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## “Thy Mind, O Man, Must Stretch”

*John W. Welch*

*This forum address was delivered May 17, 2011, at Brigham Young University. Dr. Welch was invited to speak on this occasion as the recipient of the 2010–2011 Karl G. Maeser Distinguished Faculty Lecturer Award, BYU’s highest faculty honor.*

I am truly grateful for this recognition. And thanks to all of you for your presence here today, especially to my family to whom I owe so much. I’m glad my brother Jim could play the organ today. He and I were roommates in Helaman Halls in 1968; with great talents, he is a brother I have always looked up to. Also, it is fun to be able to address you here in the de Jong Concert Hall. I remember ushering here as a freshman in 1964. My wife, Jeannie, and I have many good memories of dates and events here in this building. I’m so glad that she and I have been able to share such an abundant life together.

Concerning this award, let me note that we are currently celebrating several fiftieth jubilee anniversaries, of BYU Studies, the BYU Honors Program, and the Harold B. Lee Library. This year is also King James Version’s 400th anniversary (its 8th jubilee), and Mormon’s 1,600th birthday (his 32nd jubilee)—all of these representing huge parts of my life. So, I count it as a special privilege to be added as the 50th recipient to the list of this award’s previous designees, who include many of my teachers, mentors, role models, and senior colleagues. In addition to our family trees, we also have our intellectual genealogies, made up of people who have forged the roots and filled out the branches of our minds, interests, ideals, and testimonies. How fortunate we are for such influences in our lives.

What a challenge it has been to prepare this talk! As this talk has developed and changed, it has also changed me. At times like this, words simply fail. Preparing this talk has made me more grateful than ever for BYU. This university is a beacon on a hill that cannot be hid. Its influence will go forth to bring to pass much goodness and righteousness.

As I puzzled over what to say, I felt directed to re-read the BYU Mission Statement. I have read this statement many times over the years, though probably not often enough. I now see it as something like a patriarchal blessing for the university. As I looked at it and at my thirty-one years on the faculty, I felt like the boy in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story of the old man of the mountain, as it dawned on me how closely my experiences and desires have come to track the contours of this mission statement. While that statement is not holy scripture, I hope it's okay for a true blue cougar to bear testimony that the BYU Mission Statement is good and true. I believe it was inspired. It was drafted in 1981, in short order, at a quiet mountain retreat, by the recently installed BYU President Jeffery R. Holland.<sup>1</sup> It was tweaked only a little, and then approved without hesitation by the Board of Trustees, led by President Spencer W. Kimball. As an overriding take-home message for you from my remarks today, it would be, "Follow this mission statement." You can find it on the BYU web site. Take any line in it, and it will bless your intellectual life with perspective and purpose.

My title, "Thy Mind, O Man, Must Stretch," comes from the poignant letter dictated by Joseph Smith from the dungeon of Liberty Jail (that so-called Temple-Prison that was more often prison than temple). The Prophet revealed these words almost five months into his miserable and legally unjustifiable detention there. After counseling the Church to avoid pride and trifling conversations, the Prophet burst beyond the walls of his surroundings with these expansive words: "The things of God are of deep import, and time and experience and careful and ponderous and solemn



The rock formation known as the Old Man of the Mountain. Photo courtesy Jeffrey Joseph, at Wikipedia Commons. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's story "The Great Stone Face," a boy searches and waits for a great man who will match this majestic face portrayed in a stone cliff near his village; as he grows in wisdom and serves his village, the people discover that the boy has become that great man.

### **Brigham Young University Mission Statement**

The mission of Brigham Young University—founded, supported, and guided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—is to assist individuals in their quest for perfection and eternal life. That assistance should provide a period of intensive learning in a stimulating setting where a commitment to excellence is expected and the full realization of human potential is pursued.

All instruction, programs, and services at BYU, including a wide variety of extracurricular experiences, should make their own contribution toward the balanced development of the total person. Such a broadly prepared individual will not only be capable of meeting personal challenge and change but will also bring strength to others in the tasks of home and family life, social relationships, civic duty, and service to mankind.

To succeed in this mission the university must provide an environment enlightened by living prophets and sustained by those moral virtues which characterize the life and teachings of the Son of God. In that environment these four major educational goals should prevail:

- All students at BYU should be taught the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any education is inadequate which does not emphasize that His is the only name given under heaven whereby mankind can be saved. Certainly all relationships within the BYU community should reflect devout love of God and a loving, genuine concern for the welfare of our neighbor.
- Because the gospel encourages the pursuit of all truth, students at BYU should receive a broad university education. The arts, letters, and sciences provide the core of such an education, which will help students think clearly, communicate effectively, understand important ideas in their own cultural tradition as well as that of others, and establish clear standards of intellectual integrity.
- In addition to a strong general education, students should also receive instruction in the special fields of their choice. The university cannot provide programs in all possible areas of professional or vocational work, but in those it does provide the preparation must be excellent. Students who graduate from BYU should be capable of competing with the best in their fields.

- Scholarly research and creative endeavor among both faculty and students, including those in selected graduate programs of real consequence, are essential and will be encouraged.

In meeting these objectives BYU's faculty, staff, students, and administrators should be anxious to make their service and scholarship available to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in furthering its work worldwide. In an era of limited enrollments, BYU can continue to expand its influence both by encouraging programs that are central to the Church's purposes and by making its resources available to the Church when called upon to do so.

We believe the earnest pursuit of this institutional mission can have a strong effect on the course of higher education and will greatly enlarge Brigham Young University's influence in a world we wish to improve.

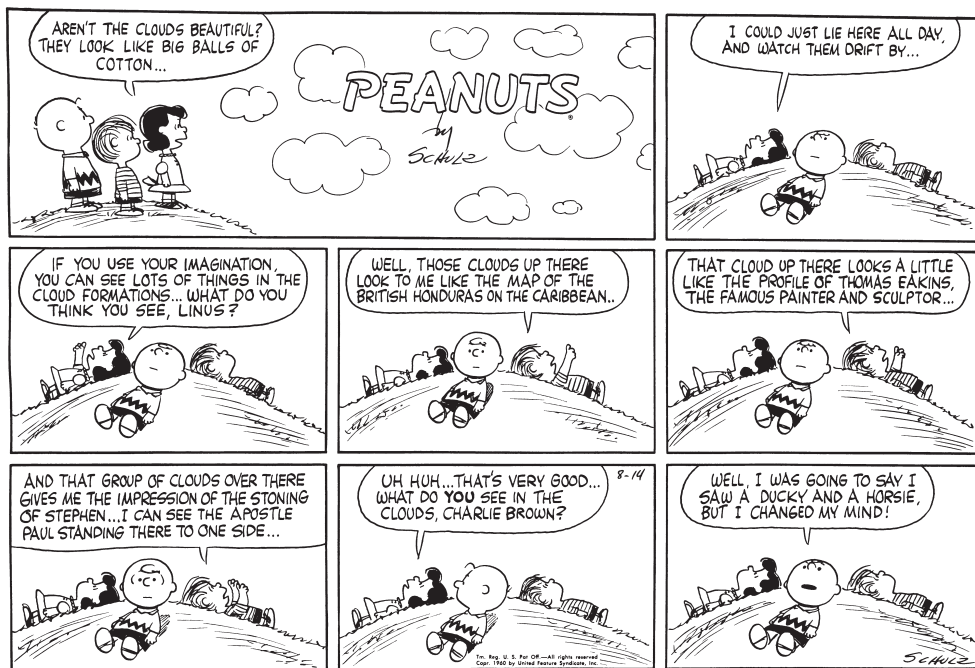
—Approved by the BYU Board of Trustees November 4, 1981

thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O Man [and we may add O Woman as well], if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of eternal expanse; he must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God, than the vain imaginations of the human heart, none but fools will trifle with the souls of men.”<sup>2</sup>

Altogether, these expansive words reward deep reflection. Here is a most compelling mandate for a broad BYU education and a lifetime of learning. Joseph's prophetic words impel, to the *n*th degree, all who are not just scholars who happen to be Mormons, but Mormons who happen to be scholars.

Being a part of Mormon scholarship at BYU has been a perpetually rewarding, mind-expanding experience for me. There is nothing closed-minded about being a true Latter-day Saint. With the Holy Ghost, you will never get a “disk full” warning. Every year, there have been new and amazing discoveries.

You might wonder, so, how does this happen? How does one's mind expand to see or discover new things? In this acceptance speech today, I thought it would be appropriate to try to explain how this has worked for me personally, and, as I know, for many others as well. Actually, saying how any discovery happens is a pretty tall order, because most discoveries are



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not planned or orchestrated. They often come as flashes of inspiration, or as the Doctrine & Covenants says, “as . . . moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 68:3). But whenever they happen, especially when they involve seeing some new extension or application of gospel-truth, the moment is unmistakable, bringing an abiding sense of joy and satisfaction.

Consider these lines from a Peanuts comic strip. Charlie Brown, Lucy, and Linus are lying on a hillside looking up at the clouds. Lucy asks, “What do you think you see, Linus?” Linus says, “Well, those clouds up there look to me like the map of the British Honduras on the Caribbean. That cloud up there looks a little like the profile of Thomas Eakins, the famous painter and sculptor . . . And that group of clouds over there gives me the impression of the stoning of Stephen . . . I can see the Apostle Paul standing there to one side . . .” Lucy says, “Uh huh . . . That’s very good . . . What do **you** see in the clouds, Charlie Brown?” He answers, “Well, I was going to say I saw a ducky and a horsie, but I changed my mind!”

What might help us to see like Linus? The first thing is to be looking, purposefully and constructively, for something of value. The mind expands by recognition, or re-cognizing. Seeing in one thing something that is

faintly reminiscent of something else that is higher, deeper, or of greater substance is the beginning of knowing and not just observing. Connecting and seeing recurring patterns, such as those with which the gospel is replete, is the beginning of discernment and the development of potentially meaningful relationships.

For example, one day as my wife and I were visiting Chartres Cathedral, we listened to a guide explain a stained-glass window that had twelve scenes depicting the parable of the Good Samaritan on the bottom, and twelve scenes telling the story of Adam and Eve on the top.<sup>3</sup> This pairing, which struck me at first as very odd, turned out to spawn meaningful connections at every point with not just a single act of kindness, but with the broad pattern of the eternal plan of salvation. In this context, the man who goes down from Jerusalem, a holy place, and falls among the robbers, represents the fall of Adam and Eve and of all mankind as we all have come down from our heavenly home and have fallen among the forces of evil. The Good Samaritan, who saves the injured man, represents the Savior, who comes, has compassion, and alone is able to save all who have been left half dead, having suffered a first but not yet the second death. He anoints with oil, washes wounds with his wine, binds us, and promises to return a second time. But the initial burst of connective insight is just the beginning of the discovery process. Extensive reading, pondering, and lots of work soon yielded further insights and even found that this understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ was evidenced in this long-lost line of allegorical Christian interpretation stretching back at least as far as the second century A.D.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, most discoveries require lots of hard work. As a tax lawyer in Los Angeles, I repeatedly saw the value of the Mormon commitment to hard work. In one case, I represented movie-star Burt Reynolds. A tax issue had arisen whether he was a California or a Florida resident, and his case hung in the balance. People had been over the documents many times. A couple days before our hearing in Sacramento, I decided to double check everything. I even went back over Burt's appointment books, to see if any detail might have been missed. And there it was: every year Burt was always in Florida on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Well, I walked into the hearing humming, "I'll be home for Christmas." The legal issue of residency, after all, is all about where home is. I introduced this new fact into the record, and the State asked for a recess. When they returned, they dropped the case. The point of this little story is simply that I was glad to have gone the extra mile.

Indeed, most academic discoveries come after poring over materials again and again. The mind expands by hard work over sustained stretches. Thus, the first paragraph of the BYU Mission Statement emphasizes that



a BYU education demands "a period of intensive learning" with a high "commitment to excellence." Our BYU way of doing things enthusiastically embraces work. There are no shortcuts to good scholarship. Brilliant ideas remain mere figments until they are verbalized, embodied in images, and brought to life. In Joseph Smith's words, this takes "time, experience, careful and ponderous . . . thoughts."<sup>5</sup> We learn best by strenuous effort. I remember vividly my student days at BYU, at Oxford, and at Duke, because those experiences were so intense; they indelibly seared words and ideas upon my mind. Think of how much you have learned in accelerated courses, in the compressed MTC experience, during intense travel abroad, or by competing under pressure-packed circumstances. A Mormon motto is, "We do hard things." Do not shy away from hard work, from long course assignments, or from demanding challenges, for work precedes the a-ha moment.

But hard work alone is also not enough. It is possible to exert endless energy spinning one's wheels. To expand our understanding, we must formulate more precise, potentially answerable questions, and then keep searching, believing that an answer is out there somewhere, giving the scriptures credence, suspending judgment, giving God the benefit of the doubt, praying every day for his guidance, trusting that he knows the answer, that it can somehow make sense, and not presuming that the answer must necessarily come out "your way." What we are looking for is frequently going to be found outside of the box. Sometimes the answer is "none of the above," or "all of the above."

Under its second bullet point, the BYU Mission Statement speaks of "the pursuit" of truth. It doesn't speak of "inventing" or "voting on" truth, but rather of "pursuing" truth. We expand our knowledge by looking for things, pursuing things that exist beyond our current understanding. How can one logically pursue something that one assumes does not exist? As former BYU Academic Vice President Robert K. Thomas said, "Skeptics, by definition, cannot affirm anything—even their own skepticism."<sup>6</sup> Thus, discoveries that have given me the greatest satisfaction have begun by assuming the correctness of a text, the truthfulness of a proposition, or the wisdom of an instruction given by one in authority.

In a recent email, Terry Warner, one of my philosophy mentors and the creator of the Education in Zion exhibit here on campus, spoke of what he sees as the astonishing momentum that has developed in Mormon studies by many first-rate scholars here at BYU. He said: "I have wondered whether the first dislodged stone in what is becoming almost an avalanche of scholarship was not Nibley's gutsy determination to see what could be made of the available historical evidence by assuming (at least the possibility of) the truth of LDS claims, rather than by assuming their falsehood. . . . It was



Leibniz,” he added, “who insisted that one cannot adequately understand the meaning of a proposition without assuming its truth.”<sup>7</sup>

Of course, the scientific method rightly propounds a hypothesis and then tries to invalidate it; but still the hypothesis is not considered false *before* it has been found to have failed. There is something wrong—as much in academic halls as in courtrooms—about assuming something or someone to be guilty until proven innocent.

As an example, when I began teaching a course on ancient laws in the Book of Mormon, I ran across the case of Seantum, the man who secretly stabbed his brother seated on the judgment seat and was detected by Nephi’s prophecy in Helaman 8–9. Since there were no witnesses, how could Seantum be executed under the law of Moses, which required two or three witnesses in order to convict? Rather than sadly conceding that there must be an embarrassing blunder here, I continued studying more about ancient Hebrew law, only to learn quite unexpectedly at a Jewish law conference that an ancient exception to the two-witness rule, which was traced in rabbinic law as far back as Joshua 7, allowed that the two-witness rule could be satisfied if the culprit confessed voluntarily outside of court, or God’s hand was involved in the detection of the offender, and if corroborating physical evidence (such as blood on the skirts of his cloak) was found. As it turns out, the Book of Mormon goes out of its way to report these very points. The case against Seantum is not an embarrassment, but remarkably sound.<sup>8</sup>

When we come up against things that seem out of sorts or nonsensical, our critical instincts lure us into thinking that there must be something wrong. But, a special joy attaches to the discovery of a new insight that began with the thought that something was wrong but turned out to be right. It’s the joy of finally seeing an odd little puzzle piece snap into place in the bigger picture. It’s the joy that comes from the great gospel principle of reversal: that by small things come great purposes; that the Lord’s ways are not always the world’s ways (Isa. 55:8); that the poor are rich; and that those who lose their lives for Christ’s sake will be the ones who will ultimately find eternal joy (Matt. 10:39).

So, I go on high alert when I notice interesting anomalies, which are often clues of something going on below the surface. Truth will be found in odd places, as high and low and broad as the eternal expanse, as Joseph said. Moses’s mind was certainly stretched by the amazing things he saw in unexpected places, which things he had never supposed (Moses 1:10). No one was more surprised by what Joseph Smith was told in his First Vision than was he himself. It was not at all what he was expecting.<sup>9</sup>

Recently, reading on a plane to Portland, Oregon, I noticed something unexpected in the hardly ever mentioned parable of the two sons in

Matthew 21. After Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the chief priests approached him, in the Temple, and demanded: "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?" (23). Jesus answered by telling a story about a certain man who had two sons. When asked to go down and work in the vineyard, the first son initially refused, but then he went, while the other initially said yes but then does not go, or so it seems (28–30). This parable may be useful in parenting, and it can be read at that level; but remember, that's not what Jesus was asked about. With the question of authority in mind, as I read this parable in the Greek, something jumped off the page at me. Think about it: When did a certain father have two sons, one who went and the other who did not? When did the first (the firstborn) say, "*ou thelo*," which in Greek means "I will it not," or "I'd rather not" or "it is not my *will*." As the Greek continues, that son reconciled himself (not repented himself) and went. In contrast, the "other" (the *heteros*) son simply said, "*Ego*," meaning "I." But "I what"? Readers must fill in this blank. In this verse, the word "go" in the King James Version is italicized because it has only been implied there. One might as well supply other words: "I . . . will have it my way," or "I . . . will get the glory." In any event, this egotistic son did not go. As Latter-day Saints, we can easily but unexpectedly see at this deeper level how this unassuming little parable answers the all-important questions about Jesus's authority. He received it from the Father in the Council in Heaven when he was commissioned to go down and do, not his will, but the will of the Father.<sup>10</sup>

Believing that God has revealed and yet will reveal many great and important things commits us to approach some things differently from the rest of the world, and for me that's okay. There will always be worldly things that will make it difficult to be a Latter-day Saint, by making some Mormon beliefs objectionable, frustrating, or awkward. And we won't always have all the answers to these difficulties, certainly not the moment they first arise. But this too invites further stretching and expansion. Our ongoing task as Latter-day Saints is to locate defensible answers that are also consistent with our scriptures, doctrines, and assumptions, and to understand how opposing views often depend principally upon other fundamentally different assumptions.

For example, the Mormon point of view sees work differently from the world, because we know that God himself has a work, and it is his glory; and we affirm, by our actions, that faith without works is dead (Moses 1:39; James 2:26).

We also see ethics quite differently because, for us, humans are not disconnected creatures with whom we selectively enter into social contracts, but all are related to us, as members of our premortal family.<sup>11</sup> That

expansive factor transforms the foundations of ethics and the meaning of ethnicity.

We see moral agency differently. As President Hinckley taught, false freedom is freedom to do what one likes; true freedom is freedom to do what one ought.<sup>12</sup>

We see history differently. The reality of the Apostasy shows that the fittest don't always survive.

We see power differently, because we take seriously the scriptural curse placed on anyone who misuses power for glory or gain, and we know that the greatest must be the servants of all (D&C 121:36–39; Matt. 23:11). Because of this, we do not share the common animus against hierarchy and authority.

We see issues of gender equality differently. The secular world would collapse equality into sameness. But equality does not mean identity.<sup>13</sup> Four plus four, and two plus six, are different, but both are equal to eight.

At BYU we have the constant opportunity to bring many Mormon insights to bear on scholarly topics, and just as much to bring scholarly perspectives to bear on topics of importance to Latter-day Saints. If we think there isn't a Mormon point of view on any subject, it may well be that we haven't yet looked high or deep or wide enough.

With stretching the mind comes an openness to embrace more. The BYU Mission Statement speaks of the pursuit of *all* truth. Our desire is for further light and understanding, to circumscribe all truth. To me, Mormonism thrives because it welcomes the idea that the world is fundamentally pluralistic by nature. Over and over, the Mormon world view relishes multiplicity. Words found traditionally only in the singular are boldly spoken of as plurals in Mormon doctrine: we speak of priesthoods, intelligences, noble and great ones, two creations, worlds without number, continuing revelations, scriptures, covenants, degrees of glory, eternal lives, saviors on Mt. Zion, and even gods. Joseph Smith spoke of there being many kingdoms and that “unto every kingdom is given [its own] law,” and “all truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it” (D&C 88:38, 93:30). To me, such statements of cosmological relativities unleash and transfigure the concepts of natural law and eternal truths.<sup>14</sup>

It took a century for the world to even begin to catch up with this expansive notion revealed by Joseph Smith. For example, I am fascinated by the implications of Gödel's 1931 incompleteness theorem, which demonstrates that a system can be either complete or consistent but not both.<sup>15</sup> Thus, systematic theologies or rational philosophies may well be internally consistent, but they do so at the expense of completeness. Sets and abstractions may be helpful, but they are simply extractions of selected elements of otherwise messy realities. Mormon thought, in contrast, privileges fullness,

abundance, completeness, and all that the Father has, even if that means that Mormon life becomes joyously overloaded or torn by competing pressures that pull, stretch, and expand us in many ways. This may produce episodes of cognitive dissonance, social quandaries, mystery, and uncertainty, but if forced to choose, Mormon thought will always prefer openness over closedness, boldly inviting further growth, progression, and—fortunately for us in academia—further questions.

This dynamic view has certainly influenced my legal thinking. Over the years I have taught classes about corporations, partnerships, and other organizations that are all managed by various kinds of officers, trustees, and administrators. The law holds these people to standards called fiduciary duties. Despite thousands of cases, the law hasn't addressed the question of what makes one fiduciary duty high and another low. But in our complex world, one size does not fit all. Thinking more expansively, Professor Brett Scharffs and I have identified a set of factors that reveal whether a fiduciary duty is high, medium, or low, and what degree of duty is required of fiduciaries in all kinds of settings.<sup>16</sup> Thinking this way may seem obvious enough to you as a Latter-day Saint, since you already believe that there will be varying degrees of treatment and glory for every person according to their individual deeds and circumstances. But recent events in the corporate world show how much in need we are of a more robust legal approach to the duties owed by people in positions of greatest trust.

Concerning duties, let me mention one other part of this subject that has occupied much of my thought in the last decade.<sup>17</sup> Because we know that there must be an opposition in all things, LDS thought often harmonizes traditional paradoxes. The world has fought wars over whether we are saved by faith or works. We peacefully say, "Both." People argue over whether we come to know by study or faith. We confidently say, "Both." "Each of us must accommodate the mixture of reason and revelation in our lives. The gospel not only permits but *requires* it," President Packer has said.<sup>18</sup> In the same way, Mormon thought brings together both rights and duties. Rights and duties go hand in glove with each other, for with all rights come duties. I think this is because with all rights come powers and privileges, and with powers and privileges come duties. As Latter-day Saints, again, we intuitively sense this, for we know that all who have been warned have the duty to warn their neighbors (D&C 88:81), and that with greater knowledge comes greater stewardship and accountability, and that "Because I have been given much, I too must give."<sup>19</sup>

But this is decidedly not the way people usually think about rights. The world usually thinks that, because I have a right, someone else has a duty, namely to protect or fulfill my right. While that is true enough, at the same

time, if I claim a right, power, or privilege, I also acquire a duty as its necessary flip side.<sup>20</sup>

I have no doubt that the twentieth century will go down in history as the century of rights: voting rights, workers' rights, civil rights, human rights, privacy rights, disability rights, and many more. With these rights in place, I can only hope that the twenty-first century will someday go down in history as the century of duties: civic duties, human duties, fiduciary duties, religious duties, environmental duties, and duties to future generations. I yearn for the day when we will have a Bill of Duties to go with our Bill of Rights. As world resources become scarcer, and as all nations, tongues, and peoples become more vulnerably interdependent, the idea of individual rights will necessarily change. How many rights can the world support without all people assuming commensurate duties? The point is not to take rights away but to recognize the duties that are inherent in those very privileges.

Speaking of privileges, we in the academic world are certainly among the most privileged. We enjoy the extraordinary blessings of time to read, think, write, listen, and talk about things we love. With those blessings, one would have thought, would also come a great awareness of our responsibilities. As Joseph said, "None but fools will trifle with the souls" of others.<sup>21</sup> Yet, as Stanford President Donald Kennedy wrote in 1997, "The responsibility of the professoriate is a difficult subject about which surprisingly little has been said,"<sup>22</sup> and that serious defect still remains inexcusably unaddressed.

I am pleased that we at BYU Studies have adopted a code of academic duties (see sidebar). This multidisciplinary LDS quarterly journal is open to all authors and readers. Its code draws on scriptural mandates, hoping to encourage among LDS scholars such things as unity ("if ye are not one, ye are not mine" [D&C 38:27]); charity (for, if we have not charity, we are nothing [1 Cor. 13:2]); edification ("the goal is to be spiritually and intellectually upbuilding"), and honesty and integrity (for, accuracy and reliability are the essence of scholarship). And, by the way, it's all right, like Charlie Brown, to see a ducky and a horsie, if that's what you honestly see.

As President Monson has often said, duty basically means charitably putting other people ahead of one's own self-interests.<sup>23</sup> Our minds stretch the farthest when they are pure and actively concerned about the welfare of others. Unselfishness is what allows the mind to stretch without snapping. Thus, for good reason, the BYU Mission Statement again stretches us to know as much as possible, not only about our own culture, but also the cultures of others. It is rightly said that he who knows only one culture knows no culture.

I like the way George Handley, an associate editor of *BYU Studies*, sees this. He writes, "My discovery [has been] that listening carefully to other

### BYU Studies Author Guidelines: Article Submissions

BYU Studies strives to explore scholarly perspectives on LDS topics. Contributions from all fields of learning are invited. BYU Studies strives to publish articles that openly reflect a Latter-day Saint point of view and are obviously relevant to subjects of general interest to Latter-day Saints, while conforming to high scholarly standards. BYU Studies seeks articles that document or analyze, in a scholarly manner, topics related to LDS history, culture, society, art, language, literature, science, thought, or experience. Short studies and research involving significant historical documents are also welcomed.

BYU Studies is dedicated to the correlation of revealed and discovered truth and to the conviction that the spiritual and the intellectual can be complementary and fundamentally harmonious avenues of knowledge. All who venture to write for BYU Studies should morally confront certain responsibilities that may be said to comprise a sort of academic code of professional conduct. Some important components of such a code would embrace at least the following precepts.

**Unity.** The Lord has clearly stated: "If ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). In a shifting world that necessarily and fortunately features diversity, individuality, heterodoxy, and change, the goal of unity with God and our fellow beings must be continually cultivated and nourished. The goal of unity does not imply that all scholarly methods or personal views must be the same.

**Harmony.** BYU Studies is committed to seeking truth "by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). It proceeds on the premise that faith and reason, revelation and scholarly learning, obedience and creativity are compatible. Traditional dichotomies such as mind and body, God and man, spirit and matter, time and eternity are not viewed in the gospel of Jesus Christ as competing opposites. The objective is to embrace both: ancient and modern, word and deed, intellectual and spiritual, research and teaching, reason and revelation, the "ought" and the "is," community and individuality, male and female, nature and custom, induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis, rights and duties, subjectivity and objectivity, theory and practice, even mortality and godhood. We can grow beyond issues over which is greater, the spirit or the intellect. As Elder Boyd K. Packer has stated, "Each of us must accommodate the

mixture of reason and revelation in our lives. The gospel not only permits but requires it.”

**Honesty.** As a primary trait of character, “we believe in being honest” (A of F 13). Accuracy and reliability are of the essence of scholarship. All scholars worth their salt have wrestled long with the questions of what can and cannot, what should and should not, what must or must not be said. They acknowledge and evaluate data both for and against their ideas and theories. They eschew all forms of plagiarism and generously recognize their indebtedness to other scholars. They guard on all sides against the covert influences of unstated assumptions, bias, and esoteric terminology. They avoid material omissions, for often what is not said can be as misleading as what is said.

**Thoroughness.** “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (A of F 13). BYU Studies welcomes contributions from all disciplines, addressing “all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand; of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad, . . . that ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you” (D&C 88:78–80).

**Humility.** Pride has been identified as the pervading sin of our day. As scholars, we have more than our share of exposure to this problem. Arrogance, disdain, overconfidence, dogmatism, and many other manifestations of intellectual and spiritual pride may well be the main occupational hazards of academia. But the perspectives of scholarship and the gospel can also provide the antidote. First is the acknowledgement that all people are at different stages in the eternal journey toward the glory of God, which is intelligence. Second is the humble awareness that scholarship is not an end in itself. Research cannot create faith; it can only set the stage for greater light and knowledge.

**Charity.** In order for communication to occur, there must be charity, for no statement exists (including this one) that cannot be misconstrued. If fellowship and goodwill do not exist, especially in an academic setting, we will not communicate with one another. Paul’s



confession comes to mind: "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge . . . and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. 13:2). Charity is also necessary to avoid offending even the weakest of the saints. Jesus said: "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luke 17:2).

voices and other cultures doesn't have to involve sacrificing our values," but rather helps me to understand better my own "Mormonness."<sup>24</sup>

As Brigham Young charged the elders going out into the world, he said: "Whether a truth be found with professed infidels, . . . or the Church of Rome, . . . it is the [duty] of the Elders of this Church . . . to gather up all the truths in the world pertaining to life and salvation, to the Gospel we preach, to mechanism of every kind, to the sciences, and to philosophy, wherever it may be found . . . and bring it to Zion."<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, it was from a Catholic Jesuit that I first learned about chiasmus;<sup>26</sup> and from a Jewish barrister that I learned about the ancient legal difference between thieves and robbers.<sup>27</sup> And, by the way, both of those scholars were genuinely glad to see in the Book of Mormon these things that they had found in Hebraic settings.

As Latter-day Saints we certainly understand the benefits of learning from others and reaching out to collaborate with others. Our experiences in councils and presidencies instill in us a sociality that easily carries over into our way of doing scholarship. Identify a project, assemble the right team, and see what you can accomplish. Team victories magnify the thrill. Among the best memories of my academic life are many team efforts, such as Macmillan's *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* with Dan Ludlow's team of eight hundred contributors.<sup>28</sup> I am now thrilled to be working on the legal team of the vital Joseph Smith Papers Project.<sup>29</sup> We now know that Joseph was distracted by over 200 lawsuits in his lifetime, and their documentary records are astonishingly more complex than any one person can sort out. Two or three lawsuits are usually enough to overwhelm most men, but Joseph succeeded by working collaboratively and expansively with numerous associates, including the Holy Ghost as his regular companion.

Well, our time is nearly gone, and we've only scratched the surface of the BYU Mission Statement. I intend no disregard of any word in it. Equally

important to me are its dozens of other vital elements, upon which we could equally expand: assisting individuals in realizing their full human potential; staging a variety of extracurricular experiences; preparing people to meet personal and family challenges; competing with the best in each field; making scholarly resources available to the Church when asked; loving God devoutly;<sup>30</sup> following the living prophets, and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to all—in other words, no child of God left behind. If nothing else, I hope my comments today have opened up some intriguing possibilities for you to think about.

In the end, the BYU Mission Statement calls on us to “have a strong effect on the course of higher education” and “be an influence in a world we wish to improve.” In this, our uniqueness can be an asset. As mediators between competing views, we can offer alternative solutions. And we need not be reluctant. We have all been electrified this season by Jimmer Fredette’s incredible, dramatic long shots. The sign I liked the best was “Jimmer’s in range when he steps off the bus.” Mormon thought is also capable of hitting a stunning array of intellectual long shots, doing things that traditional Western thinkers have said cannot be done. Everywhere you turn, Joseph’s words hit the mark. He was in range every time he opened his mouth.

In a book now at press with Oxford, Stephen Webb, a non-LDS professor of religion, writes of Mormonism: “No other religious movement lies so close to traditional Christianity. . . . Mormon theology is Christology unbound. . . . Of all the branches of Christianity, Mormonism is the most imaginative, and if nothing else, its intellectual audacity should make it the most exciting conversational partner for traditional Christians for the twenty-first century.”<sup>31</sup>

I know that we can accomplish the goals of the BYU Mission Statement. Like many other Latter-day Saints, I have spoken to various academic groups, with their respect and genuine interest. After one paper I gave to a meeting of the Jewish Law Association in Boston,<sup>32</sup> an older rabbi congratulated me and said, “Very very good, but why does a goyim [a Gentile] have to show us these things in our own Torah!” After a paper I presented on ritual theory and temple themes in the Sermon on the Mount,<sup>33</sup> of all the comments I received, I was most gratified by this one: “I have been attending these conferences for thirty years. You, for the first time, brought the Spirit into the room.” Latter-day Saints can indeed be an influence in a world we wish to improve.

So, let us rejoice! Shall we not, each in our own way, go on in so great a cause? The point is to come to think more as God thinks, and to see his children and this creation more as he does. The more we become like that, the more the stone face on the mountain of the Lord, that stone which some

builders have refused, can become the head of the corner, and that image can be received in our countenances.

We need not be ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith was truly a prophet. The scriptures are true and in them we find our way. The expansiveness of the truth invites us to venture forward, as high, and as deep, and as broad as our minds may go. Thy mind, O man, must stretch. Indeed, it can and will stretch, if you will lead a soul (including your own) unto salvation and will commune with God, that our joy may be full and abundant, in time and all eternity. For your thoughtful attention and goodness, I thank you very, very much.

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Beginning with Hugh Nibley's "The Expanding Gospel" (vol. 7, no. 1, 1965), *BYU Studies* has published the lectures or works related to the lectures of seventeen previous recipients of the Karl G. Maeser Distinguished Faculty Lecturer Award. This article follows in that tradition.

1. Jeffrey R. Holland and Jae R. Ballif, interviewed by John W. Welch, May 9–11, 2011.

2. Dean C. Jessee and John W. Welch, "Revelations in Context: Joseph Smith's Letter from Liberty Jail, March 20, 1839," *BYU Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000): 137, spelling and punctuation standardized. Part of this passage is quoted in "The Aims of a BYU Education," <http://unicomm.byu.edu/president/aim1.aspx>, which followed the BYU Mission Statement.

3. Our guide, Malcolm Miller, has published several books on Chartres Cathedral, including *Chartres Cathedral* (Andover, UK: Pitkin, 1996).

4. John W. Welch, "The Good Samaritan: A Type and Shadow of the Plan of Salvation," *BYU Studies* 38, no. 2 (1999): 50–115; John W. Welch, "The Good Samaritan: Forgotten Symbols," *Ensign* 37 (February 2007): 40–47, and *Liahona* (February 2007): 26–33.

5. Jessee and Welch, "Revelations in Context," 137.

6. Robert K. Thomas, "Plato's Honey Head: Facing the Challenge of the Ideal," in *A Love of Learning: Speeches of Robert K. Thomas*, ed. Daryl R. Hague (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2011), 174.

7. Terry Warner, email to John W. Welch, March 6, 2011.

8. John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2008), 331–33.

9. See, for example, Joseph Smith's comment at the end of the King Follett Discourse in his diary kept by Willard Richards, "had I not experienced it could not believe it myself," and in the report of Thomas Bullock, "if I had not experienced what I have I should not have known it myself," in *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed.

Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 343, 355; Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 361; also in Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 208. For the collection of First Vision accounts, see Dean C. Jessee, "The Earliest Documented Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," and James B. Allen and John W. Welch, "The Appearance of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith in 1820," both in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 1–75.

10. John W. Welch, forthcoming article on the parable of the two sons, *BYU Studies* (2011).

11. See First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," at <http://lds.org/family/proclamation?lang=eng>, or *Ensign* 25 (November 1995): 102.

12. President Hinckley spoke of the disappointment that came to those who, seeking freedom from moral restraint, "had been told of freedom, that evil was only a thing of the mind. But they found they had lost their freedom. . . . Can anything be more false or dishonest than gratification of passion without acceptance of responsibility?" Gordon B. Hinckley, "In Search of Peace and Freedom," *Ensign* 19 (August 1989): 5. My wording paraphrases the widely quoted *Charles Kingsley, His Letters and Memories of His Life*, vol. 1, eleventh abridged ed. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Co., 1882), 230.

13. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* 25 (November 1995): 102; B. Kent Harrison and Mary Stovall Richards, "Feminism in the Light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," *BYU Studies* 36, no. 2 (1996–97): 181–99; and Richard G. Wilkins, "The Proclamation: Ten Years of Hope," *BYU Studies* 44, no. 3 (2005): 7–14.

14. John W. Welch, "Toward a Mormon Jurisprudence," *Regent University Law Review* 21, no. 1 (2008–9): 95–100.

15. Kurt Gödel, "Über formal unentscheidbare Sätze der Principia Mathematica und verwandter Systeme, I," *Monatshefte für Mathematik und Physik* 38 (1931): 173–98; Ernest Nagel and James R. Newman, *Gödel's Proof* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971); Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Vintage, 1980); Welch, "Toward a Mormon Jurisprudence," 90.

16. Brett G. Scharffs and John W. Welch, "An Analytic Framework for Understanding and Evaluating the Fiduciary Duties of Educators," *Brigham Young University Education and Law Journal* vol. 2005, no. 2 (2005): 159–229.

17. See generally Welch, "Toward a Mormon Jurisprudence," 79–103.

18. Boyd K. Packer, "I Say unto You, Be One," address at Brigham Young University, February 12, 1991, available at <http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=373>.

19. *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 219; Alma 9:20–24.

20. See the important work of Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld, including "Some Fundamental Legal Conceptions as Applied in Legal Reasoning," *Yale Law Journal* 23 (1913): 16–59.

21. Jessee and Welch, "Revelations in Context," 137.

22. Donald Kennedy, *Academic Duty* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997),

68. Kennedy discusses Edward Shils's *The Academic Ethic* (Chicago: University of

Chicago Press, 1984) on the responsibility of professors to act as role models and as agents for improving society. See also Eric Ashby, "The Academic Profession," lecture under the "Thank-Offering to Britain Fund," delivered June 11, 1969, and printed for the British Academy by Oxford University Press.

23. See, for example, Thomas S. Monson, "Do Your Duty—That Is Best," *Ensign* 35 (November 2005): 56–59.

24. George B. Handley, "A Poetics of the Restoration," *BYU Studies* 49, no. 4 (2010): 50, 51.

25. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 248.

26. The Jesuit was Paul Gaechter. The story is told in John W. Welch, "The Discovery of Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon: 40 Years Later," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, no. 2 (2007): 74–87.

27. The barrister was Bernard Jackson. Welch, *Legal Cases*, 52; John W. Welch, "Thieves and Robbers," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 248–49.

28. Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), available online at <http://eom.byu.edu/>.

29. Joseph Smith Papers: Legal and Business Records, forthcoming from Church Historian's Press.

30. See John W. Welch, "And with All Thy Mind," address given at Brigham Young University September 30, 2003, available at <http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&tid=145&tid=7>.

31. Stephen H. Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming), in chapter 9. An extended excerpt of this chapter is printed in this issue: Stephen H. Webb, "God-bodied: The Matter of the Latter-day Saints," *BYU Studies* 50, no. 3 (2011): 83–100.

32. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in Biblical Law: An Approach to the Structure of Legal Texts in the Bible," in *Jewish Law Association Studies IV* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 5–22.

33. John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009).