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The Educational Philosophy of Eliza R. Snow

Jolene Merica

Eliza R. Snow established a legacy as a poet and as general president of the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; she was also a wife to two Latter-day Saint prophets, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.¹ Snow's lifework was devoted to the establishment of a faith focused on preparing its members for a postmortal existence and eternal life with God. Central to that preparation, and therefore to Snow's work, was education—not just to equip the Saints for eternity, but also to make them useful in mortality. Although in her early life Snow was a school teacher, she gained prominence in the Church not as a teacher but as “Zion's Poetess,”² and so her educational thinking and practice remain largely unexplored facets of her contributions to the nineteenth-century community in which she lived. But Snow's ideas on education appear repeatedly in her poetry and in her speeches and other writings.

In a 1907 memorial service in honor of the Prophet Joseph Smith's 102nd birthday, Elder B. H. Roberts paid tribute to Joseph as a “Prophet-Teacher.” He expressed the idea that a prophet must primarily “be a teacher of men, an expounder of the things of God.” Roberts further suggested that the Prophet Joseph's “philosophical principles were flung off in utterances without reference to any arrangement or orderly sequence.”³ Eliza R. Snow was also a teacher. She “became very intelligent in regard to the principles of the Gospel, from frequent conversations with the prophet [Joseph], whose knowledge of God and the plan of salvation seemed to unlock the past and future eternities.”⁴ Like Joseph, Eliza left no formally stated educational philosophy, but her recurrent poetic themes and public statements suggest educational principles that also expounded the things of God.

Snow's Core Educational Assumptions

The Saints in the Utah Territory were tasked with building a society that hoped to be temporally, if not also somewhat intellectually, independent of the world they had left. A simplicity was required because of tough temporal circumstances; and yet in that simplicity Snow presented an example of fundamental principles to assist any person to grow and develop and, in her words, to “possess energy of character sufficient to determine to *be somebody* and to *do something*.”⁵

In “Good Society,” a prose piece written between 1854 and 1856, Snow wrote, “He [God] has implanted in our organizations, the germ of mental, moral, and physical faculties capable of expansion, and possessing the rudiments of eternal progression.”⁶ Ten years later, in a letter to Dr. Martin Luther Holbrook, editor of the New York journal *Herald of Health*, Snow added “social” to the list of faculties to be expanded and described human progress as “the development of all the rational and noble faculties of man, physically, morally, mentally and socially.”⁷ Snow modified her list of faculties in a second letter to Holbrook in 1869, replacing socially with spiritually and mentally with intellectually.⁸

This list of faculties—intellectual, moral, physical, and spiritual—summarizes the areas of development Snow felt were necessary for eternal progression.⁹ While Snow advocated for the complete development of all these abilities, it was the improvement of the spiritual and moral faculties that would receive her greatest attention.

Snow reflected that when the Saints arrived in the Utah Territory, “there were no regular schools; but as soon as we obtained the necessities of life, attention was turned to educating the children mentally, but as they were born in the Church, and heirs by right to the kingdom, no thought was bestowed upon their spiritual culture.”¹⁰ Snow believed it was spiritual food that the young wanted and lacked and that the education of the world could not prepare youth to fill high positions in the kingdom of God.¹¹

Educational Themes in Snow's Poetry

Snow's educational thinking was not what President Joseph Fielding Smith later called a “vain philosophy, full of doctrine that [was] not of the Lord” but rather one comprised of principles based on eternal truth.¹² Beginning in her early twenties, her poetry would be “a means to convey her feelings and ideas.”¹³ In 1838, Joseph Smith called upon Snow to use her poetic gift to bless the Latter-day Saints. As Zion's designated poetess, she would add to her existing work and amass a collection of over five hundred poems.¹⁴ What readers find in Snow's poetry is her most cogent expression of the relationship of God

to his children, and it is this understanding and her sense of the purpose of life that undergirds what we might identify as her educational philosophy.

Four of her poems written between 1830 and 1867 embrace explicit educational themes. (The full text of these four poems is included at the end of the article.) “Genius Emancipated” portrays the fruitful effects of education and the potential for continued growth and learning. “The Tool and the Gem” focuses on the educational process and the interplay between the teacher and the learner. “To Parents” underscores the importance of educating children to prepare them to perform the mission God intended for them. “Man Capable of Higher Development,” the capstone piece, connects the educational ideas expressed in the other three poems and clearly articulates Snow’s belief that the “grand immortality man is design’d” for is the ultimate educational outcome.

The first poem, “Genius Emancipated Or, the Effects of Education on the Human Mind,” was published in 1830 in the *Ohio Star* newspaper.¹⁵ Snow was in her mid-twenties at the time and lived with her family in Mantua, Ohio. It was a season of religious seeking for Snow, who had affiliated with the Campbellites and would soon become acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith. “Genius Emancipated” speaks of immortal crowns and heavenly thrones, religious concepts consistent with Snow’s Christian beliefs. Her vivid imagery of an uneducated person chained by “Ignorance,” eventually unleashed by the freedom that only education offers, foreshadowed principles Snow would learn from Joseph Smith when she became a Latter-day Saint—concepts such as the eternal progression of the soul and intelligence being “the glory of God” (D&C 93:36).¹⁶

Beginning in Nauvoo and continuing through the end of her life, Snow would use her poetry to “chronicle her people’s history, broadcast their beliefs, and speak in their defense.”¹⁷ For example, the second poem, published in 1841, “The Transformation; or the Tool and the Gem,” was written for the students of the newly established Nauvoo University.¹⁸ In this poem, Snow echoes many of the same educational themes articulated in “Genius Emancipated.” The human mind was “a useless gem . . . wrapped in cumbrous earth” until the “transforming edge” of education “expos’d to view—its nature and its worth.”

The third poem, “To Parents,” was written for a meeting of the Polysophical Society, which met in Salt Lake City during the winter of 1854–55.¹⁹ This group (organized by Eliza’s brother Lorenzo) gathered weekly for musical and literary presentations by its members. While Snow would never bear children, she was affectionately referred to by many as a mother in Zion. In her poem “To Parents,” she reminds mothers and fathers that the “improvement of the youthful mind” should be a priority because adult action and postmortal progression depend upon the “outlines sketch’d in youth and infancy.” This poem

suggests that to Snow a primary purpose of education was to prepare people for a postmortal existence and eternal life.

The fourth poem, “Man Capable of Higher Developments,” was published in 1867 in the New York journal *Herald of Health*. This poem centers on the Latter-day Saint doctrine that men and women can become gods and goddesses, a belief that was a recurrent theme in her work with the Church auxiliary organizations.²⁰

In 1882, Snow compiled two volumes of *Recitations for the Primary Associations, in Poetry, Dialogues and Prose*. These materials were prepared for the “spiritual cultivation and progress” of the children of Zion and included “Genius Emancipated,” “The Tool and the Gem,” and “Man Capable of Higher Development.”²¹ Snow’s inclusion of these poems in her Primary curriculum suggests the value she placed on education. She would also encourage Primary leaders to explain the meaning of the recitations to the children so they were fully understood and not merely memorized.²²

Snow’s Perspective—Both Eternal and Practical

While Snow’s focus was eternal and elevated in tone, she recognized the importance of applying that perspective to daily choices and practical living. In a meeting of the Young Women of Weber Stake in 1881, Snow stressed that the key to self-improvement was to practice what they professed. “The Lord has given us perfect principles, but it will require the practice of these as well as the profession.”²³

In Snow’s poems, as in her speeches and writing, she repeatedly mentioned perfect principles, all of which she saw as theologically based. Through imagery and heightened poetic expression, she demonstrated her nuanced understanding of the connection between these eternal principles and the practical experience of living and learning. As education in the country and in the Utah Territory became increasingly secularized, she continued to keep her eye on what she saw as the ultimate purpose of education.

Snow’s Educational Principles

We are eternal beings divinely endowed with the capacity to learn. In her poem, “Man Capable of Higher Development,” Snow wrote:

We wake into being—how helpless at birth!
How short, at the longest, our visit on earth!
Too short to develop (we merely begin)
The germ of the Deity planted within.²⁴

This, of course, echoes the revolutionary doctrine that Joseph Smith taught and Eliza R. Snow embraced: each individual on earth possesses

divine potential, the capacity not only to become *like* God, but to attain godhood. For any person to receive God's approbation in life, choices between good and evil are crucial; but to the adherent of Mormonism, knowledge and personal growth take on special significance. Developing positive traits, gathering information, gaining wisdom, even learning skills—all draw a person closer to godhood. Or, as Snow expressed later in this same poem:

Though frail and imperfect, unlearn'd and unwise
 We're endow'd with capacities needful to rise
 From our embryo state, onward, upward!—at length
 To a fullness of knowledge, of wisdom and strength.²⁵

The implications in this doctrine were monumental to Snow. In her poem “To Parents,” Snow reminds parents that they do not have the power to create ability in their children but only to cultivate or advance a child's growth. The poem underscores the fact that untrained mental powers “will not arrive at their diploma'd worth, / nor shed their own inherent lustre forth.”²⁶ In other words, divine endowments will not reach their potential without education; and, as Snow so vividly portrays in “The Tool and the Gem,” that potential is often masked in a “rough exterior” with capacities “forc'd to lie in buried depths.” In this poem, education is the mechanism that enables the transformation:

Each cumbrance from its surface, clear'd—
 The gem, expos'd to view—
 Its nature and its worth appear'd—
 Its form expansive grew.²⁷

“Genius Emancipated,” the earliest of Snow's educational poems, also expresses the idea that as education frees the mind from ignorance, “unbounded prospects in succession rise.”²⁸ When Snow joined the Latter-day Saints, these thoughts were both reinforced and augmented by principles she learned from Joseph Smith. Smith taught that all “minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement”²⁹ and that God “created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect.”³⁰

Echoing these ideas, Snow taught that “God has implanted in the human organization the germ of every faculty necessary for a perfected glorified being; and these germs are all developed or undeveloped according to circumstances.”³¹ Those circumstances, of course, might include a good teacher—or a good school or a good Church organization—to help prepare a child not only for this world but for worlds without end.

Each person is an agent with freedom to choose. If one function of education is to impart knowledge regarding choices and the consequences of those choices, then education enhances not only a person's range of

options but also his or her ability to choose wisely and act honorably. In “Man Capable of Higher Development,” Snow gives poetic expression to the Latter-day Saint doctrine of moral agency.

Man becomes his own agent, with freedom to choose,
With pow’r to accept and with pow’r to refuse;
With a future before him, the sequel of life,
To which this is a preface with consequence rife.³²

The same year that “Man Capable of Higher Development” was published, Snow also published a poem for children with choice as a central theme. “Gold and Tinsel” didactically warns children to “be very careful what you choose, / and careful too, what you refuse.”³³ Through the image of “tinsel’s glitt’ring show” and the warning to not be “deceived by shining things,” Snow illustrates the principle of discernment—a skill youth need to learn in order to make wise choices, so that they “squander no talents, no health and no time.”³⁴

Snow was reared in a home where her parents “extended to their children the right, and afforded us every opportunity we desired, to examine all creeds—to hear and judge—to ‘prove all things.’”³⁵ Endorsing this pattern in her poem “To Parents,” Snow encourages those with children to “inspire your sons and daughters” to take advantage of opportunities when “education waits before your door.” This poem also expresses the responsibility of the learner:

’Tis true, the Lord his Spirit does bestow,
And thro’ that medium, streams of knowledge flow:
But when the opportunities are giv’n,
Thro’ the o’er-ruling providence of heav’n
For self-cultivation; no one need expect
That God with smiles will sanction our neglect.³⁶

Individuals who understand their own eternal nature and who develop—with a teacher’s or a parent’s encouragement—a sense of who they can become, must choose self-cultivation if they are to reach that divine potential. God may plant the germ of divinity, but he expects his children to improve it and nurture its growth.

In “Genius Emancipated,” an individual with an educated mind “aims at crowns on high, / and seeks a passport to the upper sky.”³⁷ Expanding on this idea many years later, Snow affirmed in “We Are, We Were and Are to Be” that moral agency and obedience open the door to eternal rewards:

Man, as free moral agent, has the right
And power to choose his future destiny
Thro’ his adherence to whichever law
Or code he shapes his life. The fullness of
The Everlasting Gospel of the Son

Of God contains the perfect law by which
Perfection's full proportions are attained,
With Immortality and Endless Lives.³⁸

In a piece written for children, Snow explained how agency can affect educational outcomes here in mortality: "I have noticed that some of those who go to school most, and have the best advantages do not learn as fast as others who have few privileges, but apply themselves more diligently to their studies. Merely going to school does not make scholars, without close application to study."³⁹

While individual motivation is a key to success in both religious development and secular learning, the gift of the Holy Ghost can lift students to even loftier heights. Snow "desired all to cultivate the Sixth Sense which was the Spirit of God."⁴⁰ She also explained that "we need not be in the dark; for there are ways by which we can be instructed. We have God's Spirit and agency at our head."⁴¹

To receive eternal life, our minds must be expanded and refined, transformed and perfected. Each of Snow's four educationally themed poems includes the concept of immortality (living forever) or eternal life (enjoying the quality of life God lives).⁴² According to Snow, the latter is achieved as individuals are "perfected in body, perfected in mind."⁴³ As they gather knowledge and as they refine and use that knowledge, they are transformed from "gem[s] . . . chain'd in crudeness" to "polish'd stones."⁴⁴ Snow described the need for this refining process and taught that "we are never to come to a standpoint. We are to be progressing, and growing better. If we have done well to-day, we must do still better tomorrow. We believe in eternal progression."⁴⁵

For Snow, with an eternity to grow and with the motivation provided by the exhilarating ability to choose, potential joy is limitless. She endeavored in her speeches and her poetry to inspire her audiences with that same excitement. "I aim—I live for Immortality," she wrote. "Life, knowledge, bliss, without one stopping point."⁴⁶

One danger that can attend such lofty goals is hubris. Snow warned her readers to remember the ultimate source of both their capacities and their potential. In her poem "The Tool and the Gem," she described education as the tool that could transform a person from rude, cumbrous earth into a beautiful work of art. The gem to be transformed was the human mind; the sculptor who "lent his aid" was God.⁴⁷ Individuals could assist in the transformation through their choices and personal effort, but only the guidance and power of the Lord could ever carry them to an eternal end.

Still, Snow put great stress on individual responsibility. It was not enough to pray for perfection or to ask God to change one's heart instantaneously. For her, progress was a long learning process requiring daily effort:

Of I pause and ask myself the question, What is the object of life? There certainly must be a grand and holy purpose at the foundation of our creation, else why this innate longing and thirst for knowledge—this perpetual desire for improvement and advancement. . . . The object of this life must be to test us, to try us in all things, and to make us more “perfect, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect.” We may feel that we are far from this, but it is by overcoming the small things, and being able to bear the little trials and perplexities of life patiently and meekly, striving to profit by our daily experiences, that we are enabled to become more perfect, overcoming our weaknesses and not allowing them to overcome us.⁴⁸

Snow expressed a similar sentiment in a dialogue written expressly for use in the Primary Association: “You, each one, will form your own characters, either for good or for evil, and what you do now, is laying the foundation for your future lives. If you want to be great, you must be good—if you want to be good and great, you must lay a solid foundation. A flimsy one will not support a noble structure.”⁴⁹

On another occasion, in a farewell address to the pupils in her Nauvoo School, Snow pointed the children’s minds toward their desired eternal destination: “How awkward you would feel to be introduced into the society of beings filled with intelligence and surrounded with glory, if entirely unprepared for such society? Life itself might seem too short for such a preparation. Then diligently seek wisdom and knowledge.”⁵⁰

Capacity, greatness, and usefulness are developed through improving oneself and serving others. As Snow bade farewell to her thirty-seven pupils, aged four to seventeen, in the large second-story room of Joseph Smith’s red brick store in Nauvoo in 1843, she again tried to “impress [their] minds with the importance of scholastic pursuits.”⁵¹ At the same time, Snow seemed to recognize the danger of an overemphasis on self and urged students to employ their knowledge and individual talent in being useful:

Let your thoughts be elevated—let them rise superior to the superficial glare—the pompous nothingness of the fashion of this world which ever passes away, and study to make yourselves useful. By early habit you will accustom yourselves to blend the useful with the agreeable in such a manner as that the every-day duties of life will be pleasurable; and that course of life which proposes the most usefulness, will conduce most to your individual happiness by contributing most to the happiness of others. How much better—how much nobler the principle of habituating yourselves to derive pleasure by contributing to the happiness of those around you, than to seek it in the indulgence of that little selfishness of feeling which extends no farther, and has no other object than mere personal gratification?⁵²

Snow’s “Man Capable of Higher Development” expresses the idea that the blessings of education and knowledge are intended to extend beyond the

individual self. Snow illustrates the impact of these acquired traits in “Genius Emancipated.” The untrained or undeveloped mind is a dark and dreary scene with a “strange mysterious gloom” until education enters and rises “phoenix-like, to renovate the earth.” The effects of education are not confined to the individual human mind but “swept th’ encumber’d soil, / And made it teem with honey, wine and oil.”⁵³

Again, for Snow, the purpose of life was improvement, and a goal of education was to cultivate and prepare oneself for usefulness.⁵⁴ She once boldly proclaimed that individuals “might as well have been born in some other nation or dispensation” if they did not feel they had “a mission in Zion.”⁵⁵ While a person may find joy in growth and may work constantly at self-improvement, the greatest achievement comes in turning outward, not inward, and working with others to improve life for everyone.

To this end, Snow believed that a united effort would “accomplish incalculably more than can be accomplished by the most effective individual energies.”⁵⁶ Implied in her poetic works and overtly expressed in her discourse was the idea of learning in community. Snow taught that one of the blessings of being organized was to bring people together like “coals of fire, imparting warmth and life to one another.”⁵⁷

An educator, then, must hope to enlarge students’ minds so that they can grasp the infinite possibility within them and, in the very act of doing so, help them understand that to be like God means going beyond self-gratification to a life of service. Snow believed that the more good people did, “the more their faculties would become developed.”⁵⁸ She said it was “not the talented alone, but the willing, that are the most useful” and that “in order to improve society” people must first improve themselves.⁵⁹

Conclusion

A fitting summary of the educational principles that guided Snow’s work is captured in this concluding thought to her Nauvoo class: “With the most earnest desires for your present & eternal welfare, praying God in the name of Jesus Christ that you may be blest with the richest of heaven’s blessings—that you may be preserved from the evils that are in the world, and be of that number who . . . inherit the glory of the celestial kingdom, I bid you all, an affectionate farewell!”⁶⁰

Eliza R. Snow was not just “Zion’s Poetess” and an influential auxiliary leader; she was also an educator. Her teachings and philosophical thought, much of it preserved in her poetry, will continue to influence the lives of learners willing to read her words and, like her, see the central role of education in their quest for eternal life.

Selected Poems by Eliza R. Snow with Education Themes

Poem 1: Genius Emancipated

Or, the Effects of Education on the Human Mind

Published in the *Ohio Star*, May 19, 1830

The scene was rude, and in its scenic pride,
Wild, mossy thickets cluster'd side by side,
Spontaneous rubbish cloth'd the rugged soil,
The lean brake doted on the thistle's smile;
Nature's green umbrage closely interwove,
And form'd the darksome, orbless arch above.
There, on the rocky base by Ignorance chain'd,
Untam'd, uncultur'd, savage Genius reign'd;
Thick clouds of vapor gather'd round her head,
Her winding paths thro' miry mazes led,
Her ling'ring step and vague ambiguous air
Bespoke distraction rather than despair:
Her harsh speech grated thro' the craggy oaks,
Or fell unheeded on embedded rocks;
Her harp was silent, and it matter'd not,
For no kind gale could reach th' ill-fated spot;
And when full aiming at the vocal song,
She seem'd the mimic of a palsied tongue.

At length, amid the strange mysterious gloom,
Freedom's bold spirit shook the bolted tomb;
And Education usher'd into birth,
Rose phoenix-like, to renovate the earth.

The scene is chang'd—the scenery now appears
Like hope's fine portrait of prospective years—
That mighty skill has swept th' encumber'd soil,
And made it teem with honey, wine and oil;
Fair lilies flourish and gay tulips bud,
Fresh roses bloom where prickly brambles stood,
Tall trees are bending with perennial fruit,
And golden diamonds sparkle at the root;
Unbounded prospects in succession rise
On either side, and tow'r amid the skies.

See Genius now, in splendid robes array'd,
Expanding blossoms deck her laurel'd head;

Fair gems of science brighten on her brow,
 She speaks, kings nod, and thrones and empires bow,
 She takes the harp, and letter'd pinions bear
 Enchanting music thro' the ambient air.

See her ascend Olympus' blazing height
 Where fabled deities carouse in light:
 Aspiring still, she aims at crowns on high,
 And seeks a passport to the upper sky;
 Obtains the grant, by Inspiration giv'n,
 And with its chart and compass, sails to heav'n,
 Scales the high walls, and in the bright abode
 Is crown'd immortal at the throne of God.

Poem 2: The Transformation; or the Tool and the Gem

Dedicated to the Students of the Nauvoo University;
 under the Tuition of Elder O. Pratt

Published in *Times and Seasons*, November 15, 1841

I saw a thing of rudest form,
 From mountains' base brought forth—
 A useless gem—devoid of charm,
 And wrap'd in cumbrous earth.

Its rough exterior met the eye
 With a repulsive show;
 For every charm, was forc'd to lie
 In buried depths, below.

The Sculptor came,—I wonder'd, when
 His pliant tool was brought;
 He pass'd it o'er the gem, and then
 I mark'd the change it wrought.

Each cumbrance from its surface, clear'd—
 The gem, expos'd to view—
 Its nature and its worth appear'd—
 Its form expansive grew.

By gentle strokes, it was set free—
 By softer touch, refin'd;

Till beauty, grace and majesty,
 Were with its nature join'd.

Its lustre kindled to a blaze—
 'Twas Wisdom's lamp begun,
 And soon the splendor of its rays
 Eclips'd the noon-day sun.

That gem was chain'd in crudeness, till
 The Sculptor, lent his aid:
 I wonder'd at the ready skill,
 His potent hand display'd.

But 'twas the virtue of his tool
 Of fine, transforming edge;
 Which serv'd for pencil, mould and rule—
 For polisher and sledge.

The *tool* requires a skilful hand—
 That *gem*, no charm should bind;
 That tool is *Education*, and
 That gem, the *Human Mind*.

Poem 3: To Parents

Composed winter 1854–55; published in *The Mountaineer*, March 10, 1860

FATHERS and mothers! love for Zion's weal
 Inspires the muse to proffer an appeal,
 In Zion's name. Her welfare is our aim,
 And mutual int'rest; therefore I will claim,
 Not the indulgence of your list'ning ear,
 Nor the vain plaudits sycophants would hear;
 But your attention, thoughtful, calm and grave—
 Your sober judgment I would fondly crave.

You all are stewards of what you possess:
 You may abuse or use in righteousness;
 And thus the children giv'n you of the Lord
 May prove your curse, or prove a rich reward.

Early in life, is the direction giv'n
 Which leads them down to hell or up to heav'n.
 As outlines sketch'd in youth and infancy,
 The manhood and womanhood will be.
 The infant mind is like an empty cell,
 Where good and evil find a place to dwell,
 And may, by culture, be enlarg'd and fill'd,
 And truth and error, one or both, instill'd.

Our bodies, thro' exertion, strength obtain—
 By exercise, to proper growth attain:
 Let healthy, vig'rous limbs, inertly lie,
 How soon they perish—ultimately die!
 And without practice too, the mental powers,
 Weak, unsupplied with needful, useful stores;
 Will not arrive at their diploma'd worth,
 Nor shed their own inherent lustre forth.

We cannot pow'rs and faculties create,
 But 'tis our province, both to cultivate;
 And while life's busy scenes are hurrying thro',
 The most important is the first to do;
 And surely none can more of worth combine,
 Than the improvement of the youthful mind.

Will ignorance—will wit and sportive glee—
 Will nonsense qualify your sons to be
 Your representatives to carry on
 The work you have commenced, when you are gone?
 In high important offices to act—
 As Zion's judges, business to transact
 In things momentous for all Israel's sake,
 With the salvation of the world at stake?

When education waits before your door—
 When her rich streams in golden currents pour;
 Altho' yourselves have not the time to sip,
 Inspire your sons and daughters too, to dip.
 Prompt them to mental service, while the mind,
 Like pliant boughs, is easily inclined—
 While they with readiness and pleasure take
 The impressions which the sculptor's chisels make.

Your sons as heralds, soon must go abroad
To face the world—to teach the truth of God—
The wise—the erudite of earth to meet—
Knowledge with knowledge—mind with mind compete—
All their attainments criticised and tried,
Before tribunals of ungodly pride:
Where no apologies will be received,
And no mistakes and errors be retriev'd.

'Tis true, the Lord his Spirit does bestow,
And thro' that medium, streams of knowledge flow:
But when the opportunities are giv'n,
Thro' the o'er-ruling providence of heav'n,
For self-improvement; no one need expect
That God will smile upon our own neglect.
The Lord assists all those who do their part—
The dilatory ones must feel the smart.

Would not your bowels of compassion yearn
To think your child, in stranger lands must learn,
By force of cruel circumstances, what
He might have been, at home, in kindness taught?

Among the brutes, and brutish of our kind,
The pow'r of sinew rules, instead of mind:
Where cultivation sheds its genial ray,
Knowledge is pow'r, and mental strength bears sway.

As fins obscure the vision of the blind,
So ign'rance hides the lustre of the mind—
To rude unpolish'd gems, it will compare,
Till education stamps an impress there.

Should Zion's sons, in aught deficient be,
That will adorn, or yield utility?

And very soon your blooming daughters will
Their destin'd place as wives and mothers fill.
The best—the noblest boon they can receive—
The richest fortune, you have power to give—
The wealthiest patrimony under heav'n,
Is Education timely—wisely giv'n.
Not erudition's superficial gloss—
Its glitt'ring tinsel, and its flimsy dross,

Vain useless lumber—foolish, empty boast,
Which constitutes the braggadocia's toast.

Instead of fabled, false, fictitious glare,
Teach them what was—what will be, and what are;
Which will their minds with useful stores supply—
Expand, ennoble, and exalt them high,
Teach them the principles of life and health,
And make them rich with intellectual wealth:
As your best legacy, teach them to find,
By constant searchings, treasures for the mind:
All else will perish or elude their grasp,
Tho' much they cherish—tho' they fondly clasp;
But what they gather up of mental worth,
Will not forsake them when they leave the earth.

The pow'r of method students gain in school,
Forms a credential—constitutes a tool,
An operative instrument, whereby
Their own resources, they can self-apply.

Then, let your children be well taught in youth,
Upon the basis of eternal Truth—
Self-cultivated too, as well as taught—
Train'd to reflection, and inur'd to thought:
And both in Time, and in Eternity,
Your sons, as pillars, in the church, will be—
As chosen saviors on Mount Zion stand,
And sway the royal sceptre of command:
Your daughters too, as polish'd stones, will shine,
And ornament their parentage and line—
To grace—to dignify celestial courts,
Where the illustrious from all worlds resort;
And mingle in the high assemblies, where
The Holy Ones—the Gods and angels are.

Poem 4: Man Capable of Higher Developments

Composed February 1867; published in *Herald of Health*, April 1867

MAN'S tide of existence is fearfully chang'd—
From God and from nature how widely estrang'd!

Vice, dandled by custom, mocks nature's designs,
And existence is lessend' where virtue declines.

We wake into being—how helpless at birth!
How short, at the longest, our visit on earth!
Too short to develop (we merely begin)
The germ of the Deity planted within.

As a father transmits from the father to son,
So God, our Creator, our Father has done;
There's no attribute God, in his glorified form,
Possesses, but man, too, inherits the germ.

Though frail and imperfect, unlearn'd and unwise
We're endow'd with capacities needful to rise
From our embryo state, onward, upward!—at length
To a fullness of knowledge, of wisdom and strength.

Man becomes his own agent, with freedom to choose,
With pow'r to accept and with pow'r to refuse;
With a future before him, the sequel of life,
To which this is a preface with consequence rife.

He may learn how to strengthen this life's feeble chain,
And redeem the longevity man should obtain—
Develop capacity, greatness and worth,
By improving himself and improving the earth.

He should squander no talents, no health and no time;
All, all is important—age, manhood and prime.
As we sow we shall reap, what we earn we'll receive—
We'll be judged by our works, not by what we believe.

We now lay the foundations for what we shall be,
For life's current extends to Eternity's sea;
Whatever ennobles, debases, refines,
Around our hereafter an impress entwines.

We're the offspring of God; shall we stoop to degrade
The form which at first in his image was made?
To honor our beings and callings, while here,
Secures an admission to life's higher sphere.

In the likeness of Deity gracefully form'd,
 With his own noble attributes richly adorn'd;
 For a grand immortality man is design'd—
 Perfected in body, perfected in mind!

Jolene Merica (who can be reached via email at byustudies@byu.edu) wrote this article as part of her doctoral dissertation in Instructional Psychology and Technology at BYU. Her interest in and respect for the contributions of Latter-day Saint women coalesced while serving as the administrative assistant to the Relief Society General Presidency during the Bonnie D. Parkin administration.

1. Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson, "A Wary Heart Becomes 'Fixed Unalterably': Eliza R. Snow's Conversion to Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 30, no. 2 (2004): 98.

2. This title was reportedly given her by Joseph Smith sometime in early fall 1838. [Emmeline B. Wells], "Eliza Roxie Snow Smith: A Tribute of Affection," *Woman's Exponent* 16 (December 15, 1887): 109.

3. B. H. Roberts, *Joseph Smith, the Prophet-Teacher: A Discourse* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1908), 12, 62. Brigham Henry Roberts (1857–1933) was an assistant Church historian for thirty-three years.

4. Emmeline B. Wells, "Pen Sketch of an Illustrious Woman," *Woman's Exponent* 9 (September 1, 1880): 50.

5. Eliza R. Snow, "To the Young Sisters in Provo," *Woman's Exponent* 2 (April 15, 1874): 170, italics in original.

6. Eliza R. Snow, *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political*, 2 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1856), 1:135. Snow wrote this piece for the Polysophical Society, a biweekly gathering organized by Lorenzo Snow where "speeches, songs, readings recitations and instrumental music" were presented. See also Eliza R. Snow, *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1884), 251–53; and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "Three Women and the Life of the Mind," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43 (Winter 1975): 28–32.

7. Jill Mulvay Derr and Matthew J. Grow, "Letters on Mormon Polygamy and Progeny: Eliza R. Snow and Martin Luther Holbrook," *BYU Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 157.

8. Derr and Grow, "Letters on Mormon Polygamy," 161.

9. See Snow, "To the Young Sisters in Provo," 170; "Special Meeting of Kanosh Relief Society," *Woman's Exponent* 9 (December 1, 1880): 102–3; "Minutes of Quarterly Conference of the Relief Society of Utah Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 13 (March 15, 1885): 159–60; Eliza R. Snow, "Well, If We Make It So," *Recitations for the Primary Associations, in Poetry, Dialogues, and Prose No. 1: Adapted to the Capacities of Members from the Age of Four to Ten Years* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1882), 177.

10. "R. S. Reports: Residence Elder John Pack, Jan. 17, 1878," *Woman's Exponent* 6 (February 15, 1878): 138.

11. "The Second Annual Meeting of 10th Ward Young Ladies' Retrenchment Association," *Woman's Exponent* 3 (February 1, 1875): 130. See also "East Porterville, Sept., 1878," *Woman's Exponent* 7 (October 1, 1878): 66.

12. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 3:274.

13. Jill Mulvay Derr, "Form and Feeling in a Carefully Crafted Life: Eliza R. Snow's 'Poem of Poems,'" *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 1 (2000): 7.

14. Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson, *Eliza R. Snow: The Complete Poetry* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), 73, xiii; [Wells], "Eliza Roxie Snow Smith," 109.

15. Eliza R. Snow, "Genius Emancipated," in Derr and Davidson, *Complete Poetry*, 36–37; also in Snow, *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political*, 1:31.

16. Derr and Davidson, *Complete Poetry*, 1–4; see also Derr and Davidson, "Wary Heart."

17. Derr and Davidson, *Complete Poetry*, 73.

18. Eliza R. Snow, "The Transformation; or the Tool and the Gem," in Derr and Davidson, *Complete Poetry*, 189–90; also in Snow, *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political*, 1:29.

19. Eliza R. Snow, "To Parents," in Derr and Davidson, *Complete Poetry*, 465–69; also in Snow, *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political, Also Two Articles in Prose* (Salt Lake City: Latter-day Saints' Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1877), 2:156.

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21. "Primary Speaker," *Woman's Exponent* 11 (September 1, 1882): 53.

22. Snow, *Recitations*, preface.

23. "Quarterly Conference of the Y. L. M. I. A. of Weber Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 10 (July 1, 1881): 23–24.

24. Snow, "Man Capable," in *Complete Poetry*, 746.

25. Snow, "Man Capable," in *Complete Poetry*, 746.

26. Snow, "To Parents," in *Complete Poetry*, 466.

27. Snow, "Transformation," in *Complete Poetry*, 189.

28. Snow, "Genius Emancipated," in *Complete Poetry*, 37.

29. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d ed., rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948 printing), 6:311 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

30. *History of the Church*, 2:8.

31. Eliza R. Snow Smith, "Conscience," *Woman's Exponent* 12 (September 1, 1883): 53.

32. Snow, "Man Capable," in *Complete Poetry*, 746.

33. Eliza R. Snow, "Gold and Tinsel," in Derr and Davidson, *Complete Poetry*, 751.

34. Snow, "Gold and Tinsel," in *Complete Poetry*, 751, 750; Snow, "Man Capable," in *Complete Poetry*, 747.

35. Eliza R. Snow, "Sketch of My Life," in Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy Snow* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 8–9.

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38. Eliza R. Snow, "We Are, We Were and Are to Be," in Derr and Davidson, *Complete Poetry*, 837.
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41. Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: General Board of YLMIA, Deseret News, 1911), 39.
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47. Snow, "Transformation," in *Complete Poetry*, 190.
48. Eliza R. Snow, "The Object of Life," *Woman's Exponent* 7 (November 1, 1878): 81.
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53. Snow, "Genius Emancipated," in *Complete Poetry*, 37.
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57. "Utah Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 12 (October 15, 1883): 78.
58. "Relief Society Conference," *Woman's Exponent* 8 (June 1, 1879): 252.
59. "R. S. Reports," *Woman's Exponent* 8 (November 1, 1879): 86.
60. Snow, "Nauvoo Journal," 71.