report it to be the fastest-growing religion there. The first stake organized in South America was the São Paulo Brazil Stake, located in the same city as the first modern-day temple to be built on the continent.

In order to gain a more global perspective of the value, need, and adaptations of CES programs in different parts of the world, we visited with CES area director Paulo Grahl in São Paulo and talked about the impact of the programs in Brazil. Brother Grahl holds a BA in English and Portuguese from the University of the Sinos Valley (Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos) in São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. He learned English on his mission, and it became a lifelong study. He taught English at various prestigious institutions and later received an MBA from the National Institute of Post-Graduate Studies in São Paulo, Brazil.

Brother Grahl’s journey of service began with a call at age seventeen to be a construction missionary from 1965 to 1967. At that time most Brazilian young men were called as building missionaries because all meetinghouses in Latin
America were built with the help of such missionaries, along with local members and proselyting missionaries. Brother Grahl worked on meetinghouses in Pelotas and Uruguaiana, both cities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Not long after this, he was called as a counselor in the Brazil Porto Alegre Mission presidency (1973–78), where he served under three presidents.

He returned to his roots in December of 1978 as president of the Novo Hamburgo Brazil Stake, where he served until 1982. The stake was unique because of the many communities it served that were settled by German and Italian immigrants. In 1988 the call came for him to preside over the Brazil Brasilia Mission, which covered a vast area, including the Amazon Basin, where shortly before Brother Grahl’s release the Brazil Manaus Mission was organized as part of the Brasília Mission. He then served as an Area Seventy from 1995 to 2007, four years of which were spent as second counselor in the Brazil Area Presidency under Presidents Neil L. Andersen and Mervyn B. Arnold.

**Olsen:** Could you comment on the importance of the seminary and institute programs in helping the youth in Brazil?

**Grahl:** There is no question about the vital importance of the seminary and institute programs of the Church. They help to strengthen the youth of Zion and better prepare them as missionaries, parents, leaders, and citizens of the nation.

For our youth to stand firm and strong in a world where the influence of evil is growing at an astonishing rate, they need clear, inspired, and qualified teaching. They need to learn how to identify key principles and doctrines as they study the scriptures and to be able to explain them, share them, testify of them, and apply them in their lives. This is the broad scope of our training and the essence of what we call the Teaching and Learning Emphasis, which comprises a set of principles that establish a common ground for all those involved in seminary and institute teaching, regardless of geography, language, or culture.

To provide you with a general picture of our situation, young people everywhere seem to love to go to seminary and institute. In most cases in international areas, the institute program is the only organized and structured vehicle where young adults, single or married, can participate and associate with each other in a lofty, edifying environment. In countries such as Brazil, we have, over the past few years, seen significant growth in the participation
of young adults in the institute program. I believe that to be the case in all Latin American countries, as well as in other parts of the world.

The Brethren have challenged us to increase the exposure and impact of seminary and institute programs in the lives of our young people. We are to do that by working very closely with leaders, parents, and teachers and by providing effective training to all involved.

Some of the challenges we face in international areas are that:

- Most of the seminary and institute teaching is done by a host of wonderful volunteers throughout the worldwide Church, but volunteer teacher turnover becomes a matter of constant reworking for those who are charged with teacher training.
- There is growing concern among parents and leaders about security, and they are sometimes reluctant to let their children go to seminary or institute classes in the early morning or in the evening.
- Financial circumstances sometimes represent a challenge to students attending class on a regular basis.
- Young adults are usually very busy with school and work, and some of them have a hard time finding a place for seminary or institute on their calendars.
- A large number of our youth have parents who are neither members nor attenders of the Church. This poses a challenge to young people in terms of regular attendance and of encouragement and support from home.

But these and other challenges only make our task so much more exciting. I sincerely believe that, as was the case with Nephi, the Lord will continue to prepare a way for the seminaries and institutes to fulfill their sacred role of helping our youth come unto Christ through “feasting upon the word” (2 Nephi 31:20).

**Olsen:** How did you become employed in the Church Educational System?

**Grahl:** In February of 1973, I accepted an invitation through David A. Christensen, who had started the seminary and institute program in Brazil in 1971, to give up my career as an English teacher and to work for the Church Educational System. I began working as a coordinator in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul. I later served as an institute director on three different occasions in Porto Alegre. At the beginning of 1983, I was invited to be the area director for the Europe West and South Area, comprising Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, and the French-speaking parts of Belgium and Switzerland; I replaced Christian Euvrard, who had been called as a mission president to Italy. I currently serve as the director for the Brazil Area, which has recently been part of a consolidation of the former Brazil North and Brazil South Areas.
Olsen: Both your early service in Brazil and this move to Europe were pioneering efforts. Could you share some of your experiences serving in the trenches?

Grahl: Before my arrival, the implementation of the early-morning seminary program had already been started, especially in Spain and Portugal, with the great work done by devoted coordinators under the direction of Jim Stevens, Cory Bangerter, and Christian Euvrard. Having had a great experience with early-morning seminary in Brazil, soon after my arrival in Europe I realized that the youth were ready for the challenge of daily participation in seminary, so that became one of our top priorities. With the support of leaders and parents and the hard work of coordinators and volunteer teachers, the program was expanded and was eventually established in all of the countries in our area.

Olsen: What were some of the challenges of cultural adaptation you faced?

Grahl: Although the former area director had lived in Paris, France, we chose to settle in Madrid, Spain, because we thought it would be easier to learn the language since we had some exposure to Spanish before. At first my family had to struggle with the differences in terms of culture, food, climate, and language. But with time we were able to cope with the challenges and to make many new friends and serve the Lord in various assignments in the Church in Madrid. We learned to love and appreciate the people and the fascinating history of those great Latin cultures. We saw faith and devotion among the Saints in those lands. We saw wonderful miracles among the members as they left their ancient religious traditions in order to embrace the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and to join his true and living Church. We saw the new generations going through experiences with the scriptures in seminary and institute, changing their own lives, and rising to higher standards of living. We saw the devotion of leaders, teachers, and coordinators who worked together for the common good and the happiness of our youth. It was marvelous to see how the true doctrines and principles of the gospel are able to influence the lives of people everywhere in the world, regardless of nationality, culture, or traditions.

Olsen: What were some of the day-to-day struggles you faced as you implemented the various CES programs in Europe?

Grahl: The youth were ready for the challenges of participating in the daily seminary program, even when it was held in the early morning hours. The greater challenge usually lay with leaders and parents who were not always
willing to pay the price and to sacrifice in order to make things happen. That was the reality in Europe: everywhere I went I could see the readiness and joy of the students, along with the loving care and dedicated service of teachers. With time and concentrated effort, we saw the daily seminary program become an important tool and benefit in the eyes of students, parents, and leaders alike.

**Olsen:** How did this experience help you later in your homeland?

**Grahl:** Those three years in Europe were very important for me to more clearly see the powerful effects of the gospel in the lives of people and how much it can change lives and behavior, especially in the young people. As I returned to Brazil, I felt I had gained more experience and maturity and was able to make a more meaningful contribution in my new assignments in my homeland. Two years after our return, I was called as a mission president, and then I could see the great effects of seminary and institute in the lives of the missionaries and how helpful the knowledge of the holy scriptures was in their increasing ability to teach people and to bring souls to Christ.

**Olsen:** What progress and benefits have you observed as a result of implementing CES programs in the areas where you have worked?

**Grahl:** I believe I have observed greater preparation of these young people to become more effective missionaries, parents, leaders, and citizens. Having served in various leadership positions and having participated in the calling and training of numerous new bishops and stake presidents, I could see the great effects of those seminary and institute years in the lives and service of those who had experience in CES programs. They were men of greater spirituality, devotion, preparedness, vision, and willingness to magnify their callings. This is especially important in Latin America because, in many cases, those called as bishops are between twenty-five and thirty years of age, and a good number of stake presidents are called who are not yet in their forties.

Seminary and institute programs also play an important role in helping parents cope with the challenge of raising their children in the pathway of virtue and righteousness. It is also a means to help leaders in their challenging task of orienting the youth in the strait and narrow path of the gospel.

**Olsen:** Let’s talk about international students from your area who come to the United States. What suggestions do you have for North American religion teachers who instruct an ever-increasing number of international students? How can they become acquainted with and try to understand the culture of each one of these students?
Grahl: This is certainly an important issue, and we must do all that can be done. Teachers need to realize that even within Latin America, each country has significant cultural differences and customs, different things they can relate with.

One important contribution would be for teachers to always encourage students to go back to their countries of origin after finishing their studies and to help their own people and the Church to grow, using the skills and training they have received. There is so great a need for leaders who have excelled in different careers and who can represent the Church in all segments of society in addition to helping the Church to be stronger through their dedicated service in various callings and responsibilities. The Prophet Joseph Smith had the vision that the Church would fill North and South America, and it is coming true. These new generations of leaders are the ones in whom the Lord will trust to make his work move forward with power and glory.

Olsen: We have talked about those who come here to study at BYU. How can BYU professors better train students from the U.S. culture who are called to foreign missions?

Grahl: The *Preach My Gospel* handbook has come through the inspiration of prophets, apostles, and other inspired leaders. It has become a powerful and effective tool in the training of missionaries, so that they may (1) understand the purpose of missionary work; (2) have a deeper comprehension of the fundamental doctrine and principles of the restored gospel; (3) learn how to find and teach by the Spirit; (4) learn how to help people receive the basic ordinances of salvation; (5) learn how to better organize and use their time; (6) learn how to work more effectively with leaders and members; and (7) develop other skills and abilities that make for a successful missionary.

I now have the privilege of serving in the São Paulo MTC, and it is wonderful to see the great benefits in the lives of the missionaries that come as a result of studying the *Preach My Gospel* handbook and to see how prepared they are as they leave for the field.

The institute missionary preparation course has recently been rewritten and totally adapted to the *Preach My Gospel* handbook to help prospective missionaries have a better grasp of the new approach, even before they enter the MTC. I believe it would be wonderful if BYU professors could somehow look for ways to emphasize the principles and contents of this great volume.

Olsen: Let’s speak specifically of Brazil. Are there basic things about the culture we should be more aware of as we prepare missionaries to serve in your land?
Grahl: Brazilians are, by nature, very friendly, warm, and tenderhearted. This is evidenced by the use of the diminutive endings of endearment—*inho* and *inha*—in most of the nouns in conversation. They are diminutive endings that express tenderness and affection. Brazilians like to greet those of the opposite sex and who are friends or relatives by hugging and kissing their cheeks. It is interesting that when communicating by telephone, email, or other means, the caller or sender will usually end by saying or writing *um abraço* ("a hug") or *um beijo* ("a kiss"). Knowing about these and other cultural features may be helpful for those preparing to come to Brazil. Although missionaries are not allowed to embrace or kiss people of the opposite sex, it is important that they become familiar with the culture so that they can more readily adjust. All of this may be quite true about other countries in Latin America as well.

Olsen: Of course, exposure to the history of the region and positive personal experiences of others and the like would be helpful for anyone coming into our culture. Do you have any thoughts about this?

Grahl: While living in Spain, I once told a missionary that I was from Brazil. He asked where that was and if it was close to Switzerland! I believe some preliminary notions of the geography, culture, and history of the country would help those called to serve in Brazil. They would be able to appreciate the experience much more and develop a greater appreciation for the people and the land before arriving in the field.

Also very helpful would be a grasp of the early beginnings of the Church in Brazil in a place called Ipomeia, in the state of Santa Catarina. Before World War II, missionaries were sent to that rural community from Buenos Aires, Argentina, at the request of a German sister who had been baptized in Germany and then moved to Brazil with her family. The reason for the move was that her husband hated the Church and all that had to do with it. He thought that moving to Brazil would separate his wife from the Saints forever. But somehow she found out that the Church was established in Buenos Aires, and she wrote the mission president there, who sent missionaries to Ipomeia. The antagonistic husband later began to secretly read the Book of Mormon and ended up requesting baptism. Because he was crippled and unable to walk, he was carried into the river that ran by the meetinghouse built by the members. The records say that he walked out of the river after baptism.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful for the missionaries going to the Brasilia Mission to know that Elder Ezra Taft Benson dedicated the land of Brazil for missionary work during a visit to the city of Brasilia?
Olsen: We have talked about pioneering efforts. What has your experience been with the Perpetual Education Fund? What has it done for Brazil, in your experience?

Grahl: The Perpetual Education Fund came to be through the prophetic vision of President Gordon B. Hinckley, who declared that education is the door to opportunity. Among other countries, he certainly had Brazil in mind when he expressed his deep concern about those who wished they could have access to education and training but did not have the means to afford it. There was great anguish in the heart of our dear prophet when he thought of the many returned missionaries who had to go back to the almost miserable life (in terms of economic status) that they had before entering the mission field. And then, when they came back home with lots of hope and plans, having had their lives transformed for the better during the mission experience, they would again face the sad and cruel reality of not being able to find a good job for the lack of skills and training. They were not able to go about the most important responsibility in life: getting married and raising a family in the gospel. They were not able to serve the Lord the way they had always taught their investigators and new converts to do. Many of them would become less active because of discouragement and depression.

The Perpetual Education Fund has come as a wonderful resource and relief to thousands and thousands of these wonderful young men and women, restoring self-confidence and hope, opening the doors to education and jobs, and providing a way for these children of God to remain in the pathway to eternal salvation. This has been the reality in Brazil in these past seven years since the implementation of the Perpetual Education Fund program. This has been the history of Brazil, where we currently have more than ten thousand students. The results are very positive: students who have graduated, 77 percent; students who are working, 73 percent; and students who have found better work, 75 percent.

Among the challenges we have faced is the repayment of loans, which is not at the level we would like it to be. But we have a strong team, composed of Church employees, volunteers, and local leaders who work hard and in great harmony in the search for answers to these difficulties. I strongly believe that this program will continue to grow and be a marvelous blessing in the lives of thousands more who will have the burning desire to reach higher levels of performance in life.
New Publications

To purchase any of the following publications, please visit www.byubookstore.com and search by book title or ISBN number or call the BYU Bookstore toll-free at 1-800-253-2578.

Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer
With presentations from the foremost educators and scholars, these messages provide fresh, current, and faith-ful perspectives and will give helpful context for the study of Joseph Smith's teachings. Each presenter is either on the Religious Education faculty at BYU or is part of the team preparing the landmark Joseph Smith Papers series. Each of the lectures focuses on the years from 1830–1844, providing an overview of the major events in Church history for that year and then discussing a major doctrinal or historical topic tied to that time period. This exciting and thorough treatment will lift people's understanding of the Prophet Joseph and the gospel to new heights.


Joseph and Hyrum—Leading as One
Joseph and Hyrum Smith exemplified leadership as they worked together organizing and operating the Church, teaching, speaking, and building temples and towns. As leaders, they held firm to their convictions, roused the hearts and minds of men and women in varied walks of life, and left legacies sufficient to stamp them as two of the most remarkable and influential men of the nineteenth century. Their stories and examples of shared leadership illustrate how they honored agency and exerted righteous influence, grew through adversity, forged bonds of obligation and love, governed conflict, and organized through councils. These principles can help us create more edifying leadership in our homes, our Church service, and our professional lives.
In Harm’s Way:  
East German Latter-day Saints during World War II

These are the compelling accounts of thousands of members of the Church in East Germany who found themselves in a precarious situation during World War II. They were compelled to live under the tyranny of Nazi Germany and participate in offensive and defensive military actions. The story of how they lived and died under those conditions has never before been told. This volume brings together the accounts of hundreds of Church members who survived the war—preserved in hundreds of personal interviews, journals, letters, and photographs. Their stories of joy and suffering are presented in this book against the background of the rise and collapse of the Third Reich. Readers will be amazed at the faith and dedication demonstrated by these Saints, young and old, military and civilian.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2746-0, Retail: $29.95

The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament:  
The 38th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium

We cannot be true students of the Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants without also being students of the Old Testament, for Jesus declared that the Old Testament scriptures “are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Often students of the gospel fail to see the Old Testament as a witness of Christ and his gospel. Yet this book of scripture serves as the First Testament of Jesus Christ. The frequent quotations and allusions to the Old Testament by later scripture writers in the New Testament and Book of Mormon certainly demonstrate its applicability to their understanding of the gospel and the plan of our Heavenly Father.

John Taylor: The Champion of Liberty

This book, *John Taylor: Champion of Liberty*, is a compilation of selected presentations from the annual BYU Church History Symposium, hosted by BYU Religious Education. The purpose of this book is to remember the great legacy of John Taylor. The Prophet Joseph Smith told John Taylor, “Elder Taylor you have received the Holy Spirit and if you heed promptings of the same it will become within you a Fountain of Continuous Revelation from God.” President Taylor’s words, as presented in this volume, will become a continuous fountain of revelation for its readers. On the flyleaf of the *Improvement Era*, John Taylor wrote, “What you young people want is a book that can be bound and kept with something in it worth keeping.” Certainly the essays about the life and teachings of John Taylor bound in this volume are worth keeping.

*ISBN: 978-0-8425-2736-1, Retail: $24.95*

Oliver Cowdery: Days Never to Be Forgotten

This book is a compilation of selected presentations from the annual BYU Church History Symposium hosted by BYU Religious Education. Oliver Cowdery was a primary character in the early days of the Church, both before and after its organization. The events he was involved with are significant to the history of the Church. This book explores his life and the many important roles he filled. He was the principal scribe for the Book of Mormon, and he witnessed the heavens opened and the gospel of Jesus Christ restored. As Oliver himself described, “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom!”

*ISBN: 978-0-8425-2742-2, Retail: $24.95*
Launched in 2000 by former dean Robert L. Millet, the Religious Educator serves the needs and interests of those who study and teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. In celebration of its tenth year, the editors have selected some of the outstanding contributions. Among the authors are Elder D. Todd Christofferson, Elder Jay E. Jensen, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, Richard E. Bennett, Thomas A. Wayment, and several others. This volume is highlighted with a number of color images.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2718-7, Retail: $11.95

The Religious Educator, a publication of BYU’s Religious Studies Center, is a place where Church leaders and teachers publish thoughtful essays for those who study and teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The editors of this compilation selected some of the outstanding contributions from past issues to celebrate the Religious Educator’s tenth year of publication. This volume features outstanding articles by Elder Robert D. Hales, Elder Richard G. Scott, Elder Tad R. Callister, J. R. Kearl, Brent L. Top, Kathy Kipp Clayton, and others.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2717-0, Retail: $8.95

This is the fascinating story of the Colonia Juárez Chihuahua Mexico Temple, including the inspiration President Gordon B. Hinckley received, while visiting Colonia Juárez, to build smaller-sized temples throughout the world. This widely visual book highlights the process, the progress, and the sacrifice of the wonderful Saints of the colonies who helped build this beautiful temple.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2727-9 Retail: $29.95
To Save the Lost: An Easter Celebration

Easter is a good time to recall Jesus’ mission to the least, the last, and the lost, for he said, “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” Not surprisingly, we discover that he sent his disciples to the “lost sheep,” and thus their mission of finding the lost is a natural extension of his mission. Some of Jesus’ most memorable teaching moments have to do with finding the lost. This volume contains the papers delivered at the 2008 and 2009 Brigham Young University Easter Conferences, which is a celebration of the life and atoning mission of Jesus Christ. We are honored to include articles from Elder Merrill J. Bateman, an emeritus member of the Seventy, and Bonnie D. Parkin, former general Relief Society president.


This book examines such themes as the Atonement, grace, gifts of the Spirit, the condescension of God, and calling and election within the pages of the book of Acts through the Revelation of John. Using scriptures of the Restoration and teachings from the presiding authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it illuminates and clarifies these and others topics so that we might find sweetness therein and see wondrous things to our understanding and establish godly conduct.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2725-5 Retail: $25.95
A Land of Promise and Prophecy: A. Theodore Tuttle in South America

This book is the winner of the prestigious Geraldine McBride Woodward International Mormon History Award. Though this book is not a biography of Elder Tuttle, it focuses on his activities in South America. Each mission in South America is discussed in relation to Elder Tuttle’s efforts and some of the issues and concerns of the time. This history focuses on the personalities and programs of the mission presidents and their wives with particular emphasis on Elder A. Theodore Tuttle because the changes that occurred during the time he was there were the product of these men and women.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2713-2 Retail: $25.95
Upcoming Conferences

**Student Symposium**
The 2010 Religious Education Student Symposium will be held, Friday, February 19, 2010 in the Wilkinson Center on BYU campus from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.

**Church History Symposium**
The 2010 Church History Symposium, sponsored by Religious Education and the Religious Studies Center, will be held Friday, February 26, 2010 in the Harmon building on BYU campus. Topic to be announced.

**The BYU Easter Conference**
The 2010 Religious Education Easter Conference will be held on Saturday, March 27, 2010, in the Joseph Smith Building auditorium on BYU campus at 9 a.m. Visit [easterconference.byu.edu](http://easterconference.byu.edu) for more information.

**The Thirty-Ninth Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium**
Scheduled for October 29–30, 2010, this Sperry Symposium focuses on “The Sermon on the Mount in Latter-day Scripture.” The keynote speaker will present in the Joseph Smith Building auditorium, Friday, October 29 at 6:30 p.m.
Nelson Boren and his wife, Jeanne, live in Sandpoint, Idaho. After graduating from Arizona State University with a degree in architecture, he went into private practice in Salt Lake City and Mesa, Arizona. Following his fifteen years of architectural practice, community service, urban sprawl, and trying to keep seven children busy on a fifth of an acre in Mesa, Arizona, Nelson and Jeanne moved their family to a small farm in northern Idaho where he pursued a fine art career as a cowboy artist and raised cows, sheep, and children. In 2003 Nelson went from serving as stake president to presiding over the New York New York North Mission. After three years of living there, surviving the traffic, working with incredible young and senior missionaries from all over the world, and loving the people of New York, the Borens moved back to their little farm in Sandpoint, where Nelson now serves as bishop, takes the young men in his ward hiking and fishing, and enjoys his grandchildren and the peace and quiet of the country.

Rosalind Elizabeth Ricks grew up in a small town in the high deserts of California, the sixth of seven children in a wonderful family. She was a pretty normal kid: she preferred ice cream to green beans and playing outside to cleaning her room. One by one, each of her siblings left home to go to BYU, and eventually she graduated from high school and followed them there. She loves many things about BYU but particularly enjoys her language classes. Since coming to BYU, she has taken classes in Welsh, Swedish, Italian, and Hindi, in addition to singing in a German choir. One summer she did a study abroad to Wales to continue learning Welsh. She is currently a senior majoring in English with a minor in editing. She started working for the RSC in November 2008 as a student editor, and she loves both where she works and what she does there. Her hobbies include reading children’s books, watching Hindi and Telugu movies, and spending time with her family.

Dayna K. Thomas is a senior from Centerville, Utah. After briefly studying chemistry at BYU, she switched her focus to pursue a major in English with minors in Spanish and editing. Dayna has edited for Inscape and was a production lead editor for the BYU Prelaw Review. She has been editing and preparing various projects for publication at the RSC since March 2009. She loves hiking, and her favorite place to be is in Utah’s beautiful mountains. After Dayna graduates in April, she plans to attend law school.
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