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Bruce C. Hafen

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“What Is It about This Place?”

Truman Madsen, Religious Education, and the Mission of BYU

Bruce C. Hafen

Barnard (“Barney”) Madsen has written a readable, thoughtful, and well-informed biography about his charismatic father, Truman Madsen.¹ Although Truman didn’t keep a conventional journal, he maintained “journal files”—“crucial journal entries or documents he preserved for his posterity.”² Those files, along with Barney’s intimate and observant relationship with his father, have now yielded rich biographical resources.

Barney paints a warm portrait of Truman’s colorful personality, from his Salt Lake City boyhood through his impressive educational attainments, missionary service, family life, and his contributions as a gifted teacher who blessed many Latter-day Saints, on and off BYU campus. The professional springboard for Truman’s contributions was his role as a BYU faculty member for nearly forty years. Thus this review essay sees his biography as an opportunity to reflect on what his approach to teaching and scholarship—and his relationships with both intellectual and spiritual communities—might suggest to us today about the present and future mission of BYU.

Highlights of the Madsen Story

Truman Grant Madsen (1926–2009) grew up in Salt Lake City, served a mission in New England, and was educated at the University of Utah, University of Southern California, and Harvard University. His mother,

1. Barnard N. Madsen, *The Truman G. Madsen Story: A Life of Study and Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2016).

2. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 489.

Emily Grant Madsen, the daughter of President Heber J. Grant, was the first woman to graduate in mathematics from the University of Utah. She also studied literature at Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and taught at LDS High School. Truman's father, Axel Madsen, after serving in World War I, caught President Grant's eye in a local oratory contest—prompting President Grant to invite Axel to attend a stake conference with him—and with Emily as their driver.

Barely after the birth of Axel and Emily's third child (Gordon), Emily died from an infection. Truman, the second child, was two at the time. After sending his sons to live with aunts and uncles for a few years, Axel brought them back together and raised them as an unusually devoted single parent—assisted by "Aunt Edna" Skinner, whom Axel employed as a housekeeper for twenty-four years and then married. Truman's older brother Grant was killed in action during the Korean War.

These early events helped shape young Truman, and his first mission in New England also affected him deeply. There, he once said, "the Lord had to sink a shaft into me" and bring out the ore of his faith—especially when his mission president, Elder S. Dilworth Young of the First Council of Seventy, assigned him and his companion to do summer "country work" on Prince Edward Island, off the coast of Nova Scotia. In one stretch, they learned to depend totally on the Lord as they trudged the rural farms and roadways for sixty-six days carrying only Church pamphlets—no money and no food ("without purse or scrip").

Then, in 1953, Truman married Ann Nicholls, who energetically sustained him through the rigors of graduate school, his service as a young mission president back in New England (he was thirty-six and she was twenty-nine), and in his early years as a BYU professor of philosophy and religion. He likewise energetically sustained her in raising their three children together—Emily, Barney, and Melinda ("Mindy"). Once Mindy was in high school, Ann completed a graduate degree and began her own teaching career, focusing on Hebrew, the Old Testament, and Isaiah. In their later years, people who knew them typically thought of them together—as did their friends from Vienna, Johann and Ursula Wondra: "Thinking [of] Truman includes always thinking [of] Ann too—it is not possible to think of one without thinking of the other."³ Both Ann and Truman hoped "that's the kind of oneness that . . . will eventually take us back into the presence of God."⁴

3. Johann Wondra to Bruce C. Hafen, email, December 15, 2016.

4. Ann Madsen as quoted in Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 224.

Truman began teaching at BYU in 1957. Overcoming his initial hesitation about the university's just-emerging academic stature, he quickly found that "the total freedom to . . . interrelate the Mormon heritage with philosophical and historical issues was a perpetual delight."⁵ The way he built on that insight with continuing delight over the next half century is so significant that it is a central theme of his life. And, as discussed in parts 2 and 3 below, it is a central theme in the mission of Brigham Young University.

The BYU Philosophy Department in those days was located in BYU's College of Religious Instruction—which probably facilitated Truman's desire to integrate philosophy and religion while still honoring key differences between the two disciplines. It also helped that his college dean, West Belnap, and his philosophy colleagues, David Yarn and Chauncey Riddle, all shared an uncommonly deep commitment to teaching BYU students to live lives of serious spiritual discipleship. These three shared that commitment with faculty in other departments, including a close friend from their graduate studies at Columbia University, Robert K. Thomas. A professor of English, Thomas became the founding director of BYU's Honors Program in 1959 and then served as academic vice president to presidents Ernest L. Wilkinson and Dallin H. Oaks.

My wife, Marie Kartchner, and I were among an entire generation of BYU Honors Program and other students whose intellectual and spiritual lives were profoundly touched during the 1960s and 1970s by this handful of people and by other faculty who shared their attitudes. They opened our minds and our hearts in ways that helped us desire to move from being just *active* Church members to becoming *consecrated* disciples of the Savior. And they motivated our desires to take our education seriously enough to contribute to society—not in spite of our religious faith, but because of it. Their influence sparked many in the next generation of BYU faculty, who were guided by this perspective during their graduate and professional training elsewhere.

For example, one of our early Honors classmates was Noel Reynolds, who later wrote that Truman's "four-square stand for the gospel of Jesus Christ . . . was always the key to the power and influence [he] held on me as a student. That commitment made it safe for me to take philosophy seriously."⁶ Reynolds went on to earn his own PhD in philosophy and politics at Harvard before returning to the BYU faculty—a pattern followed by many others from that era in all academic disciplines.

5. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 232.

6. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 301.

As Truman's BYU career unfolded, it also expanded, until his influence began to reach two important audiences beyond the borders of the campus—non-LDS scholars and the general LDS membership. As the first holder of BYU's Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding for twenty years, he was what Hugh Nibley called "an emissary of the gospel."⁷ This became a personal ministry well suited to his robust intellectual background and gregarious personality; he made long- and short-term visits to over one hundred U.S. and fifty international universities. In addition to teaching groups of non-LDS faculty and students about Church doctrine and philosophy, he built numerous personal relationships with such influential religious scholars as John Dillenberger, Krister Stendahl, and Rabbi David Rosen. He also found appropriate ways to invite his erudite friends, who had usually known little about the Church, to come to Provo and share with BYU faculty and students what they were learning about LDS perspectives.

Truman's strength in this emissary role was not that he knew ancient languages but that he was so fluently bilingual in the languages of scholarship and faith—in both Mormon and non-Mormon discourse.⁸ With Truman as their window and their example, scholars from other faiths, as Noel Reynolds said, increasingly saw Latter-day Saints as "honorable, intelligent, contributing members of society."⁹ And significantly, as Elder Dallin H. Oaks wrote after reading Truman's work from a symposium at the BYU Jerusalem Center, Truman had "the wonderful bilingual capacity of speaking to scholars who are not LDS without diluting LDS doctrine."¹⁰

The initial platform for Truman's outreach to the general LDS audience was his teaching in such BYU Continuing Education programs as "Know Your Religion" and "Education Week"—religion and other adult education classes taught periodically by BYU faculty, both on campus and at LDS population centers off campus.

His Education Week lectures on Joseph Smith gave Truman an opportunity to teach Church members what he was learning from his lifelong interest in Joseph Smith—an interest that harked back to a stirring personal experience at Joseph's birthplace in Vermont, just as Truman was completing his first mission to New England.¹¹ Those

7. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 368.

8. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 358.

9. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 368.

10. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 358.

11. See Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 10–11.

lectures, developed over the years, became the basis for his eight hours of audio tapes on Joseph Smith recorded at BYU Education Week in 1978. In the years that followed, these tapes and a book that refined the tapes brought “the life, character, and testimony of Brother Joseph” to thousands of people—a broader reach and influence than anything else Truman said or wrote.¹²

Another major theme of Truman’s off-campus educational influence was his interest in the Holy Land. Nearly every year since 1969, the Madsens returned to Israel—partly to help plan for and later for him to act as director of the BYU Jerusalem Center (1991–94); partly to lead travel study groups, including numerous private tours; and partly for him to serve as a guest professor at the University of Haifa (1980). Truman’s knack for nourishing personal relationships with prominent scholars and other influential figures helped BYU build a network of key relationships in Israel—such as with Teddy Kollek, mayor of Jerusalem from 1965 to 1993, and with the scholars who invited BYU into their massive project to build a searchable database for the Dead Sea Scrolls. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, who as BYU president led the challenging task of building the Jerusalem Center, said that Truman’s gift for articulating Israel’s religious heritage was “one of the quintessential elements of Truman’s lifetime contribution to BYU and to the Church. His legacy will be pretty closely tied to the Holy Land.”¹³

Truman also addressed the general Church audience, as well as BYU students, with his keen personal interest in the doctrinal and practical blessings of the temple. His last book was *The Temple: Where Heaven Meets Earth*. The biography candidly shares a story from Truman’s graduate school days, when he heard a provocative discourse by President David O. McKay in the Los Angeles Temple that had the effect of shifting Truman’s own paradigm about the temple from lukewarm to passionate.¹⁴ From then on, he found increasingly influential ways to learn, and then teach, how “nearly everything connects in the temple”¹⁵ as the sanctuary “of full access to Christ’s most pervasive life-giving powers.”¹⁶ After all, he said at a BYU commencement, “the temple and Christ are the heart of our spiritual life.”¹⁷

12. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 375.

13. Quoted in Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 416.

14. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 432–33.

15. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 434.

16. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 435.

17. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 436.

The intimate connection Truman saw between the temple and Christ was much like the close connection he saw between Joseph Smith and Christ. He often said that Joseph was and is "a clear window . . . to the living Christ." He added that this window was a primary reason for his ongoing interest in Joseph. He found that really knowing Joseph, his example and his teachings, would prepare us—"free us"—for our own "direct experiences" with Christ.¹⁸

Truman realized that Joseph himself had seen the temple endowment as opening a symbolic window to Christ. As Richard Bushman wrote, "The temple's sacred story stabilized and perpetuated Joseph's governing passion," which "was to have his people *experience* God."¹⁹ Through the temple, Joseph wanted to bring his people as close as possible to what he himself had experienced in his relationship with the Lord.

And the same can be said of Truman's passion for the Holy Land as another window to Christ—geographically, historically, and spiritually. Little wonder that Johann Wondra would summarize Truman's life and work by saying that "his only purpose, as we have witnessed, was to lead to Christ."²⁰

Historical Perspective:

David O. McKay's Prophetic Articulation of BYU's Mission

Just as David O. McKay shifted Truman's paradigm about the temple, he also influenced Truman's attitudes about higher education in the Church. He became President of the Church shortly before Truman and Ann were married; and he performed their temple marriage. Then his two decades as Church President, when he was a vigorous proponent of education, matched the years when Truman was emerging as a premier LDS teacher and scholar. It is no accident, then, that Truman's vision and values about education at BYU would reflect those of President McKay. And with the hindsight of history, we can now see that the prophetic McKay vision significantly shaped the spiritual and intellectual foundations on which all three of the present BYU campuses still stand. Let us consider some of the steps in that history.

In the early 1990s, BYU launched its biggest ever (to that time) capital campaign. Seeking the best available advice, the administration engaged a sophisticated Chicago-based consultant on university

18. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 371–72.

19. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 451, italics added.

20. Johann Wondra to Bruce Hafen, email, December 15, 2016.

fund-raising. After he had interviewed about a hundred of BYU's most prominent "stakeholders," such as university trustees and major past donors, I heard the consultant say, "I have conducted similar interviews for many of the largest and most elite universities in the country. I have never seen a university whose main stakeholders feel so passionate about wanting their own children and grandchildren to be admitted as BYU students. What is it about this place?"

I'm now seeing that same passion in my own family. Like thousands of other LDS parents, all of our married children begin early and work hard to prepare *their* children to establish the educational, spiritual, and financial qualifications required for eventual admission to one of the three BYU campuses. Despite their best efforts, however, many active LDS young people will not find it feasible to attend one of these schools.

For many years, the Church's primary response to this challenge has been to offer religion courses in LDS Institutes near the campuses of state colleges and universities. More recently, by expanding an initiative that began in 2009 at BYU-Idaho, the Church has also launched a "BYU Pathway" program, which offers students across the globe an introductory Church college experience through a combination of online classes and local gatherings—often housed in Institute buildings or other Church facilities.

A complex but key issue in all of these developments has been whether education on a BYU campus is qualitatively different from education at a state school combined with attending a nearby LDS Institute; in other words, "What is it about this place?" Any such qualitative difference is difficult to quantify, partly because so many key variables are hard to measure—such as comparative educational quality; social opportunities, especially marriage to another well-grounded Latter-day Saint; and the likelihood of real religious growth—in both understanding Church doctrine and learning to live it.

Moreover, how can one quantify the unique, multilayered effects of simply living for a few years in a Mormon village (like Laie, Rexburg, or Provo)—experiencing daily the reality and the spirit of "the gathering" as the Saints knew it in Nauvoo or in the early pioneer settlements? And, of course, some students will benefit more than others in such a place, depending on what a given student brings to the table. Some are simply more ready for it than others, whether by attitudes or aptitudes.

Yet clearly, many thousands of LDS students and their families all over the Church believe that these qualitative differences—"the BYU

experience," whatever that is and however it is measured—are worth years of preparation and sacrifice.

A question worth asking is how the most influential founders of the three modern BYU campuses saw the differences between a Church campus experience and a state university plus an Institute. By substantially enlarging all three student bodies in the last six decades, what were they trying to create, and why? They surely didn't need to invest in the Church universities just because state schools didn't have room. On the contrary, in recent years, access to U.S. higher education has become almost universally available. So let's consider the historical context that gave rise to today's BYU campuses.

The Church's commitment to educating LDS youth came as a doctrinal mandate of the Restoration. For example, "I, the Lord, am well pleased that there should be a school in Zion" (D&C 97:3). The application of this premise is further displayed in the impressive historical exhibit in the Joseph F. Smith building on the Provo campus, "Educating the Soul: Our Zion Tradition of Learning and Faith." On this foundation, Church efforts to find the right balance between the religious and the secular in its approach to higher education have a long history.

Due primarily to inadequate public education in Utah, an influx of non-LDS settlers, and the creation of new pioneer colonies beyond the Great Basin, by 1900 the Church had created over thirty stake "academies" for secondary education, stretching from Canada to Mexico. And even though the Utah Territory began establishing public schools in 1890, most of the academies continued to function as private Church schools and colleges until well into the twentieth century.²¹ BYU-Provo became a university in 1903.

By 1920, the Commissioner of Church Education was a young Apostle named David O. McKay. He recommended to the Church Board of Education that the Church divest itself of all but a handful of its post-secondary schools, because the Church simply couldn't afford to provide a college education for all its members.

Then in 1926, also citing costs, Commissioner Adam S. Bennion went even further. He recommended that the Church *entirely* "withdraw from the academic field [in higher education] and center upon religious education" by creating new Institutes of Religion near selected

21. Harold R. Laycock, "Academies," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:11–13.

state colleges. Elder Bennion told the board that he believed the people teaching in the state universities were "in the main . . . seeking the truth." However, Elder McKay replied that the Church had not established Church schools "merely because the state didn't do it;" rather, he said, the Church established its schools "*to make Latter-day Saints.*" Thus, he continued, "*we ought to consider these Church schools from the standpoint of their value to the Church more than from the standpoint of duplicating public school work.*"²²

Elder McKay later said he had therefore "voted against . . . [giving] the Church's junior colleges to the states of Utah, Arizona, and Idaho."²³ However, the First Presidency decided in 1930 that the Church should (1) divest itself of all its colleges except BYU and LDS College in Salt Lake City (now LDS Business College), and (2) establish a system of Institutes of Religion on selected other campuses.

Thus, the Church transferred such junior colleges as Snow, Dixie, and Weber to the state of Utah. The Church also offered Ricks College (now BYU–Idaho) to Idaho beginning in 1931, but the state legislature repeatedly declined, even though the Church offered to donate all of the college's assets if Idaho would just agree to operate the school. And that's why the Church eventually kept Ricks College.²⁴

The Institutes of Religion grew during the 1930s and 1940s. Then in 1951, David O. McKay became President of the Church, and Ernest Wilkinson was appointed as both the president of BYU and the Church Commissioner (then the "Chancellor") of Education. During the ensuing twenty years, President McKay actively established a new vision of Church higher education. Both BYU and Ricks College began to

22. Quotations found in "To Labor in the Most Honorable Cause," a talk to the BYU Religious Education faculty in 1990 by Bruce C. Hafen, then Provost of BYU. The quoted language is from an unpublished report by a committee appointed by the Church Board of Education in 1964; italics added

23. Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 196.

24. Negotiations between the Idaho state legislature, local college leaders, and the Church continued throughout the difficult Depression years of 1931 to 1937. In 1934, David O. McKay was called into the First Presidency and became "the dominant educational advisor in the church." His influence was evident when the college finally received "the welcome news that Ricks was to be maintained as a Church school." David L. Crowder, *The Spirit of Ricks: A History of Ricks College* (Rexburg: Ricks College, 1997), 142. For a complete account, see pp. 109–51.

grow rapidly, and the Church College of Hawaii, now BYU–Hawaii, was founded in 1955.

In 1957, the Church announced plans to purchase land for the possible construction of eight additional junior colleges in western U.S. locations—potential feeder schools for BYU. However, after a full feasibility study, the leadership of the Church decided in 1963 that the junior college plan was just too expensive. Instead, they reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the Institutes of Religion.²⁵

Nonetheless, the Church's commitment to BYU, Ricks, and Hawaii remained strong. During the McKay presidency, BYU's enrollment expanded from 5,500 in 1950 to 25,000 in 1971, and is now at about 32,000. In 2001, Ricks College became BYU–Idaho, now a four-year university with a current on-campus enrollment of about 17,000. BYU–Hawaii enrolls about 2,700.²⁶

So the three BYU campuses are clearly exceptions—large and significant ones, but still exceptions—to a general policy of not providing higher education on a Church campus for Latter-day Saints. The First Presidency established that pattern ninety years ago and has since reaffirmed it often as Church policy. The spiritual architect who magnified the exceptional window in the 1950s and 1960s was President David O. McKay, and I don't believe that a long-term exception of this magnitude was an unintended anomaly.

The BYU campuses are therefore living monuments to the educational vision of President McKay, who, prior to his call to the Twelve in 1906, had been a faculty member then principal of the Weber Stake LDS Academy. And what was his vision? President McKay answered that question with his entire life's work. He also applied his educational vision to the mission of BYU in a talk to faculty and students in 1937:

Brigham Young University is primarily a religious institution. It was established for the sole purpose of associating with facts of science, art, literature, and philosophy the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . In making religion a paramount objective, the university touches the very heart of all true progress. . . . I emphasize religion because the Church university offers more than theological instruction. Theology as a science "treats of the existence, character, and attributes of God," and

25. See report cited in note 22. See also President McKay's diary entry, Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 196–97.

26. Current enrollment estimates are from the websites of the respective three campuses.

theological training may consist merely of intellectual study. Religion is subjective and denotes the influences and motives of human conduct and duty which are found in the character and will of God. One may study theology without being religious.²⁷

This is an expanded version of what President McKay told the board in 1926 when he said, "We established the schools to make Latter-day Saints." He also taught as a fundamental personal belief that "character is the aim of true education." Yet he believed that "modern education" gave inadequate emphasis to helping students develop the "fundamental elements of true character."²⁸ And he was disturbed as early as 1926 by "the growing tendency all over the world to sneer at religion" in secular state education.²⁹

I sense in President McKay's point of view an implicit belief that providing religious education next to the campuses of state universities would not do as much "to make Latter-day Saints" as might be possible on a BYU campus. For him, something unique and spiritually significant could grow out of a conscious fusion of fine academic departments, extracurricular programs, and the teaching of the religious life—all on the same campus, pursuing a unified vision about becoming followers of Jesus Christ and blessing the Church by blessing the youth of Zion. So when he said, "*We ought to consider these Church schools from the standpoint of their value to the Church,*" he was describing a religious mission, not simply an educational mission; but it is a religious mission in which higher education plays a central role.

Truman Madsen and the Mission of BYU

Now we're ready to ask—what does all of this history have to do with the biography and core values of Truman Madsen? I believe that Truman's work as a teacher and scholar exemplifies President McKay's ideal approach to higher education—to *associate* "science, art, literature, and

27. David O. McKay, "The Church University," *Messenger*, Provo, Utah; remarks delivered at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, October 1937; italics added; available online at http://aims.byu.edu/sites/default/files/foundationdocuments/The_Church_University--David_O_McKay.pdf.

28 McKay, "True Education," quoted in Prince and Wright, *David O. McKay*, 160–61.

29. Church Board of Education minutes, quoted in Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 2:75.

philosophy [with] the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" in ways that will "make [better] Latter-day Saints" of the students. Then, as a direct result of this integrated approach, those students generally tend to be better off personally, and they are probably more likely to have greater "value to the Church" than if they had received only a secular higher education, even if supplemented by Institute classes.

Truman's career illustrates what that kind of thinking and teaching looks like—where it comes from, how it applies, and why it matters. And, fortunately, he wasn't, and isn't, the only BYU (or LDS) professor to think and teach this way. Many of them do. Church leaders have often encouraged BYU faculty toward such writing, teaching, service, and role modeling. Indeed, the first of "the aims of a BYU education," a formal part of the university's stated purpose since the early 1990s, states that "the founding charge of BYU [from Brigham Young's original advice to Karl G. Maeser] is to teach every subject with the Spirit." In the words of President Spencer W. Kimball, this doesn't mean "that all of the faculty should be categorically teaching religion constantly in their classes," but it does expect "that every . . . teacher in this institution would keep his subject matter bathed in the light and color of the restored gospel."³⁰

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, Truman's classmate at the University of Utah and Church Commissioner of Education from 1970 to 1974, also shared President McKay's attitude about integrating secular and religious perspectives. On one hand, Truman and Elder Maxwell would have both agreed with the BYU Aims document that education at a Church university should be "intellectually enlarging" with regard to intellectual skills, depth, and breadth; that BYU students should thoroughly "understand the most important developments in human thought as represented by the broad domains of knowledge"; and that their intellectual preparation and rigor should make them "capable of competing with the best students in their field" in U.S. higher education.

On the other hand, the Maxwell/Madsen approach does not simply "balance" the sacred and the secular, or faith and reason, as if the two realms were of equal importance. Rather, they consciously avoid allowing the academic discipline to judge or stand superior to the gospel or

30. Spencer W. Kimball, "Education for Eternity," address to BYU faculty and staff, Provo, Utah, September 12, 1967, available online at https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/spencer-w-kimball_education-eternity/ and printed in *Educating Zion*, John W. Welch and Don E. Norton, eds. (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1996), 54.

the Church, because, as one LDS scholar observed, "there is a danger that [the] use of scholarly tools—which requires the privileging of those tools—will breed habits of mind that reflexively privilege secular scholarship over the gospel."³¹ This danger is one of the risks of some emerging approaches to Mormon studies, which often look at Mormonism primarily through the lenses of the academic disciplines.

Because of that risk, Elder Maxwell was always dismayed by LDS scholars and professionals who allow the premises and perspectives of their disciplines to take priority over their understanding of the gospel. And he was disappointed by LDS teachers who, as he put it, "fondle their doubts" in "the presence of Latter-day Saint students who [are] looking for spiritual mentoring." President McKay's model, illustrated by both Truman Madsen and Elder Maxwell, "looked at all knowledge through the gospel's lens." They knew they "could integrate a secular map of reality into the broader sacred map, but the smaller secular map, with its more limited tools and framework, often wasn't large enough to include religious insights. Thus the gospel's larger perspective influenced his view of the academic disciplines more than the disciplines influenced his view of the gospel."³² For that very reason, in describing the desired breadth of an "intellectually enlarging" BYU education, the Aims document states, "The gospel provides the chief source of such breadth because it encompasses the most comprehensive explanation of life and the cosmos, supplying the perspective from which all other knowledge is best understood and measured."

It was precisely because he taught at BYU that Truman was able to teach and model this larger view of education. If he had been a philosophy professor at a state university, he would have been constrained by understandable academic conventions and circumstances from mixing his personal religious views too freely with his teaching and scholarly work. Indeed, on most campuses these days, he would have been expected to "bracket his faith" in his professional role, whether in Mormon studies work or otherwise, partly because the primary audience for that work is other scholars, not a broader LDS audience. The institutional academic freedom allowed by BYU's explicit, written religious mission consciously removes those brackets, like taking the mute out

31. Nathan Oman, "'Out of Zion Shall Go Forth the Law' (Isaiah 2:3)," *FARMS Review of Books* 12, no. 1 (2000): 132.

32. Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple's Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 166–67.

of a trumpet. And that unmuting allowed Truman Madsen's talented trumpet to give an especially certain sound—a fortunate quality both for BYU students and for Latter-day Saints generally.

And if he had been a teacher in an LDS Institute, his duties would have been different, and he probably would have had a more difficult time establishing and maintaining his credibility as a serious scholar in the fields of both philosophy and religion. That credibility is especially important in opening doors and building bridges with a wide array of scholars in other faith traditions and in helping LDS students see their teachers as role models as they learn how to integrate the sacred and the secular in their own emerging professional lives.

One of Truman's own role models for understanding and applying this scholarly paradigm was B. H. Roberts, a General Authority from 1888 to 1933. Elder Roberts wrote the six-volume *Comprehensive History of the Church*, published in 1930, which current LDS historians consider "a high point in the publication of Church history to that time. Most earlier works were either attacks upon or defenses of the Church. Although Roberts's study was a kind of defense, he set a more even tone, a degree of uncommon objectivity."³³

In a major work of historical scholarship in its own right, Truman Madsen wrote B. H. Roberts's biography, *Defender of the Faith*. In that biography, Truman described Roberts's approach to writing Church history in terms that aptly capture Truman's own writing and teaching. Roberts did write with uncommon objectivity—but his faith was not in brackets:

Some of Roberts's critics have sought to discredit the approach to history that makes it a passionate part of one's own being—lived through—and they make it instead a specialist's retreat, a professional game for which only the detached are qualified. Those critics build their reputations by poking at the ashes. At his best B. H. Roberts took from the altars of the past not the ashes, but the fire. And in the pages of his best writing, the fire still burns.³⁴

In the pages of Truman Madsen's best writing and teaching, where his religious faith is clearly a passionate part of his being, that same fire still burns.

33. Douglas D. Alder, "Comprehensive History of the Church," in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:303.

34. Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 366.

The biography draws liberally from Truman's own journal entries and other writing, often creating an autobiographical feel. Some of these passages show that Truman's commitment to overtly religious scholarship and teaching took shape at a relatively early stage. At age twenty-four, for example, he wrote, "I yearn to teach. . . . To store my mind with truth, to fill it with the precepts that the best minds, the best literature of the day have set down." And what did he want to teach? "The Church is my home," he wrote. "The gospel is my element."³⁵ Then, just after his admission to graduate school at USC, he added, "There is a persistent push in my makeup to study and make vividly concrete in life the spirit of Jesus Christ. This I now propose to begin doing, writing of Him, and of my expanding conceptions of Him." Not many months later, as he prepared to transfer from USC to study philosophy at Harvard, he wrote what he had prayed: "It is . . . thy power—that has led me to . . . the all-enveloping desire to become a mighty witness of thy Son in writing and spoken word."³⁶

He wanted to study philosophy as a means to this larger end because he respected the intellectual power that came from defining high and abstract thought, and he wanted the tools of "sane . . . analysis" to help him understand "the attitudes and intellectual trends of history." He wanted this understanding because he believed that the world is "ever hungry for better explanations" and "for solid moral guidance, for reasons of righteousness, and inspiration to fulfill them."³⁷ From the outset, however, Truman sensed that "if philosophy helped him ask the ultimate questions, the restored gospel . . . answered them."³⁸

Perhaps the clearest example of how Truman learned to apply this perspective to his teaching arose after he had begun teaching philosophy and religion at BYU and had served as a young mission president in New England. The editors of one of the Church magazines felt that LDS young adults needed an "orientation to basic philosophical problems through the insight of a scholar who knows the gospel as well as philosophy."³⁹ So they asked Truman to write a series of magazine articles, which then became his first book, *Eternal Man* (1966). Its chapters

35. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 199.

36. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 200.

37. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 193–94.

38. Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 197.

39. Lorin F. Wheelwright, associate editor of *The Instructor* magazine, in Truman G. Madsen, *Eternal Man* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), vi.

dealt with classic philosophical issues, such as the nature of human identity, the problem of evil and suffering, and the meaning of freedom and fulfillment.

Consistent with President McKay's hopes for BYU, Truman's approach showed what can happen when well-educated and well-anchored LDS teachers look at major secular issues through the lens of the gospel. As one BYU colleague put it, this book was one of the first instances of "a fully engaged, believing Latter-day Saint . . . framing the great questions of philosophy in gospel terms." Philosophers had for centuries sensed the importance of the questions, but after endless debates, most of the dilemmas remained unresolved. Truman's work articulated the issues in accessible but academically credible language then boldly gave Joseph Smith's answers to many of them—within the context of numerous continuing paradoxes.⁴⁰

One other important component of Truman's influence was the way he mentored BYU students, both in his private interactions and in the broader power of his example. The best way for an LDS student to reconcile productively the competing values of faith and intellect is to know well—ideally to be mentored by—teachers and leaders whose daily life and attitudes authentically demonstrate how deep religious faith and demanding intellectual rigor are mutually reinforcing. One of the unique blessings of a Church campus is to offer students many faculty mentors who live that way.

Truman was that kind of mentor, not only in the realm of abstract ideas, but also by a daily walk and years of student counseling that showed—not just told—what it means to read and think both deeply and widely—and also, at the core, to follow Christ, follow the promptings of the Spirit, and follow the guidance of the Brethren. He believed in his students and taught them to believe in themselves and in God, as they learned to solve their own problems with His help. The biography offers several concrete illustrations of Truman's warm, focused, and caring approach to mentoring—such as his letters as a mission president to his missionaries, his personal interaction with students, his letters to his students as director of the BYU Jerusalem Center, and his correspondence with people immersed in personal struggles.

Truman Madsen's life and career exemplify President McKay's aspiration to make BYU "a religious institution" that responsibly "associates"

40. Sterling van Wagenen, quoted in Madsen, *Truman G. Madsen Story*, 312, 315.

university disciplines with the gospel. Yet as well schooled as he was in philosophy, in that discipline he was more a classroom teacher than he was a publishing scholar. Still, his broad intellectual background and academic expertise gave him the credibility required to show his students by example the wholeness of a fully educated, contributing Latter-day Saint—"with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, *and with all thy mind*" (Matt. 22:37; italics added). And that same academic stature gave him significant professional currency in his interaction with non-LDS scholars in ways that benefitted BYU students and the Church.

Academic disciplines and individual personalities and circumstances vary enough that we may not see many other highly visible Truman Madsens at BYU. But, subject to that natural variety, we can and should expect to see many faculty who generally follow his pattern of looking at their disciplines, the world, and their students through the lens of the gospel. That's why BYU devotional speakers since the early 1990s now regularly include BYU faculty, not just General Authorities, as had typically been the past pattern.⁴¹ That is also why the most capable BYU faculty from other academic disciplines have long been invited—often recruited—to teach religion classes on campus.

In addition, faculty whose lives reflect a completeness of heart, soul, and mind can fulfill much of President McKay's vision by mentoring their students—both in how they share themselves in class and in personal interactions. Research among current BYU students by the BYU Faculty Center tells us that a great deal of "spiritually strengthening" and "intellectually enlarging" teaching on the campus "comes from the personal example of professors and the sincere/caring mentoring they provide. Integrating faith and learning varies significantly in theme and opportunity across disciplines but example and mentoring with love and faith do not."⁴² This kind of individualized "integrating" between the professional and spiritual realms may be less visible than public speaking and writing, but over the long run, it is not less significant for individual students.

Indeed, recent research among U.S. college students shows that having genuine mentoring relationships with faculty is a more important variable than a university's national ranking in influencing both

41. I know this rationale for including more faculty speakers because I participated in the discussions leading to the policy change.

42. Alan L. Wilkins to Bruce C. Hafen, email, December 23, 2016.

the personal well-being and the future vocational satisfaction of college graduates.⁴³ For example, and unfortunately, only about half of today's graduates believe that their university education was worth what it cost; but the odds of their believing that their schooling was worth its price are about twice as high among graduates who said "their professors cared about them as a person."⁴⁴ If faculty mentors matter that much in secular universities, they matter even more when transmitting the unique values and aspirations of BYU.

When faculty feel responsible for students' personal development as well as their cognitive education, they will find ways to let their students see how gifted LDS teachers and scholars integrate their dedicated professional competence into their overarching religious faith—an opportunity those students are much less likely to find elsewhere.

These reflections may seem to some like stating the obvious. But as BYU's academic stature continues to grow, its faculty will probably feel increased natural pressures to be more concerned with published scholarship and national reputation than most faculty felt when Truman Madsen began his BYU career. Yet at the same time, for a variety of reasons, the current moment seems to pose greater challenges to students' religious faith, which heightens each student's need for informed but faithful mentoring. Alan Wilkins, former BYU academic vice president and current director of the BYU Faculty Center, aptly describes the implications of these competing pressures: "Some will certainly argue that we just have to be more scholarly in today's context than Truman was in his to have much influence in the larger academic community. *How and whether that can be done and still strengthen our students spiritually in ways that build faith and character and lead to a life of continued learning and service is the most important question before us at BYU currently.*"⁴⁵

During my own years on the BYU faculty, I learned firsthand, both as a professor and a dean, about the high value of publishing scholarly work that seeks both to influence one's academic discipline and to

43. Purdue University, "Gallup-Purdue Index Releases Inaugural Findings of National Landmark Study," May 6, 2014, <http://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/releases/2014/Q2/gallup-purdue-index-releases-inaugural-findings-of-national-landmark-study.html>.

44. "Gallup-Purdue Index Report 2015," *Gallup*, <http://www.gallup.com/reports/197144/gallup-purdue-index-report-2015.aspx>.

45. Wilkins to Hafen, email, December 23, 2016; italics added.

enrich one's teaching. I also learned firsthand about the high value of building relationships with students that reciprocally nourish the religious foundations for our disciplines and for our lives.

In my experience, those two quests are not mutually exclusive—but only if we exert whatever energy it takes to pursue both goals wholeheartedly, with religious faith as the primary quest. Otherwise, “The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.”⁴⁶ When we do hear the Falconer, the fires from past altars will keep burning, and we—and those we touch—will know what it is about this place.

Bruce C. Hafen is an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He received a BA from BYU and a JD from the University of Utah. After practicing law, he joined the faculty of BYU's new J. Reuben Clark Law School. He served as President of Ricks College (now BYU–Idaho) from 1978 to 1985, as Dean of the law school from 1985 to 1989, and as Provost of BYU from 1989 to 1996. Most recently, he served as President of the St. George Utah Temple.

46 W. B. Yeats, “The Second Coming.”