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Abstract Using the life of Neal A. Maxwell as a standard, Bruce C. Hafen, in his Neal A. Maxwell Lecture, delivered 21 March 2008, discusses the relationship between intellect and spirituality. While many people struggle to understand how reason and faith can coexist, Elder Maxwell exemplified how the two notions are, in fact, complementary to each other.

REASON, FAITH, AND THE THINGS OF ETERNITY

Elder Bruce C. Hafen

President Samuelson, Sister Maxwell and your family, students and other friends and guests, it is wonderful to be with you tonight. I have cheered since first hearing that there would be a Neal A. Maxwell Institute. I've known the people in this institute a long time, and to see those people and that name come together warms my heart. I'm very grateful for your work. I know how very much Elder Maxwell admired it. It is a great blessing not only to BYU, but throughout the Church.

My purpose tonight is to explore the relationship between the life of the mind and the life of the spirit, with some connection to Elder Maxwell's life as a mentoring model. He showed us not only how to balance the natural tensions between faith and reason, he showed us how to move beyond those tensions to a higher level of resolution. When he first invited me to work on his biography in 1999, I believed that the main theme of his life story would be his contribution to the Church as a role model for educated Latter-day Saints, showing how religious faith and intellectual rigor are mutually reinforcing. In both his public and private ministry, he had been a great mentor on such issues for thousands of us as students, teachers, and other Church members.

Neal A. Maxwell Lecture, 21 March 2008, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. This annual lecture is sponsored by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. Elder Hafen is a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

However, my research on his life revealed a different core message than the one I had expected to find. Personal Christian discipleship is really the central message of Elder Maxwell's life and teachings. His background and contributions as an educator and scholar still matter a great deal; in fact, they matter even more when we also know that his life story is a kind of guidebook on seeking to be a true follower of Christ.

In my own life (and I'm only a sample among many others) his mentoring about faith versus intellect issues prepared me to benefit even more from his later, higher-level mentoring on very personal questions about being and becoming. To talk about these ascending levels of his influence on me, I must go back to my BYU student days in 1963.

The first semester after my mission to Germany, I enrolled in a small Honors religion class called "Your Religious Problems." The teacher was West Belnap, BYU's Dean of Religion. The format for each class hour consisted primarily of a presentation and discussion led by a student in the class. We would identify a "religious problem," do research on the issues, then lead a class discussion on the topic. Each student then submitted written comments, both to our teacher and to that day's presenter.

The first time I ever noticed Marie Kartchner from Bountiful was in that class, when she presented her religious problem: "How can I bring the influence of the Holy Ghost more into my life?" Almost every class day, a small group of us, including Marie, would keep talking, out into the hallway and across the campus. Coming to know Marie in that way actually solved my biggest religious problem when that friendship blossomed into our marriage. In the last forty-five years, those same lively gospel conversations have continued on, with Marie's approach always making me want to live better.

The problem I presented to our class was something like this: "How much should we develop our minds and think for ourselves, and how much should we rely on Church authority and spiritual guidance?" These were honest questions for me. I was experiencing what Catholic sociologist Thomas O'Dea had described in 1957 as

“Mormonism’s most significant problem.” He thought the Church’s “great emphasis on [higher] education” created an inevitable conflict for young Latter-day Saints because he believed the Church’s literalistic and authoritarian approach to religion would collide with the skepticism and personal independence fostered by university studies. Toward the end of his book, *The Mormons*, O’Dea had written, “The encounter of Mormonism and modern secular learning is . . . still taking place. . . . Upon [the outcome of this source of strain and conflict] will depend . . . the future of Mormonism.”¹

I could see from BYU’s very existence that the Church was deeply committed to higher education, and I had returned from my mission in Europe with a high awareness of my own ignorance, which fueled my hunger to learn. I was close to some faithful LDS university teachers whose examples helped motivate that desire. One of them liked to quote J. Golden Kimball: “We can’t expect the Holy Ghost to do our thinking for us.” Another of my teachers had a great love for literature and the arts, and he emphasized that students needed both discipline and personal creativity to develop their God-given gifts.

One influential teacher from that era recently passed away here in Provo—Reid Nibley, Hugh Nibley’s younger brother. Reid, who was a consummate artist at the piano, was the Utah Symphony’s official pianist and taught for years on the BYU music faculty. He was my piano teacher in my mid-teens. I lived in St. George and went to Salt Lake City to take lessons in the summertime. He also wrote the words and music to the song “I Know My Father Lives.”² He deeply affected my life, opening my eyes not only about the meaning of real musical skill, but to a much larger world of thought and perspective than the one I had known in my small hometown. Yet Reid also loved the Lord with depth and meekness. Sometimes he used to tell me that a heightened sensitivity to music would increase my sensitivity to spiritual things. I can still see him sitting cross-legged on a chair near the piano bench,

1. O’Dea, Thomas. *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 222, 225, 240. Quoted in Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 333.

2. “I Know My Father Lives,” *Children’s Songbook* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 5.

quoting from D&C 59 with his animated, optimistic voice that the Lord had given us nature and the arts “for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart; . . . to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul” (vv. 18–19). When I was about sixteen, someone asked me to list “my heroes.” I listed only two—Vic Wertz, who played right field for the Detroit Tigers baseball team, and Reid Nibley.

Later I had a mission president whom I also loved; but he saw the world very differently from the way these teachers did. He introduced me to precious doctrines about knowing the Lord and relying on the Spirit. I came to prize those doctrines when I saw their fruits in our missionary work. He loved to quote Proverbs: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (3:5). He would cite the Gospel of John, emphasizing Christ’s total reliance on the Father: “I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John 14:10). He often said, “Christ was the most unoriginal man who ever lived. He did only what the Father told him to do.” He also once warned me to stay away from people who took literature and the arts too seriously. One time he said, “Don’t think too much.”

Then, just after my mission and before I went to BYU, I was with a seminary teacher I greatly admired. When he asked what I planned to study, I said I wanted to learn everything I could about subjects like history, literature, and philosophy. He replied with great concern that I should avoid those subjects because they can easily lead people into what he called “intellectual apostasy.”

So the “religious problem” I presented to our class reflected the confusion I felt in trying to reconcile the conflicting viewpoints among these teachers. West Belnap’s comment to me on my presentation was, “Well, some of our people have it in their heads, and others have it in their hearts. I think the best way is to have it in both places.” I understood that as a plea for simple balance.

Brother Belnap’s counsel helped me decide to reject what I would call, for ease of conversation, a “level one” either-or approach to my questions. Level one required a permanent, categorical choice between

extreme religious conservatism or extreme religious liberalism. But neither extreme choice made sense to me. I remember some of the first definitions I heard for the term *Mormon liberal*. One was “A Mormon liberal is someone who drinks Coke, reads *Dialogue* magazine, and begins the Articles of Faith with ‘Would you believe . . .?’” I remember a more serious definition from President Harold B. Lee, who said a Mormon liberal is a person who doesn’t have a testimony. To me that meant reason alone, with no foundation of real faith.

During that same era, I also saw the other extreme at level one—overzealous and unchecked religiosity. I had a stake missionary companion who was sure the Holy Ghost would give him the answer for every detail of his life and thought. He was always writing in a little book he carried the things he believed the Spirit was telling him. He would dust off his feet after we left the door of someone who didn’t want to hear our message. Only a few years later, he felt God had called him to leave the Church and found an apostate group. His overzealousness eventually ended in tragedy.

I was also called as a counselor to two different student ward bishops, who leaned toward the opposite extremes of level one. One of these bishops was an ardent political conservative, dogmatic, authoritarian, and extremely distrustful of all academic disciplines. The other was very politically liberal, freethinking, and highly academic. (I love the broad spectrum this Church has in it.) He said he was close enough to some senior Church leaders that he was aware of their personal flaws, and that concern, which ate away at him, eventually compromised his willingness to follow their counsel. Some years later he also left the Church.

These experiences reinforced my inclination to seek what I’ll just call level two: a balanced approach between the liberal and conservative tendencies I had seen. I felt that I didn’t need to make a permanent choice between my heart and my head. I soon found an opportunity to explore this concept further in a BYU class I was teaching. My summary to my students went something like this: The tension between faith and reason is a challenge with a very long history. During the time of Christ, He taught His gospel almost exclusively to people of

a Hebrew background. Not many years after Christ's death, Gentiles with a Greek heritage began entering the Church. Other factors increased that Greek influence until Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century. That huge historical shift created an official but complex merger between the Hebrew and Greco-Roman cultures, combining two very different religious traditions.

As one historian put it, through this merger, the "entire Hebraic Tradition was superimposed upon classical [Greek and Roman] culture."³ And because Greek thought had by then so heavily influenced the Roman Empire, another historian could say, "Here were two races [the Greeks and the Hebrews], living not very far apart, yet for the most part in complete ignorance of each other. . . . It was the fusion of what was most characteristic in these two cultures—the religious earnestness of the Hebrews with the reason and humanity of the Greeks—which was to form the basis of later European culture."⁴

A few years ago I read a fine article by BYU's Dan Peterson that shed light on the implications of this historical watershed. He wrote that when Christianity's center of gravity shifted from Jerusalem into the Greek-speaking Hellenistic world, this gradually cut the New Testament's ties to its roots in the Hebraic world of the Old Testament. The resulting Greek influence preserved Christ's words in the New Testament only in the Greek language. "Mormons," wrote Brother Peterson, "recognize in this [Greek absorption of Christianity] at least one aspect of what they term 'the Great Apostasy.'"⁵

At the same time, I told my students that the gospel contains strands that connect to both the Hebrew and the Greek elements in our heritage. That helped me see why I had found the conflicts I did in my student days. Without attempting a complete comparison, here's an example of how Western culture reflects both the Greek and Hebrew traditions. Take a coin from your pocket and you'll notice

3. Rod W. Horton and Vincent F. Hopper, *Backgrounds of European Literature* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1954), 248.

4. H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Hammondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1957), 8.

5. Daniel C. Peterson, "What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?" *Apostasy and Restoration in the Big Picture*, *FARMS Review of Books* 12/2 (2000): xii.

two familiar phrases: “Liberty” and “In God We Trust.” The personal liberty of the individual was a key element in the hierarchy of Greek values. In the Greek heritage, man is the measure of all things. For Socrates, nothing was more important than for each of us to “know thyself,” and the ultimate goal was to ennoble man through reason.

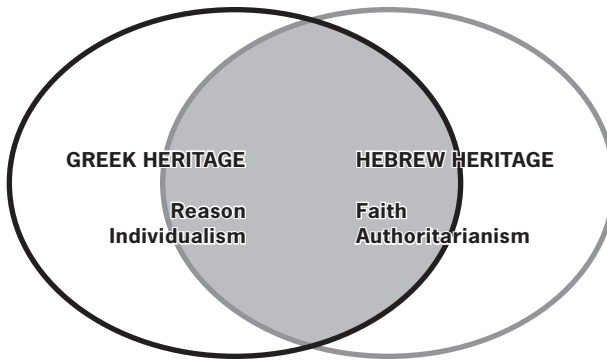
But the coin’s other phrase, “In God We Trust,” would have perplexed an ancient Greek—even though it spoke directly to the Hebrew soul, who did try to trust in the Lord with all his heart and leaned not to his own understanding. The goal of the Hebrew pattern was to glorify God, not man; and one reached this goal through faith and obedience, not by relying on human reasoning. In this example from the differing Greek and Hebrew worlds we find the seeds of countless arguments about the place of reason and the place of faith in our religious life.

The restored gospel accepts elements from both traditions. For example, we place high value on both personal liberty and reason. No other religion or philosophy takes a higher view of man’s nature and potential. Consider these phrases: “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). “I am a child of God.”⁶ “Man was also in the beginning with God” (D&C 93:29).

Regarding reason, the Lord told Oliver Cowdery to “study it out in your mind” (D&C 9:8) before seeking a spiritual confirmation. Alma told Korihor that “all things [in nature] denote there is a God” (Alma 30:44). In preaching to the Lamanites, Lehi and Nephi helped convince them “because of the greatness of the *evidences* which they had received” (Helaman 5:50). And Elder John A. Widtsoe entitled his classic book *Rational Theology*.

On the other hand, the gospel teaches that all blessings are predicated on obedience to God. Further, faith in God is not only the first principle of the gospel, it is an essential check against unrestrained liberty and reason. When the free individual chooses to disobey God, he not only rejects divine authority, he damages his future liberty. As the Lord said, “Here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation

6. “I Am a Child of God,” *Children’s Songbook*, 2.



of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light” (D&C 93:31).

Imagine with me two circles that partially overlap each other. One circle represents the Greek tradition, with reason and individualism as samples. The other circle represents the Hebrew tradition, with faith and authoritarianism as samples.

On the left end of the spectrum, outside the area of overlap, we see the Greek tradition alone. At the right end of the spectrum, also outside the overlap, is the Hebrew tradition alone.

We will be in trouble if our individualistic Greek strain cuts loose from the anchoring authoritarianism of our Hebrew strain. That’s what happened with the bishop I mentioned, who could not reason his way through the flaws he perceived among some Church leaders. His unchecked commitment to reason alone eventually took him out of the Church. We might consider those on this end of the spectrum as “cultural Mormons,” who accept only that part of the gospel that meets their standard of rationality.

At the other extreme, my former stake missionary companion exemplified the Hebrew strain gone wild. Unchecked by reason and common sense, he veered off the edge and became what we might call a “cultist Mormon.” In other words, we can go off the deep end at either the right or the left end of the spectrum.

The area of overlap, where the individualistic and authoritarian principles coexist, is where we live most productively. Here authoritarianism acts as a check against unbridled individualism, and individualism acts

as a check against unbridled authoritarianism. Both principles are true, both are anchored in our doctrine, and both play a role in our decisions and attitudes—though the outcome in particular cases may vary, depending on the circumstances. Similar interaction occurs between faith and reason, which are both within the area of overlap.

President Spencer W. Kimball, speaking at BYU during Elder Maxwell’s time as Commissioner of Education, also spoke about our “double heritage” of secular knowledge and revealed truth. He said we must become “bilingual” in speaking the language of scholarship and the language of the Spirit.⁷

Within the overlap area of our dual heritage, true principles drawn from the two traditions can sometimes compete and conflict. For example, the idea of “liberty” on our coins is in a natural tension with the idea of “in God we trust.” If we really trust in God, we must at times place limits on our own liberty. Christ’s teachings are full of similar paradoxes—that is, true principles that seem to contradict each other but which are reconciled by higher doctrines. Consider, for example, the principles of justice and mercy. At times they may seem to be in opposition, but both are essential in the higher doctrine of the Atonement.

Gospel teachings contain other paradoxes. For example, the Savior taught us to “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven” (Matthew 5:16; see 3 Nephi 12:16). Yet elsewhere He taught, “Do not your alms before men, to be seen of them” (3 Nephi 13:1; Matthew 6:1). Another example: In some circumstances Christ called Himself the “Prince of Peace” and promised to give peace to His disciples. Yet elsewhere He said, “I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34).

In presenting these ideas to my class, I concluded that Brother Belnap was right—it is best to nourish our religious commitments in both our hearts and our heads, even if doing so means we must sometimes work through apparent paradoxes. The process of reconciling competing true values requires effort, but it can yield very good fruit.

7. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” in *Classic Speeches: 22 Selections from Brigham Young University Devotional and Fireside Speeches* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1994), 1:136–37.

Then I told my students that the best way to resolve such tensions is not through abstract discussion, but through the personal examples of people whose lives represent balanced, productive resolutions. I offered them as a role model Elder Neal A. Maxwell, whose heart and head worked so well together. For example, he once said that “[at BYU] we cannot let the world condemn our value system by calling attention to our professional mediocrity.”⁸ He also told BYU students and faculty to be unafraid of dealing with the world outside the Church, because they are needed there. They must be like Joseph of Egypt, he said. In today’s famine of the spirit, they should lean into the fray and draw on divine power in their professional work so they are part of society’s solutions—not just another hungry mouth to feed. He also told LDS faculty they should take both scholarship and discipleship seriously because consecrated scholarship converges both the life of the mind and the life of the spirit.

Elder Maxwell had first developed these attitudes during his own days as a university student, when he instinctively looked for ways to integrate secular and religious knowledge. Even as a young political science major, he didn’t think the field of political theory was complete without including the gospel’s teachings about government and about man’s nature. As his experience grew, so did his confidence that the findings of the academic disciplines would never seriously challenge gospel teachings. For him, every dimension of the gospel was relevant to modern social problems, and, whenever possible, he thought LDS scholars should take their research premises from gospel teachings.

Elder Maxwell drew on these attitudes when he actively encouraged LDS scholars to do the kind of work now found in the Maxwell Institute. To him, the internal evidence for the Book of Mormon’s legitimacy was so strong that it was simply unscientific to think the book was concocted in the nineteenth century.

He often reminded LDS scholars that he wasn’t interested in trying to prove in some scientific way that the Book of Mormon is true. Rather, he saw faithful scholarship as a source of defense, not offense. In his words, “Science will not be able to prove or disprove holy writ.”

8. Quoted in Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life*, 380.

However, our best LDS scholars will bring forth enough plausible evidence supporting the Book of Mormon “to prevent scoffers from having a field day, but not enough to remove the requirement of faith.”⁹ That kind of scholarship has the modest but crucial purpose of nourishing a climate in which voluntary belief is free to take root and grow. Only when belief is not compelled, by external evidence or otherwise, can it produce the growth that is the promised fruit of faith.

I return now to my own autobiographical journey because as I grew older I kept having experiences that pushed me beyond that second level of balance toward yet a third level of understanding. I can illustrate my development by remembering an interview with a prospective BYU faculty member. He described his religious convictions as “an intelligent faith.” As a level two response, his attitude seemed balanced and constructive. But as I reflected more, something felt amiss—not about him personally, but about modifying the word *faith* with a word like *intelligent*.

I remembered how President Marion G. Romney had answered the missionary who asked, “Why don’t we baptize more intelligent people?” President Romney quoted D&C 93: “The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one” (vv. 36–37). Then he said to the missionary, “A converted person forsakes evil and embraces light and truth. So what kind of person is he?” After a pause, the surprised missionary said, “An intelligent one?”

At about this same time, I was watching a close friend my age decline physically from multiple sclerosis. I had seen him gradually lose his ability to walk, to stand, and then to sit. During the stage when he was fully bedridden, his wife passed away from cancer. His family wheeled him into her funeral on a mobile bed.

Not long after his wife’s funeral, we had a visit in his home. The more he talked, the more amazed I was at the spirit of peace and light that surrounded him. He said he couldn’t stop thinking about how fortunate his life had been—so blessed by the woman he’d married, by the children the Lord had given them, by their rich life together in

9. Neal A. Maxwell, *Plain and Precious Things* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 4.

their wholesome little town. He chuckled as he said how glad he was now that he and his wife took so many “happily ever after” trips in their early years, even though they couldn’t afford it. And he kept talking about his admiration for the pioneers, the ones who left Nauvoo and helped settle the town where he lived. He felt so thankful to them. He’d been thinking about why they needed the temple endowment before leaving Nauvoo for the wilderness. Every word and feeling that came from him was genuine. There was no trace of self-pity. The light in his face and the spirit in the room gave me the sacred impression that I was seeing the process of sanctification.

That night I felt drawn to read in D&C 101:2–5: “I, the Lord, have suffered affliction to come upon them. . . . Yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I come to make up my jewels. Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham, who was commanded to offer up his only son. For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, *cannot* be sanctified” (emphasis added). Then from D&C 97:8: “All among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by . . . every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.”

Soon after this experience, I had similar feelings as I watched our son Tom and his wife Tracy experience the birth of a child born with severe cerebral palsy. Because this baby had threatened to come several months early, Tracy had been on total bed rest for nine weeks. Despite bed sores and increasing medical threats, she became very single-minded about hanging onto that baby until it could survive outside the womb. One night Tracy sensed something about how her determination, her sacrifice, emulated the Savior’s example—giving up her body’s strength to strengthen another body. She said that thought led her to realize that her experience was actually a privilege, not a burden.

After the birth, the baby was confined to the hospital for ten more weeks before coming home to a life in which she would never walk, nor talk, nor feed herself. She is now almost twelve, and what a light there is in her. (Her name is Chaya. In Hebrew, it means “life.”) Soon

after her birth, Tom gave her a blessing, in which he realized that this was a defining moment in his own life. He sensed that all he and Tracy had done and learned up to that point didn't matter. All that mattered was their awareness that God knew their circumstances and that this child's condition was not accidental, nor arbitrary; indeed there was great purpose in it. They felt that they were both being asked to offer the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit, which was somehow making the Lord's own sacrifice more accessible to them.

Something about these two experiences set me to thinking about that little summary on the Greeks and Hebrews I had shown my students—and about that prospective teacher's comments about an "intelligent faith." The experiences with my friend and my granddaughter defied rational explanation, and yet I had witnessed the sanctifying effects of these afflictions. I sensed that a balanced quest for knowledge, as valuable as that is, cannot be our ultimate end. Simply *knowing* something will not sanctify us; won't make us capable of enduring God's presence. And the circumstances that sanctify us often won't be rational ones. By its very nature, faith ultimately takes us beyond the boundaries of reason. Thus someone who conditions his faith on its being rationally intelligent may shrink back from a sanctifying experience—and thereby not discover what the experience could teach.

At the same time, even if yielding to such transforming experiences is necessarily a leap of faith, we can't go there until we've walked as far as the light of our search for knowledge allows. And a lifetime of trying to make sense of mortality, especially on days when it doesn't seem to make sense, gives us the experience we must eventually have to appreciate the meaning of our sanctification after it has been completed.

At level two, we prize the value of individualism and reason, and we also prize the value of God's authority and our faith in Him. We would not return to a simplistic level one choice that completely excludes either reason or faith. But level three invites us to realize that a "balanced" approach simply won't be enough when we encounter the most demanding experiences of our spiritual growth. When we

find ourselves stretched to our extremities, we need a new level from which to draw more deeply on our Hebrew roots than our Greek roots. No wonder Elder Maxwell often said we should have “our citizenship in Jerusalem and [have a passport] to Athens.”¹⁰ In fact, part of the sacrifice the Lord may require is that we accept what He may inflict upon us without understanding to our rational satisfaction why we should be lost in some dark night of the soul. Eventually the light of Christ’s atoning power can pierce our darkness and bless us with understanding, but we may receive no such witness until after the trial of our faith.

Elder Maxwell knew that for all his love of fine scholarship, the life of a disciple-scholar was more about consecration than it was about scholarship. To be sure, he believed that “academic scholarship [can be] a form of worship, . . . another dimension of consecration.” But he also said, “genius without meekness is not enough to qualify for discipleship.”¹¹ On one occasion, he made this memorable statement: “Though I have spoken of the disciple-scholar, in the end all the hyphenated words come off. We are finally [just] disciples—men and women of Christ.”¹²

He once told me that he felt sorry for LDS scholars who overdo the “intelligent” part of practicing their “intelligent faith.” They tend to measure the gospel and the Church by what they have learned in their academic disciplines rather than the other way around. For that reason, he said, they can ironically become “anti-intellectual about the gospel—not seeing its depth, its applications, its beauty, and its fruits, which go far beyond merely being ‘active’ in the Church.”

As part of his own discipleship, Elder Maxwell very consciously cultivated the qualities of meekness and submissiveness—precisely because he knew all about pride’s subtle seductions. Even the Greeks had no use for hubris. Elder Maxwell had seen very accomplished people become too impressed with themselves—the learned who “think they are wise” and therefore “hearken not to the counsel of God” for

10. Quoted in Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life*, 379.

11. Quoted in Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life*, 380.

12. Quoted in Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life*, 380.

they suppose “they know of themselves.” Those who are, as Jacob said, “puffed up because of their learning, and their wisdom” suffer the great loss that the “happiness which is prepared for the saints” “shall be hid from them” (2 Nephi 9:28, 42–43).

Most of you would remember that Elder Maxwell appreciated the work of C. S. Lewis. One interesting little aside is that as a young man Neal liked Lewis’s writing so much that he paid Lewis the ultimate compliment: he sent him a copy of the Book of Mormon, along with a letter expressing Neal’s own testimony. On the point we’re now discussing, Neal liked these lines from Lewis: “I reject at once [the] idea that . . . scholars and poets [are] intrinsically more pleasing to God than scavengers and bootblacks. . . . The work of a Beethoven, and the work of a charwoman, become spiritual on precisely the same condition, that of being [humbly] offered to God. . . . This does not . . . mean that it is for anyone a mere toss-up whether he should sweep rooms or compose symphonies. A mole must dig to the glory of God and a cock must crow.” But if one’s circumstances give him a “learned life,” let him lead “that life to the glory of God.” In living a learned life, Lewis noted that personal humility is essential; otherwise, we “may come to love knowledge—*our* knowing—more than the thing known: to delight not in the exercise of our talents but in the fact that they are ours, or even in the reputation they bring us. Every success in the scholar’s life increases this danger. If it becomes irresistible, he must give up his scholarly work.”

Still, continued Lewis in this same passage, which aptly fits the work of the Maxwell Institute, “the learned life [is] . . . especially important today. If all the world were Christian, it might not matter if all the world were uneducated. . . . To be ignorant and simple now—not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground—would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, [than] because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”¹³

13. C. S. Lewis, “Learning in War-Time,” in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1949), 48–50.

I said earlier that my study of Elder Maxwell's life showed me that even though he was an ideal role model for educated Latter-day Saints, his life message was only partly about learning and scholarship. His life's most central message was about discipleship—becoming a true follower of Christ. For me, that discovery makes it more appropriate, not less, that the Maxwell Institute should carry his name.

In learning about his early life, I found that young Neal Maxwell was incredibly attentive to developing the skills of self-discipline and self-improvement. One sees the same determined effort in his approach to playing basketball, raising prize pigs in a 4-H project, learning to write in high school, serving in combat during World War II, studying government as a college student and a U.S. Senate staffer, or finding a better way to do missionary work in Canada and leadership in the Church. One friend who first saw Neal's fierce tenacity during his years as an administrator at the University of Utah said he "has tried very, very hard over the years to make himself a better person. For most people, New Year's resolutions don't last. But his do." Another lifelong friend said, "No one I know requires such extreme effort of himself."

I mention this general commitment to self-mastery to put Elder Maxwell's quest for discipleship into context. He always had a believing heart and a desire to serve the Lord. But during his adult years, his understanding of the word *disciple* developed significantly—and deliberately. He first used the written word *disciple* in the 1960s as a synonym for "Church member." Then during his years as Commissioner of Education in the early 1970s, he became concerned about the growing influence of modern secularism. He began using *disciples* to describe those Church members who resist secular siren calls. Then, within a few years, he became close to several Church members who were coping with adversity in ways that enhanced their spiritual growth. He soon felt that these people were the real disciples.

His call to the Twelve in 1981 turned his full attention to becoming a more faithful disciple of Christ himself. Reflecting his great determination to live better, his writing and his talks now focused more on the disciple's personal relationship with Christ, and how the Lord will

help true disciples learn such Christlike attributes as patience, hope, and lowliness of heart. He also saw discipleship more as a process than a single choice, and he realized that adversity is sometimes a tool the Lord uses to teach his followers the very attributes they need for their development. That is why he wrote, in terms that would one day take on such personal meaning for him, that “the very act of choosing to be a disciple . . . can bring to us a certain special suffering. . . . [Such] suffering and chastening . . . is the . . . dimension that comes with deep discipleship,” when the Lord takes us “to the very edge of our faith; [and] we teeter at the edge of our trust . . . [in] a form of learning as it is administered at the hands of a loving Father.”¹⁴

No wonder, then, that when he found in 1997 that he had an aggressive form of leukemia, he said, “I should have seen it coming.” What did he mean? Neal Maxwell, the ardent student of discipleship, had signed up years earlier for divine tutoring, and his Tutor was now ready to teach him a course in personal and clinical graduate studies. In his remaining seven years, he thus embraced the heart-wrenching process of sanctification as his final tutorial. Most people who experience a terminal illness can’t help being consumed with their own suffering; but not Neal Maxwell. He saw himself in a time for testing and refining. And because he was not imprisoned by his own misery, he was free to reflect on what his new understanding could teach him and how it helped him teach others.

As a result, those who had known him for years now saw a new mellowness, greater empathy, increased spiritual sensitivity, and keener compassion for other people’s needs. Neal viewed this experience as a gift, not as an achievement. He knew the Lord was giving him a new, sanctified heart filled with divine attributes, and he said, “The natural man[’s] . . . heart . . . is pretty self-centered and hard.” But “adversity can squeeze out of us the [remaining] hypocrisy that’s there. [So for me] it’s been a great spiritual adventure, one I would not want to have missed. . . . And even though this has [had high costs], it’s

14. Quoted in Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life*, 12.

been a great blessing. I know people may think I'm just being patriotic to say that, but it's true."¹⁵

It is hard to describe how watching Elder Maxwell's experience, like watching the experience of my friend with MS, has changed my perspective about what I've called my "religious problem." Those who taste sanctification must often pay such a terribly high price that they can't possibly understand the need for their suffering. Rather than looking for a rational explanation, Elder Maxwell would just quote Nephi: "I know that [God] loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things" (1 Nephi 11:17).

At about this point in my writing a draft of this talk, a visitor came to our home—a BYU student whose parents Marie and I had met in another city a few months ago. We met them at a hospital, where his father was in the last stages of a terminal illness. Despite his tears and his questions, this father was exceptionally full of peace and purpose. He told us he knew his days were numbered, but he was reading the scriptures with a true hunger to understand and internalize the doctrine of sanctification. His countenance, his manner, and his thoughts were very similar to what I had seen before, with my friend and with Elder Maxwell. We offered words intended to give support and love, but he is the one who gave us spiritual perspective.

His son had just dropped by to tell us his father had passed away a few weeks ago. Then he said he had learned about sanctification from his father during his final weeks and that experience had permanently changed his view of life, including his daily priorities. Applying his father's perspective to his own life as a BYU student, he didn't want to wait until he had cancer; rather, he wanted to live in a different and better way *now*, closer to what he called "the things of eternity."

This student's visit somehow illustrated level three for me, even though I still don't have quite the words to define that level. I will leave you with the invitation to find your own words, but in just a moment I will try at least to show you a picture of what I think level three looks like. It is something about how the consecrated sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit blesses us with inner sight in our lives and in

15. Quoted in Hafen, *A Disciple's Life*, 558–59.

our religious problems. This perspective takes us to a higher spiritual realm than mere balance can ever lift us—even though standing on that balanced foundation helps us reach upward. This level does not ask us to give up anything of value in our reason or our scholarship, though it does recognize reason’s limits. Indeed, from this vantage point, we need even more rigorous scholarship and deeper inquiry, especially about protecting and nurturing the things of eternity.

One thing level three tells us is that being a disciple-scholar is not so much about what one does or how one thinks, but about who and what one is—and is becoming. In the course of Elder Maxwell’s adult life, he gradually shifted his emphasis from large scale “macro” concerns about secularization and social problems to the more focused, personal “micro” concerns of how to live our lives. Not that the macro problems don’t matter; he just knew that the micro problems are the ones we can do the most about. And in the long run, he knew that the gospel’s way of changing the individual is the only lasting way to change society.

Remembering this about Elder Maxwell reminds me of one writer’s comments from an essay on C. S. Lewis: “The kind of people we are is more important than what we can do to improve the world; indeed, being the kind of people we should and can be is the best and sometimes the only way to improve the world.”¹⁶

So Elder Maxwell was right, both in what he said and in how he lived. At the end of the day, there are no hyphenated words. And if we are not true disciples, it won’t matter much what kind of scholars we’ve been.

Brothers and sisters, today is Good Friday. This Sunday, March 23, is Easter. Easter is always on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. The official Easter calendar also requires that it be celebrated on a Sunday between the dates of March 22 and April 25. Applying the official rules, I am told that this year, 2008, is the earliest Easter any of us will ever see again. The last time Easter came this early was in 1913, but the next time it will come this early will be in the year 2228.

16. Richard Neuhaus, “C. S. Lewis in the Public Square,” in *First Things: A Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life* (December 1998): 30.



Apostles Peter and John hurry to the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection. Painting by Eugène Burnand. Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY.

The painting above is the visual version of level three, a picture worth more than a thousand words. It is Swiss painter Eugene Burnand's depiction of John and Peter, true disciples, running to the tomb on the very first Easter morning. In John's words, "They ran both together" (John 20:4), until they reached the sepulchre. The look on their faces, their eagerness and their energy, make me want to join them as they run to meet Him. Perhaps this painting could be called "Early Easter."

Earlier today, Marie looked at this picture and said their faces capture the ultimate tension between faith and reason. (Those gospel conversations do continue on!) Since no one had ever risen from the dead before, it was completely irrational for John and Peter to expect that Christ would live again. No wonder they couldn't understand Him when He had said He must soon leave them, yet in "a little while, and ye shall see me [and] your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:18-20). But their faces also show their faith and hope rising to overcome their rational fears. And when John and Peter did eventually meet the risen Lord, their being faithful enough to see Him was the ultimate resolution of the tension between faith and reason. He is the ultimate resolution to everything.

As we go home tonight and see the first full moon after the spring equinox coming up over Y mountain, may we feel the excitement of quickening our step and arriving early as we run to meet Him. Whether as a scholar, a carpenter, a composer, a parent, or simply as a college freshman, may we work with all our hearts, and all of our minds, and to the glory of God. And may we hasten our desire to live closer to “the things of eternity” even now, so that the Lord can prepare us now for whatever further sanctifying tests await us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.