On Grocery Shopping with Children: Nurturing Spiritual Self-Reliance

Elder L. Whitney Clayton and Kathy Clayton

"The Light of Christ is given to all men, even young men and women, in sufficient quantity for them to feel the difference between right and wrong. Our goal is to cultivate [children’s] hearts to crave, their ears to hear; and their will to honor that light."
"The privilege of agency has always implied risks, but the quest to promote spiritual self-reliance is a heavenly one."

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ON THE COVER:
The principle of spiritual self-reliance is represented by a photo of a hardy evergreen growing heavenward from an unlikely spot atop a desert rock formation in southern Utah.
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The Religious Educator is designed to serve the interests and needs of those who study and teach the gospel on a regular basis. The distinct focuses of the Religious Educator are on teaching the gospel; publishing studies on scripture, doctrine, and Church history; and sharing the messages of outstanding devotional essays. The contributions to each issue are carefully reviewed and edited by experienced teachers, writers, and scholars.

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Elder L. Whitney Clayton and his wife, Kathy, provide readers with a methodology for successful parenting that focuses on teaching children to respond to the Spirit, along with cautions against overuse of external rewards and punishments. This relevant article, “On Grocery Shopping with Children: Nurturing Spiritual Self-Reliance,” will assist parents and educators as they help youth to stand on their own and make wise decisions.

Even with 1.2 billion followers and a worldwide influence, Islam remains a mysterious religion to many members of the Church. In a clarifying and instructive article, “What Every Latter-day Saint Should Know about Islam,” Brian H. Hauglid and Kent P. Jackson, BYU professors of ancient scripture, help readers better understand this influential and rapidly growing religion.

President David O. McKay’s unique philosophy of education makes him a powerful mentor and role model for educators, as Mary Jane Woodger, assistant professor of Church history and doctrine, demonstrates in “Recollections of David O. McKay’s Educational Practices.” This delightful insight into President McKay’s teaching personality will inspire and instruct teachers.

Many of us remember the feelings associated with the 1978 announcement that the priesthood was to be extended to all worthy men. In a study of Official Declaration 2 and events surrounding its pronouncement, Richard E. Bennett, professor of Church history and doctrine, examines the personal attributes of President Spencer W. Kimball and interprets this prophet’s experiences as a lesson on the process of receiving individual revelation.

While multiple studies seek to find the forces behind self-image, religion has “largely been ignored” as a factor shaping teens’ feelings about themselves. But now, after a decade of surveying nearly six thousand LDS high school students, BYU professors Brent L. Top, Bruce A. Chadwick, and Richard J. McClendon can more accurately assert the role of religion in shaping teens’ self-worth. Even though some of the findings may surprise readers, the article offers sage advice on ways parents and educators can positively influence young people.

We hope you enjoy this excellent issue, especially the emphasis on working with youth.

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Editor-in-Chief
Ted D. Stoddard, Associate Editor
R. Devan Jensen, Executive Editor
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Elder L. Whitney Clayton and Kathy Clayton (center, back row) with family
On Grocery Shopping with Children: Nurturing Spiritual Self-Reliance

Elder L. Whitney Clayton and Kathy Clayton

Elder L. Whitney Clayton is a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Kathy Clayton is his companion and a mother of seven.

After teaching our seven children, who all managed more often than not to comply fairly well with classroom regulations, a fourth-grade teacher pulled our youngest son aside and asked, "So what do your parents do to make you behave? Do they yell at you? Do they ground you? Do they spank you?" Her list of threatening consequences exhausted, she waited for the pensive boy to answer. After a moment's thought, he responded, "They guilt us to death."

We were not entirely proud of the characterization of our parenting strategy. Although we were glad he did not report screaming, grounding, or spanking as our compelling motivators, we wish he would had responded with euphemistic composure, "They provide conscience training."

After a long laugh and a short wince over the teacher-student exchange, we considered in earnest her question in an attempt to identify, somewhat after the fact, a methodology. We concluded that we had both deliberately and inadvertently interacted with our children with a generally unified ideology.

Be Careful with External Rewards or Punishments

We agreed that any method of discipline that depends on imposing external punishment, or even granting rewards, risks becoming manipulative and delays or minimizes a child's privilege of tasting the sweet, personal sensation of the affirming approval of heaven for right
choices. Children who become satisfied to fold their arms and sit quietly in Church services solely because they crave the gold star their parents will put on their foreheads at the end of the exercise may neglect to recognize the sweet sense of worship and connection to heaven they are entitled to for their reverent behavior.

As short-term motivators, gold stars provide bright, positive encouragement along the way, but they are superficial substitutes for the more internal, long-lasting rewards of good choices and jobs well done. Although we parents all celebrate a report card with excellent marks, the enthusiasm in the voice and the light in the eyes of children who have solved a simultaneous equation or written their first sonnet underline and punctuate a love of learning in a lasting and profound way. Straight A’s will not be a realistic goal for all children, but satisfying, personal experiences with learning, discovery, and accomplishment are realistic goals. Our current educational system may not allow for such an idealistic view of personal educational success, but, as parents, we can espouse that view by celebrating effort, completion, and personal bests.

Nurture Self-Reliance

Educators talk of the ideal learning level as “competence plus one,” meaning that a wise teacher offers students familiar, mastered material, plus a little more. The wisdom of the concept is clear. Preserving elements of a familiar curriculum builds student confidence and nurtures self-reliance, and the introduction of new material promotes growth. A similar formula could be useful for parents. A trip to the grocery store with young children serves as an illustration. Although it is always easier to leave young children at home than to take them along, the opportunity to develop self-control is worth the inconvenience for the parents. When children are very young, going to the store at all may be the “plus one” part of the equation, so they may be stretched to an appropriate level just sitting in the shopping cart and lasting the hour without a tantrum.

As a child masters that level of behavior, a wise parent might take the child out of the shopping cart to allow him or her to walk alongside with one hand either held by the parent or holding onto the cart. That free hand with the potential to reach low-level temptations becomes the “plus one.” Anticipating a readiness for more-advanced self-discipline, the parent might next release the child’s hand but still require him or her to stay adjacent to the cart. With two hands free and no material
tether, that maturing child must strengthen the capacity to resist the runaway inclination of the natural man and stay beside the parent, in spite of the very real freedom the child has to tear down the aisles.

A little older and more self-disciplined, the child may next experience the “plus one” of an assigned errand to the end of the aisle to retrieve something from the shopping list or even be given the prerogative to make a choice of his or her own.

Help Children Correct Their Behavior

It all sounds very academic, but the fact is, based on our own nonacademic, repeatedly practical experience, there are risks every time we take children to the store at all, much less allow them space beyond the shopping cart. What if that previously well-behaved child takes off to the end of the aisle and impulsively snatches an apple from the bottom row of a towering display? Has the experience with self-discipline been a total failure? Although we would likely have hesitated with the answer some years ago when we were taking our own unpredictable children to the grocery store, we think even then we would have affirmed our commitment to the principle of “competence plus one,” despite the risks that “plus one” inevitably implies. Thus, if the display topples and apples bump to the ground and roll down the aisle, what do we recommend? The obvious—we take the young culprit to the scene of the crime and assist him or her in picking up every one.

While we were visiting family friends one warm California afternoon, our young sons were amusing themselves wrestling in the front yard. With a sudden flare of temper, one boy grabbed a small toy and bonked another over the head, necessitating several stitches. That young offender’s mother taught him a lesson with her response that he shared with us fondly fifteen years later. She drove him to a doughnut store, where she expected him to spend his own money buying a box of doughnuts for his injured friend. As if that were not enough, she took him to his friend’s house and waited while he made the long trek to the front door to deliver the offering to his friend with a pained apology. Repentance is an essential privilege, even for very young wrongdoers.

Prepare Children’s Minds to Make Good Choices

Although we cannot anticipate every possible challenging choice, we can appropriately brief our children by reviewing in advance the likely experiences and temptations they might face. A girl who has pictured tantalizing cereal boxes strategically placed at her eye level and made a
mental commitment to avoid the temptation of snatching them willfully off the shelves will be better equipped for her “plus one” experience of walking down the grocery store aisles without physical restraint. If we think to talk about the cereal boxes but neglect to consider the appealing apples, conversation after the fact might be helpful for the next time. Learning and repentance are lifelong projects.

**Cultivate an Appetite for Good Things**

Other benefits to our taking children with us to the grocery store and everywhere else that is enriching and interesting are the opportunity to spend time together in conversation and to expose them to the varied, lovely things of life. Part of cultivating a craving for the good implies children’s having been richly exposed to it. As a result of what we know about our children’s eternal identity as children of God, we can believe that they have a disposition to recognize and desire that which is good. We can trust they will know what is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy,” and they can cultivate an eagerness and determination to “seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13), even in their friends, their hobbies, and their activities. Parents, then, assume the fortunate task of offering children exposure to and experience with wonderful things.

We admired a group of six young mothers who organized for their four-year-old boys a weekly music appreciation group. As those energetic little music lovers played with happy lyrics and rhythms, the imaginative mothers were not only taking initiative for cultivating a God-given gravitation to positive influences but also engaging affirmatively in activity with their young sons and their young sons’ friends. Those mothers were deepening their own affection for homemade tambourines and other people’s four-year-old boys. The open-minded shared embracing of good music together will likely have lasting benefits for them all.

Another family of six we know formed a family museum club. Together they searched the Sunday newspapers for listings of appropriate exhibits they could study and attend together. When we joined them on a family outing to a traveling exhibit at the Getty Museum, we were impressed by their children’s intelligent, cultural pleasure at viewing those challenging, beautiful works of art. Beginning with a “competence plus one” measure as their guide when the children were young, the parents had cultivated and believed in their children’s Godlike gravitation to lovely things.
Spend Time Reviewing Each Day’s Choices

Being affirmative with the use of time increases the opportunity for exposure to praiseworthy things, and it minimizes the vacant time for misuse. We might avoid thinking in terms of “passing time” or “killing time” and choose rather to “take time,” “make time,” or “invest time.” At the end of every day, sometimes wearily but always with determination, we sat for a few minutes at the side of each child’s bed for each to consider in the semidarkness of his or her room the answer to the ritualistic nightly request, “Tell me all the things you’ve done today.” Over the years, we heard sweet recollections of meaningful firsts, tender confessions of childlike regrets, earnest deliberations of pending decisions, nostalgic reflections of missed opportunities, and thoughtful perceptions of right and wrong. The children were reviewing in meaningful ways, almost as soon as they could talk, the productive events of their day with pleasure, building determination to eliminate or adjust the wasted or poorly spent moments.

One exemplary family has made it a practice, beginning when their children were very young and continuing through their teenage years, to ask each child at the end of the day to recall and report a “happy thought.” A life well lived begins with a spiritual creation, continues with a worthy execution, and then concludes with a review and analysis. We might use the pattern of the creation of the earth as our example. That end-of-the-day review assists us and our children as we seek to identify, and then duplicate, those activities and behaviors that were the substance of the “happy thought.”

Take Young People’s Decisions Seriously

Although we were sometimes glad to have our smiles veiled by the evening darkness when our children reviewed in earnest the childlike things we recognized as inconsequential in the long term, we sought to take their thoughts and concerns very seriously. When we approached my father for counsel early in our marriage regarding the possible purchase of a first home, he set a valuable example for us. We were poor. The condominium we were renting in graduate school was going up for sale, so we were obligated either to purchase it or find another home. The cost of the very small, two-bedroom condominium was $18,000. With a mortgage instead of rent, our monthly payments would actually decrease, but we worried about the down payment and the commitment of the purchase. A loving parent, surely smiling on the other end of the telephone about our ardent concern over what
must have seemed to him a small amount of money and an easy decision, listened with gracious sincerity, offered his best professional analysis for our consideration, and then expressed his confidence in our ability to make a good decision. Likewise, our Heavenly Father sees from His vantage point the eternally inconsequential nature of many of our concerns; but His attention is, nonetheless, never condescending. We and our children are all works in progress.

Trust Children’s Ability to Receive Inspiration

Happily, we parents can trust our children’s ability to receive their own inspiration. Our job, then, becomes one of teaching them to seek and be sensitive to the Spirit and then honor those feelings, not demanding with proud imposition that they be obedient to our arbitrary rules. We are seeking for them, as we are seeking for ourselves, the determination, wisdom, and willingness to embrace the will of heaven, not a long list of family “musts.” Compelling our children’s obedience to our laws as our highest goal glorifies our ability to know always the best course for them, underrates their privilege of receiving inspiration, and intensifies the pressure we feel to control.

The Light of Christ is given to everyone, even young men and women, in sufficient quantity for them to feel the difference between right and wrong. Our goal is to cultivate their hearts to crave, their ears to hear, and their wills to honor that light. The nurture of such spiritual sensitivity begins before age three, continues to age eight when they receive the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, and then goes beyond. As their lives and decisions become more complicated, their privilege of inspiration and heavenly assistance becomes more comprehensive. Ideally and with attentive nurture, their ability to discern worthy voices from others increases as the need for that discernment intensifies.

The privilege of agency has always implied risks, but the quest to promote spiritual self-reliance is a heavenly one. Trusting in the Light of Christ, the eternal nature of our project, and the supplementary grace of God, we can embrace the task with patience, determination, and joy.

Use the Building Blocks for Nurturing Self-Reliance

In summary, we have learned to view the elements of the above ideological thinking as building blocks for nurturing spiritual self-reliance, and we recommend all parents adopt the methodology that has proven so successful in our lives:
• Be careful to avoid using external rewards and punishments as the ultimate results of right choices.
• Nurture self-reliance with a “competence plus one” formula.
• Prepare children to make responsible choices by discussing alternatives and visualizing possible outcomes in advance.
• Assist children with appropriate opportunities to repent, and correct errors by helping children accept the natural consequences of their mistakes.
• Cultivate an appetite for lovely and praiseworthy things by exposing children lavishly to them.
• Review and analyze the results of choices made to reinforce commitment to good choices and to rethink poor ones.
• Take young people’s decisions seriously with honest attention and thoughtful counsel.
• Trust children’s ability as heavenly heirs to receive their own inspiration.
Eleventh-century Qur’an from Turkey
What Every Latter-day Saint Should Know about Islam

Brian M. Hauglid and Kent P. Jackson

Brian M. Hauglid is an assistant professor of ancient scripture at BYU. Kent P. Jackson is a professor of ancient scripture at BYU.

Islam began in Arabia in the seventh century A.D. and since then has spread to all parts of the earth to become a worldwide faith with about 1.2 billion followers. Given its importance not only to its many adherents but also to the rest of the world, it is surprising how little Westerners know about it and how many misconceptions concerning Islam thrive in our culture. Latter-day Saints—who are under a scriptural injunction to learn about “things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, . . . and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:79)—would be wise to become better informed about this influential and rapidly growing religion.1

The name Islam means “submission” (submission to God), and each believer is called a “Muslim” (one who submits to God). Muslims worship the same God (Arabic Allah) that Christians and Jews worship, “the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob” (Mosiah 7:19), “the Compassionate, the Merciful” (Qur’an 1:1). Muslims are not a nationality or an ethnic group but a community of believers. They can be found among all races and in every nation, not only in the Middle East. Although Arabia is the birthplace of Islam, being an Arab is not the same as being a Muslim. An Arab is someone whose native or ancestral language is Arabic, and millions of Arabs in the Middle East are Christians. Indonesia, the most populous Muslim nation in the world, is three thousand miles from the nearest Arab country and three thousand miles
from the Middle East. Only 20 percent of Muslims worldwide are Arabs, and of the nine nations in the world with the largest Muslim populations, only one is an Arab country and only three are in the Middle East.² There are roughly as many Muslims in the United States as Jews or Latter-day Saints.

History

Muslims view the life of their prophet Muhammad and the origins of Islam as a sacred history. For Muslims this means that God’s hand is evident in the life of Muhammad and what occurred in the centuries after his death. Muhammad’s birth was anticipated, and his entire life is viewed as the model life for every Muslim. Therefore, his life story and the early history of Islam give meaning to and inform every aspect of the life of Muslims. Even the name Muhammad (“One Who Is Praised”) is the most common name given to male Muslims. But Muhammad is not a god or divine person who intercedes on behalf of the followers of Islam to provide salvation. He is not a savior figure. In the Islamic view, Islam began with Adam and was restored by subsequent prophets, the last of whom was Muhammad. He is considered the last in a long succession extending back to Jesus in the New Testament and farther back into the Old Testament to include prophets such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Solomon, David, and a few not mentioned in the Bible (for example, Hud and Salih).

Muhammad was born about A.D. 570 to the clan of the Banu Hashim of the Quraysh tribe in Mecca, a bustling city of commerce in the Arabian Peninsula. His father died before his birth, and he lost his mother at about age two. After his guardian grandfather also passed away, Muhammad was placed in the care of his uncle, Abu Talib, who raised him to adulthood. At age twenty-five, Muhammad married Khadija, a merchant woman fifteen years his elder. Khadija and Muhammad had a happy marriage that produced several children.

According to Islamic tradition, Mecca at the time of Muhammad exhibited all the ills of a corrupted and apostate city. Its religious focal
point was the Ka'ba, a large, black, cube-shaped structure that still stands in Mecca today. In Muhammad’s time, the sacred Ka'ba complex, which Adam reportedly constructed and Abraham and Ishmael later rebuilt, housed more than 365 idol gods. Tribal and clan warfare dominated the area, and the practice of female infanticide prevailed, wherein newborn daughters, who were looked upon as a drain on family production and finances, were left to die in the desert. Muhammad was very critical of the Meccans. He was particularly sensitive to the idolatry and corrupted business practices of the Quraysh merchants toward the poor, the widows, and his fellow orphans. Muhammad was also quite contemplative and inclined to a more spiritual outlook on life. Periodically, he would retreat to a cave on Mount Hira, near Mecca, to practice religious devotions and contemplate “his life and the ills of his society, seeking greater meaning and insight.”

Muslim tradition records that during one of those retreats, the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad and commanded him to recite to his people: “Recite: In the Name of thy Lord who created, created Man of a blood-clot. Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by the Pen, taught Man that he knew not” (Qur'an 96:1–5).

Muhammad received 114 revelations over a twenty-three-year period. Within twenty years of his death, Muslims collected the revelations and bound them together to become their sacred book of scripture, the Qur'an (“the Recitation”). The Qur'an is about the same length as the New Testament.

Muhammad and his followers experienced many trials and persecutions, particularly from the Meccans of the Quraysh tribe. One of the most difficult personal trials for Muhammad occurred when his beloved Khadija and protector uncle Abu Talib died within the same year. It was about that time that Muhammad is said to have been transported on a winged creature to Jerusalem, from which he ascended through several heavens and conversed with many Old Testament prophets. Muhammad even talked with God. Despite this Year of Sadness (as it later came to be called), Muhammad’s Night Journey experience strengthened him both physically and spiritually so he was able to take charge of the fledgling religion and provide the needed leadership for the rest of his life.

In A.D. 622, not long after Muhammad’s Night Journey and ascension, God commanded him to leave Mecca and move to Yathrib, a city about two hundred miles north. Because of the significance of this move, Yathrib took on the name “the City of the Prophet” (madinat al-Nabi, or Medina). In Medina, Muhammad was able to set up the
first Islamic state (*umma*), where Muslims acknowledged him as their prophet and political leader. The move from Mecca to Medina, called the *hijra*, was so important to Muslims that they began to calculate time from that year (A.D. 622). Hence, some Muslim calendars contain both *hijra* and Gregorian dates. After several battles and skirmishes with opposing Meccan tribes, in A.D. 630 the majority of Meccans accepted Muhammad and proclaimed him a prophet and the political leader of Mecca and Medina. Upon returning to Mecca, Muhammad cleansed the Ka‘ba of the idol gods and declared Allah the one and only God.

Muhammad did not choose a successor before he died in the arms of his wife Aisha in 632. It is significant to Muslims that the leaders who followed Muhammad cannot be considered prophets because, according to the Qur’an (33:40), Muhammad was the final prophet. Instead, those early leaders were considered representatives or deputies of Muhammad, called caliphs. Today two major branches of Islam exist—Sunnis and Shi‘is (or Shi‘ites). Following the death of Muhammad, the question of who should succeed in the leadership of the community became critical. The main question involved whether the community should choose the leader or if a direct blood relative of Muhammad should lead. During the period after Muhammad’s death, his cousin and son-in-law, ‘Ali, became an immediate candidate of choice. However, the community selected others until ‘Ali was chosen as the fourth caliph. By that time, enough Muslims were offended at ‘Ali being passed over previously that they began to develop into the “Party of ‘Ali” (*shi‘at ‘Ali*). After ‘Ali and his son were assassinated, the split was cemented even more. Over the centuries, Shi‘is (those who were loyal to ‘Ali) became prominent from time to time as their influence grew through rising to high levels of leadership in the Islamic world. Today the main distinction between Sunnis and Shi‘is is still leadership. In principle, Shi‘is believe in a central leader who can trace his lineage back to Muhammad. Sunnis, on the other hand, govern through a consensus of community leaders. Apart from the question of leadership, Sunnis and Shi‘is agree on most of the basic beliefs and practices of Islam. Geographically, a large concentration of Shi‘is can be found in Iran, but Shi‘ism also has a presence in other countries, including Iraq, Lebanon, and Pakistan. Sunnis, however, constitute the largest population of Muslims throughout the world (about 85 percent).

By the eighth and ninth centuries, Islam had already spread from the Arabian Peninsula westward to Spain and eastward to India. During the Middle Ages, while the West languished in relative intellectual darkness, Islamic civilization, first centered in Damascus and then in
Baghdad, preserved and produced classical knowledge in philosophy, literature, and the sciences, as well as contributing its own unique advances to those and other disciplines. Today one-fifth of the world’s population is Muslim, and Islam is now considered one of the fastest-growing religions on earth.

Shi'ite mosque, Damascus, Syria, marking the burial place of Sayyida Ruqayya, Muhammad’s great-granddaughter.

**Basic Beliefs and Practices**

Like Judaism and Christianity (and other major world faiths), Islam is not a monolithic religion. The Islamic world is made up of diverse races, nations, languages, and cultures. Yet Muslims all over the world are united through a number of foundational beliefs and practices.

A major belief Islam instills into every aspect of Muslim life is the oneness (*tawhid*) of God. It cannot be overstated that Muslims are strict monotheists. In fact, any Muslim who elevates anything (people, power, greed, status, materials) to the level of God and somehow supplants Him is guilty of the most grievous and unforgivable sin in Islam (*shirk*, the association of anything with God). This was the problem every prophet before Muhammad, and also Muhammad himself, had to deal with. In a sense, Islamic sacred tradition teaches a dispensational history. Each prophet, usually assisted by an angel, appears on a scene of wickedness and idolatrous practices and serves as a restorer, bringing back the true worship of the one God. But the prophets
before Muhammad were never entirely successful at ridding their people of idolatry. Muslims believe that victory over idolatry and apostasy will eventually occur, as evidenced by the rapid growth of Islam since Muhammad.

Muslims also believe that the true inner nature of each human being can recognize the oneness of God. However, because of the accumulated layers of pride, greed, or worldly preoccupations, people forget and neglect God. In traditional Christianity, original sin is Adam’s disobedience to God’s commandment, which is transferred to each person. In Islam, original sin is forgetfulness and neglect. To overcome the consequences of sin, a Christian needs the grace of Christ’s Atonement; in Islam, a Muslim needs to remember the oneness of God. To help Muslims remember God, it is common to see the use of a string of prayer beads, containing ninety-nine beads, each corresponding to one of the ninety-nine names of God. Many Muslims will recite those names on a daily basis. In Islam, recognizing and remembering the oneness of God is of paramount importance.

Islam teaches all Muslims to know and do the will of God. Muslims who want to teach this basic concept to Christians and know something of the Bible commonly refer to Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:10, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” In the Book of Mormon, Jacob also teaches the principle of following the will of God: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh” (2 Nephi 10:24). For every Muslim, God’s will is made manifest in the Qur’an and in the sayings and acts of Muhammad (sunna). Muslims view the Arabic Qur’an much the same way that Christians view Jesus Christ. According to one prominent Muslim scholar, “In Christianity both the spirit and body of Christ are sacred, and he is considered the Word of God. The Qur’an is likewise for Muslims the Word of God (kalimat Allah), and both its inner meaning, or spirit, and its body, or outer form, the text in the Arabic language in which it was revealed, are sacred to Muslims.” Muslims consider Muhammad’s teachings and example second only to the teachings of the Qur’an, and therefore great strides were made in the early centuries of Islam to collect and document every known report (hadith) of Muhammad’s words and deeds. Every field of Islamic inquiry—such as theology, philosophy, law, and mysticism—finds its bearings first in the Qur’an and then in the teachings of Muhammad. Although some Muslims have interpreted the Qur’an and Muhammad’s teachings as justification for extremism, the majority of Muslims take a much more moderate approach.
While it is true that Muslims believe in the oneness of God, in doing His will, and in the manifestation of these in the Qur’an and in Muhammad’s teachings, Islam is still very much focused on what Muslims must do with their faith to remember God and do His will. Therefore, drawing from the Qur’an and Muhammad’s life, Muslims unanimously accept five mandatory practices: the witness of faith (the shahada), prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage. These are commonly referred to as the Five Pillars of Islam.

**Shahada.** In the witness of faith, one declares the oneness of God and Muhammad’s prophethood. One must verbally declare the witness of faith when desiring to become a Muslim. To do this one must sincerely say, usually in the presence of another Muslim, the statement (preferably in Arabic), “I testify that there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.” Muslims view the first part of this statement as a forceful reminder of the oneness of God and of the ineffectiveness of all other “gods,” meaning anything equated at the level of God. The second part focuses on the prominent place Muhammad holds as a prophet and model Muslim. One can find this statement permeating much of Islamic thought and see it written on mosques and books and used in many other ways. This declaration is the Muslim creedal statement and the gateway into Islam.

**Prayer.** Muslims are commanded to pray five times a day. According to Muslim tradition, when Muhammad was returning from his Ascension to heaven, he saw Moses, who asked him what God had instructed. Muhammad said he was bringing the message to his followers to pray fifty times a day. Moses was astonished at this number and suggested that Muhammad go back to see if God would lessen the requirement. Muhammad went back and forth between Moses and God several times. Each time Moses would say the prayers are too many, and each time God would reduce the requirement. Muhammad went back and forth between Moses and God several times. Each time Moses would say the prayers are too many, and each time God would reduce the prayers by five or ten. Finally, Muhammad returned to Moses having lowered the number of prayers down to five a day. Moses still felt the people could not perform that many prayers, citing his experiences with the rebellious children of Israel. But Muhammad, when he was told to go back, said that if Moses wanted to go back that would be fine, but Muhammad would not. Muslims commonly teach that the merit of saying five prayers is equal to fifty. One can see this emphasis on prayer in every Muslim country by the vast number of mosques, which provide a place for Muslims to pray (especially for Friday prayer), and in the thousands of tower-like minarets that broadcast the call to prayer from loud speakers. Before a Muslim can pray, a cleansing ritual must be performed, which
involves washing the hands, face, and feet with water. Frequent prayer reminds Muslims that they are in a master-servant relationship with God and that they must be clean and accountable to Him.

Fasting. During one full (lunar) month each year, Ramadan (the traditional month in which Muhammad first received the Qur'an), all able Muslims are expected to fast from dawn until dusk. This means that they abstain from food, drink, smoking, and sexual relations. This is generally a time for Muslims to be introspective and draw closer to God. Generally, children are not required to fast until they reach the age of eight or older. Many Muslim families take the opportunity of Ramadan to focus on areas of their life that need more discipline, such as doing better at prayers, school, and work and being kind to others. At the end of Ramadan, Muslims joyously celebrate Eid al-Fitr, the breaking of the fast, in which much food is consumed and gifts are exchanged.

Almsgiving. Like King Benjamin’s counsel to take care of the needy (see Mosiah 4:21), Muslims are required to be outgoing in their efforts to take care of the poor and lend support to community needs. Muslims even donate 2.5 percent of their income yearly to assist the less fortunate. These alms are used for building schools and mosques and for lifting up those who are in need. It is not uncommon in Mus-
What Every Latter-day Saint Should Know about Islam

In countries to find beggars on the streets gladly receiving contributions from Muslims who are just as happy to give, knowing that doing so provides them an opportunity to live this important pillar of their faith.

Pilgrimage. Every able Muslim should perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. This is the pinnacle spiritual experience for a Muslim. The hajj (pilgrimage) occurs during one month out of the year and lasts over a week. It includes rites and reenactments that commemorate the life of Abraham. Each Muslim dons a white seamless garment, walks around the sacred Ka'ba, stones the devil, and performs the rite of standing where a Muslim imagines himself or herself in the presence of God. Although the hajj does not really resemble Latter-day Saint temple practices, for Muslims it is the closest thing in terms of sacredness and spiritual fulfillment. “The hajj is the highest act of devotion for a Muslim. It is a time of spiritual reflection, of rededication to Allah and the Islamic faith, . . . and of peace with one’s fellow beings.” At the end of the hajj, Muslims celebrate Eid al-Adha, the feast of the sacrifice, in which Muslims sacrifice and eat a sheep, goat, or cow in memory of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael.

Attached to the Five Pillars of Islam is the concept of jihad (“striving,” or “struggle”). This is not properly a pillar, but it is added to the list to remind Muslims that performing the pillars will be a lifelong striving. And it is in this sense that jihad is most meaningful to Muslims. It is reported that when the battles between the Muslims and the Meccans had ended, Muhammad said that the “Lesser Jihad” was over and that the “Greater Jihad” had just begun. In other words, the “Greater Jihad” is the struggle to be a good Muslim living a good Muslim life, while the “Lesser Jihad” is taking up arms in defense of Islam. In the words of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “To wake up in the morning with the Name of God on one’s lips, to perform the prayers, to live righteously andjustly throughout the day, to be kind and generous to people and even animals and plants one encounters during the day, to do one’s job well, and to take care of one’s family and of one’s own health and well-being all require jihad on this elemental level.” Again, most of the 1.2 billion Muslims in the world interpret these basic beliefs and practices in a peaceful way. It is the highest of virtues to spread the message of Islam through love and concern for fellow human beings. For Muslims, jihad is more or less the equivalent of Latter-day Saints being “anxiously engaged in a good cause” (D&C 58:27). Thus, it is unfortunate that extremists have created the images that many non-Muslims have of jihad, eclipsing the true and correct picture of Islam.
Future Challenges and Lessons Learned

Because North Americans are isolated from those parts of the world in which large populations of Muslims are found historically, we are not as well informed about Islam as we would be otherwise. This would be of little concern were it not for the unfortunate aspect of human nature that seeks to stereotype and sometimes even demonize those whom we do not know. One result of this is the way Muslims and Middle Easterners are treated in the popular Western media. In a world that is becoming increasingly aware of cultural and ethnic sensitivities, Middle Easterners and Muslims seem to be the only groups that are fair game for collective maligning and vilifying in television and motion pictures. Our sad experience has been that Latter-day Saints, despite having been taught by revelation that “all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33), are not immune from this kind of thinking.

Misunderstandings between Muslims and Westerners often come about because of unwillingness to understand another person’s point of view. In the modern world, the flashpoints between the two cultures that most frequently come to mind are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and terrorism. With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian dilemma, Westerners generally view the conflict from the perspective of centuries of brutal European oppression of Jews, culminating in pogroms, deportations, concentration camps, and the gas chambers of Nazi Germany, accompanied by the quest of the most persecuted minority in history to gather to its historical homeland and create a secure Jewish state there. But people of the Middle East, both Christians and Muslims, see the other side of the issue: innocent Palestinians driven by superior military force from their ancestral lands and homes to make way for the victims of European racism, culminating in continued oppression and generations of children growing up in refugee camps or under military occupation. Those who know the situation well understand that both of these perspectives are historically accurate and that both are extremely troubling to people who care about their fellow humans. Yet Westerners generally turn a blind eye to the one, while people of the Middle East generally turn a blind eye to the other. For its part, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a well-established position of impartiality on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Brigham Young University and individual Church members continue to work to build bridges with our friends in both communities. In recent years, the conflict has taken on very strong religious overtones, as Muslims throughout the world have adopted the Palestinian side as a religious cause and have wrapped in the cloak of Islam what was once considered strictly a political struggle.
Among Latter-day Saints, it is common to hear that the conflict is the inevitable continuation of a millennia-old rivalry between Isaac and Ishmael. But the truth is that the conflict is only a century old and belongs to modern history. Jews and Muslims have, for the most part, coexisted in peace throughout their common history. And ever since the Middle Ages, Muslim lands have provided a safe haven for Jews fleeing from their ongoing oppression at the hands of Christians.

Selimiye Mosque, Konya, Turkey, 16th century; in the center of the image is the mihrab (the niche indicating the direction to Mecca), and to the right is the minbar (the stairway and the pulpit used in the Friday sermon).

That Western culture and Islam are not inherently incompatible is shown in the fact that Muslims in very large numbers are immigrating to the United States and Canada, attracted by the same blessings that have brought immigrants to these countries for centuries. Many more have immigrated into Western Europe. Even so, there are cultural differences that perhaps will lead to future challenges. For example, Muslims, like Christians, seek an ultimate victory for their religion when all the world will be unified under divine rule and law. But for Latter-day Saints and other Christians, Christ’s kingdom “is not of this world” (John 18:36), and His universal reign will be established only when He returns to earth in glory. Muslims, Jews, and Christians share an equal commitment to justice. Most Muslims agree with us that vengeance is to be left to God and that justice will not always be achieved in this life (see Romans 12:19). Yet there are some who feel
that believers themselves are responsible to right things that are wrong and to see that justice is done on earth. As a result, some Muslims may find it difficult to function fully in democratic societies according to the norms of those societies. And in extreme cases, the desire to bring about what some consider to be justice has been expressed in acts of violence and terrorism. The idea of a "separation of church and state" is a foreign concept to many Muslims, who believe that God is the only legitimate ruler and that His will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven. The constitutional principle that government may neither establish religion nor impede the free exercise of religion has proven to be the best guarantee of the peaceful coexistence of differing religious communities in one country. But a government that does not acknowledge Islam both as God's true religion and as the law of the land is an anathema to many Muslims, especially in countries with large Muslim populations. Muslims themselves are debating issues regarding religious pluralism and the status of religious minorities in predominantly Muslim lands. And they are also discussing and evaluating the position of women in their societies.

Some other cultural differences between Western and Muslim societies perhaps say more about us than they do about Muslims. Many Muslims consider Europeans and North Americans to be decadent and lacking in morals. Their first large-scale exposure to Westerners came when American and European workers arrived to labor in oil fields and construction projects, bringing with them alcohol, crime, and prostitution. People of the Middle East learn about Americans by watching our motion pictures and television shows. They are appalled at the crime, violence, and immorality in our society. In contrast, visitors from the West are surprised at the lack of crime they find in the Middle East and are amazed to see children playing in the streets of big cities after dark and families going shopping or for walks long after American cities are shut down for the night. And contrary to what some Westerners believe, the scarcity of crime is not solely attributable to the severity of punishment; more than anything else, it results from a shared commitment in the Muslim world that crime is wrong.

We can learn much from our Muslim brothers and sisters. Islam has created a society in which modesty is valued, in which divorce and premarital and extramarital sexual relations are much less common than in our culture, and in which the strength of immediate and extended families can be an example even to Latter-day Saints. Muslims develop strong communities with interactive neighborhoods of people who care for each other and watch out for the interests of both neigh-
bors and strangers. Their culture teaches the virtues of generosity and hospitality. One BYU professor learned about Muslim generosity on a trip to Syria in which he and his family were stranded in a disabled car on a desert road. The family was taken into a stranger’s home and fed and entertained for hours until new transportation could be arranged. Another BYU professor learned the same lesson with flat tires and no spare on two consecutive days in Jordan. Each of the four times he stood by the road to hail a ride to and from repair shops, it was the very first car that came by that offered him a ride. Acts of graciousness and service like this, increasingly rare in the West, are typical of the experiences of the many Latter-day Saints who have lived or traveled in the Muslim world.

Men eating from a common platter, Gaza, Palestine; activities such as eating (especially from a common plate), visiting, and drinking tea in coffee houses highlight the emphasis Islam places on community.

Muslims and Latter-day Saints

In the early days of the Church, some critics of Mormonism, claiming that Joseph Smith was a false prophet, saw similarities between him and Muhammad. Their intent was clearly to insult both, but Latter-day Saints, feeling some brotherhood with the disparaged Muslims, found the parallels to be of value.10 In sermons, some Church leaders praised Muhammad and pointed to commonalities between Islam and Mormonism.11 Over the years, Latter-day Saints have continued to notice
the positive contributions of Islam. Articles in the *Ensign* have pointed out the kinship we feel with Muslims on many issues. In 1978, during the administration of President Spencer W. Kimball, the First Presidency of the Church issued a statement emphasizing God’s love for all of humankind. It taught, among other things: “The great religious leaders of the world such as Muhammad, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals. . . . Our message therefore is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race, or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters.”

It must be acknowledged that there are profound, irreconcilable doctrinal differences between Islam and the restored gospel. The fundamental claims of the two religions cannot both be true. Although Muhammad received light from God to teach moral truths to his followers and bring them to a higher understanding, we believe that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10) and that the first principle of the gospel is faith in the atoning power of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God (see Articles of Faith 1:4). And we believe that Joseph Smith and his successors have all been true prophets. We affirm the truthfulness of the message of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, while at the same time we rejoice to see God’s hand at work among honorable people not of our faith. Islam teaches its followers devotion to God, a desire to obey His will, and a commitment to live lives of virtue, honesty, and decency. Faithful Muslims, like faithful Latter-day Saints, believe in “standing for something.” In the spiritually starved world in which we live, it is good to know that in many lands the call goes out publicly five times a day from thousands of minarets, announcing the truth for all to hear: “Allahu akbar! Allahu akbar!” (“God is great! God is great!”) Latter-day Saints can be thankful that this message is being proclaimed.

**Notes**

2. The nations with the largest Muslim populations are Indonesia (181 million), Pakistan (141 million), India (124 million), Bangladesh (111 million), Turkey (66 million), Egypt (66 million), Iran (65 million), Nigeria (63 million), and China (38 million) ("Inside Islam," National Geographic, January 2002, 78-80).


5. Similarities to the much-later Dante's Inferno are inescapable, and there are ascension motifs in many religions. Muhammad's Night Journey and ascension (mi'raj) are somewhat similar to visions of the prophets Enoch (see Moses 7:23-69), Moses (see Moses 1:24-40), and Nephi (see 1 Nephi 11-14). Interestingly, Muhammad's ascension through several degrees of heavens shows (at least in the idea that there is more than one heaven) a resemblance to Joseph Smith's vision of the three degrees of glory (see Doctrine and Covenants 76).


9. See Howard W. Hunter, "All Are Alike unto God," Ensign, June 1979, 72-74, especially: "They are both children of promise, and as a church we do not take sides" (74).

10. See the discussion in Arnold H. Green, "The Muhammad–Joseph Smith Comparison: Subjective Metaphor or a Sociology of Prophethood," in Palmer, Mormons and Muslims, 111-33.


President David O. McKay at age eighty-four at his home in Huntsville, Utah

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Recollections of David O. McKay’s Educational Practices

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To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but also practically. (Thoreau, Walden)

By Thoreau’s definition, David O. McKay was certainly a philosopher. He lived according to his own brand of wisdom: his ideas consisted of simple independent thoughts, he had an underlying trust in his religion, and he solved educational problems in practical ways. By studying the experiences of people closely associated with President McKay, we will see that he established his own progressive teaching practices and expressed a unique educational philosophy that guided everything he did.

President McKay’s definition of a teacher’s role was closely associated with the knowledge he felt to be most important. First on his list of teacher responsibilities was the obligation to teach the subject of values. Fulfilling that obligation, he felt, gave a person some wonderful opportunities:

First, the desire to achieve mastery over weak and selfish indulgence.

Second, the power to prepare one to face a life with courage, to meet disaster with fortitude, and to face death without fear.

Third, to develop virile manhood, beautiful womanhood. Oh, how the world needs them!
Fourth, to implant within many souls at least the promise of a friend in each, or of a companion who later may be fit for a husband or wife, who will be fit to be an exemplary father or a loving, intelligent mother. That is your privilege, teacher.²

Looking at time spent with others as opportunities for development and self-mastery, he infused various values into the conversation and memory of those who came under his tutelage.

The Responsibility of Study and Reflection

President McKay extolled the importance of lifelong learning. For instance, President Boyd K. Packer remembers being in the temple with President McKay just before President McKay’s death. After finishing an endowment ceremony, President McKay exclaimed, “I think I am beginning to understand it.”³ Even after sixty-five years of being an Apostle, he was still a student.

President McKay thought another obligation each teacher had was to take personal time for reflection. President Packer tells a story that President McKay used to zero in on this point: “He talked about a Presiding Bishop of the Church who had lost his son in a railroading accident up in a little mine. . . . The point of it was that the boy contacted his mother and said, ‘I tried to contact father but he was too busy.’ He really pressed the brethren to take time to meditate, to take time to think, and to take time to pray. He pressed that upon the brethren using that story to illustrate. That had a very important influence on me because I have tried to do that. It isn’t easy.”⁴

President McKay felt teachers should model for their students the practices of reflection, meditation, and critical thinking. Church educator Lowell Bennion related a conversation he had with President McKay in which this idea was reinforced. Commenting on a television program, President McKay asked, “Who was that man on T.V. with you last week? Is he a member of the Church?” Bennion answered, “Yes, and a very fine one of intellectual acumen and great integrity. However, he does his own thinking.” President McKay responded with a smile, “There’s nothing wrong with that, is there?”⁵ Thinking deeply was part of each teacher’s preparation.

The Responsibility of Preparation

Preparation was another duty President McKay saw wrapped up in the role of being a teacher. According to President McKay, effective teaching was to include complete and thorough preparation. In typical
fashion, he used this story to illustrate the necessity of preparation:

The other day it was my privilege to drive through the fields in my old hometown. I passed through two farms up near the mountain canal. I saw one that had yielded an exceptionally good crop of oats. Notwithstanding the drought, the cold in the spring, and other disadvantages, the farmer had thrashed an excellent yield. Just over the fence was another oat field, but a failure, comparatively speaking. I said to the man: “Why, what is the matter? You must have planted poor seed.”

“No, it is the same seed that my neighbor has.”

“Well, then it was planted too late, and you did not have enough moisture in the ground to bring it up.”

“It was sown the same afternoon that he sowed his.” Upon further inquiry, I learned that the first man had plowed his in the fall; then he had disked it carefully in the spring, making a mulch on the surface, and by such tilling had conserved the moisture of the winter. His neighbor, on the other hand, had plowed his late in the spring, had left the furrows unharrowed; the moisture had evaporated. Following the sowing of the seed came four weeks or six weeks of drought, and there was not sufficient moisture to germinate the seed. The first man had made preparation, the proper kind of preparation, and nature yielded the increase. The second man labored hard, but his preparation was poor; indeed he had made inadequate preparation.6

President McKay outlined the steps adequate preparation included. First, teachers were to look at their expertise and make sure they were not trying to teach what they themselves did not know. Second, teachers were to take a character inventory, making sure they were free from such things as backbiting, faultfinding, or hard feelings. For President McKay, “part of the preparation of a teacher consists in freeing his own heart from those things.”7

When the teacher’s character was intact, he or she could then prepare for each individual class in three parts, which could be called the who, what, and how of preparation. Teachers were first to understand who the students were; second, to know what the message was; and third, to know by the Spirit and thoughtful prayer and consideration how they were going to teach.8 He repeated these instructions time and time again. For instance, in 1919, he gave the same advice with a slightly different twist: “There are three things which must guide all teachers. First, get into the subject—any subject taken from this universe of facts . . . ; second, get that subject into you; third, try to lead your pupils to
get the subject into them—not pouring it into them, but leading them to see what you see, to know what you know, to feel what you feel.”

After these steps were carefully addressed, President McKay always insisted that each individual lesson be put into outline form so the teacher could give the class a “definite message.”

At the same time, President McKay did not have unrealistic expectations of a teacher’s time or energy. He once warned Elder George Albert Smith about not overexerting his energy: “I am about as well as usual when I don’t overwork. I have to put the brakes on every once in a while to avoid a nervous collapse, but I enjoy my work so much that I don’t like to put any brakes on, and therein lies the danger. The same thing may be said of you, so let me give you a word of caution and suggest that there is a limit to your endurance, and I sincerely hope that you will not cross the danger line.” He believed that if teachers had enough preparation and at the same time kept a limit on expending their energy, they were capable of success.

The Responsibility of Creating a Teaching Style

To lead a student to knowledge requires a unique teaching style. Educator Keith R. Oaks, who served on the Pacific Board of Education (1964–69), felt David O. McKay was influenced by educational philosopher John Dewey. In the fashion of John Dewey, President McKay was one who felt achievement was reached by both knowledge and activity; therefore, students were not just to sit. Rather, they were to accomplish something as they learned by doing. Vernon Lynn Tyler, who also served under President McKay’s administration, concurs that one of this prophet’s greatest abilities was to inspire people to learn as well as do in the process rather than simply parrot back information. A common McKay adage is that a teacher is not a preacher. Biographer Francis Gibbons, who served as President McKay’s secretary, writes: “He used Socratic dialogue. He did not lecture. He would like to draw someone out with questions.” Drawing someone out was not always the most comfortable experience for the student. By way of illustration, President Thomas S. Monson shares his first encounter of eating lunch with the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. During the meal, President McKay turned to the newly ordained Apostle, and the following conversation took place:

“Brother Monson, welcome, to our luncheon table. I read an interesting article in the Readers Digest this month, entitled ‘I Quit Smoking.’ Did you happen to read it?”

“Yes, President McKay. I read the article. That man had the
right idea.”

“Yes, the author had the right idea, but she was a woman, not a man. Brother Monson, do you think that . . . William Shakespeare really wrote the sonnets attributed to him?”

Elder Monson thought, “Where is this conversation going? I’m a business major.” He replied:

“Yes, I do. I think he wrote them.”

“So do I, Brother Monson, so do I. Do you read Shakespeare?”

“Occasionally, occasionally President.”

“What is your favorite work of Shakespeare?”

“Henry VIII, President.”

“And what is your favorite passage from Henry VIII?”

“President, I think my favorite passage was the lament of Cardinal Wolsey when he said, ‘Had I but served my God with half the zeal I serve my king, he in mine age would not have left me naked to mine enemies.’”

“Oh I love that passage. Brother Monson, would you pass the potatoes, please?”

President Monson recounts passing the potatoes in a hurry because he was running out of his Shakespearean background. For President McKay, a sense of order should infuse every teaching experience. Some have called his style formal. Elder Simpson chooses to describe him as a “great respecter of order.” We can see a great respect for organization in the following notes President McKay made when viewing a classroom in 1919:

Observations:
1. Proper arrangements of seats
2. Typewritten schedule of classes.
3. Broken window panes . . .
4. Fire trap
5. Repeating questions . . .
7. Problems of faculty
   (1) Unprepared students . . .
   (2) Condition of school room . . .
8. Entertainment for money

These detailed observations show President McKay’s ability to look at the whole picture. His notes included the physical setting, the
process of learning, the curriculum, the student, and the faculty. His reference to having the seats properly arranged is typical of his attitudes toward organization. He was adamant about propriety.

President McKay never condoned undisciplined behavior. On one occasion in general conference, he made this observation:

Our classrooms are sometimes places of boisterousness. Here is where we need good teachers. A teacher who can present a lesson interestingly will have good order, and when he or she finds students who are rebellious, flipping papers, paying no attention, stumbling, kicking one another, he or she may know that the lesson is not being properly presented. Perhaps it was not even properly prepared.

One of our mothers recently went to a Sunday School class to try to find out why her son was losing interest. There was so much boisterousness, so much confusion, so much noise, that she felt heartsick; and she arose to leave and she said to the teacher, "I thought this was a Sunday School class, not bedlam."18

Still, putting things in order did not mean making things tedious. Elder David B. Haight of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles remembers that President McKay "knew you must keep things simple so people can understand. He was a wonderful, forceful teacher who taught the simple rudiments of the gospel."19 He was firm with guidelines and rules establishing perimeters of conduct that let everyone know what was expected.20 Being forceful and having order and decorum were at the center of President McKay’s teaching style.

The Responsibility of Respecting Agency

One concept that most colleagues agree on is President McKay’s deep regard for another’s agency. His teaching style included never overstepping the bounds of a student’s or subordinate’s agency. Elder Loren C. Dunn, who served as one of the Presidents of the First Quorum of Seventy, believes that President McKay let those he associated with have the freedom to act as they saw fit.21 An experience of former Utah Congressman Gunn McKay, a relative, proves this point. Gunn owned a grocery business and was concerned about staying open on the Sabbath. He approached David O. McKay and said, "We share the same name and I don’t want to drag that name in the mud. What should I do?" President McKay then asked what Church office Gunn held at the time and ended the conversation by saying that he realized that Gunn had to make a living. He added that if he were calling Gunn to be a stake president, he would ask him either to refuse the call or
close his store. That was his only reply. Later, Gunn met David O. McKay after he had decided to close his store on Sundays. President McKay greeted him and said, “We are so delighted you did what you did.” He wanted Gunn to close his store, but he wouldn’t directly tell Gunn to do it.22 This loyalty to moral agency is summed up in two axioms President McKay often repeated: “Behavior is caught, not taught,” and example is much more “potent than precept.”23

President McKay tried to build students in each learning situation. For instance, when Elder Dunn was called to a leadership position, President McKay talked at length with him about his father and then gave him an interesting challenge: “You’ve spoken respectfully and lovingly of your father. We want you to serve in this calling in such a way that it will bring honor to your family and [be] acceptable to your father as well.”24 President McKay used Elder Dunn’s respect for his own father to challenge him to do his best.

Sometimes interviews were nonverbal but nevertheless conveyed a feeling of esteem to the individual. Elder Simpson first met President McKay in the New Zealand Temple, where the following exchange took place: “[President] McKay put out his right hand and pulled me in very close. He put his left hand on my shoulder and proceeded to look into my eyes. He had that wonderful kindly look that he always carried. It was just a magical moment and I expected him to start a conversation but he didn’t say anything. He just looked at me close range with his pleasant smile or look on his face and eyes that penetrated my very soul. After forty or fifty seconds which seemed like an hour he said, ‘Elder Simpson, I am pleased to know you.’”25

Several months afterward, Elder Simpson received a call from President McKay, and the following conversation took place: “Brother Simpson based on our personal interview in the New Zealand Temple I feel impressed to call you to preside over the New Zealand Mission. How soon can you leave?” Elder Simpson identifies the important point of this encounter. He states: “The important thing is . . . there were no words, no questions. He had just looked into my eyes and into my very soul and said, ‘Brother Simpson I am pleased to know you.’ . . . He could see into the very depths of my soul.”26 This encounter made Robert L. Simpson feel great about himself.

In 1933, President Gordon B. Hinckley had a similar experience as a missionary when President McKay asked each missionary to write a paper. After reading Elder Hinckley’s paper, President McKay called him into his office and complimented him on his writing. President Hinckley personally observed that this leader “had confidence in young
people and saw in them their possibilities. He could look above their little idiosyncrasies to the possibility of the boy or the girl in the future. He just had a nurturing spirit about him that was tremendous and wonderful.” President McKay “loved to see people grow, see their minds catch fire. . . . It was ever the nature of the man to educate.”

Such praise and positive interaction were at the heart of President McKay’s teaching style. He was always building the learner; his facial expression and careful use of language conveyed positive affirmation. The main nutrients of the students’ diet were praise and interest in their needs. He suggested teachers take every opportunity to show students that they were interested in them, whether on the street or in a formal educational setting. He lived what he taught, and those around him caught his message. President Packer calls this style “presidential” and says he felt a personal sense of worth in all the meetings that were conducted by him, because each person was free to present his opinion. There was always a “full discussion” that President McKay would never curtail. When he taught, President McKay kept the principle of protecting self-worth uppermost in his mind.

The Responsibility of Developing a Teacher’s Personality

According to President McKay, another responsibility all educators had was to develop a personality that would draw learners to them. President McKay’s best asset in discipline was the sheer force of his charismatic personality. It would be wise to look at his teaching personality in depth to see if certain components can be emulated.

Confidence. As a teenager, Elder Henry B. Eyring experienced President McKay’s confidence when he entered the room. At a dinner, Elder Eyring “was just standing around” when suddenly he noticed “a cluster of people” who “were very animated.” Elder Eyring wondered what the “sort of a ‘hub-bub’ of happy, buoyant people . . . clustered around” were doing. He looked and in the “midst of this circle” saw “a very tall man.” He saw this “extremely handsome man . . . in a light suit which made him even more remarkable.” Elder Eyring refers to an “incredible magnetism” that came from him, not just because “he was an important person; just the person himself.” Elder Eyring called it “a feeling of electricity, . . . a capacity to radiate an influence,” and he was drawn in the same way that everyone else in the room was. Elder Eyring recounts that his impression was not exclusive to a first impression but that the more familiar people became with President McKay, the more impressed they were.

A teacher would certainly want to have such a presence as she or
he walked into a classroom. President McKay instructed how such a presence can be achieved: “Personality must be such that we radiate confidence; and unless our actions are in harmony with our pretensions, our personality will produce a disappointment instead.” Other characteristics that gave President McKay such magnetism are discussed below. They are what made President McKay such an effective educator and educational leader.

A Positive Personality. During the interviews used for this article, the following adjectives were used to describe President McKay: dynamic, forceful, impressive, moving, outstanding, dignified, excited, humorous, humble, kind, guileless, courteous, considerate, encouraging, sweet, generous, and committed. He was known to have a little twinkle in his eye, to accentuate the positive, and to be the perfect image of a mature, intelligent individual. By themselves, these traits may give the impression that President McKay was above criticism and that everyone regarded him with respect and awe. However, it is only fair to recognize that a few also saw him in less ideal terms. For instance, some thought he could sometimes be vain, judgmental, rigid, and aristocratic, even though generally they respected him.

Elder Glenn L. Rudd suggests that President McKay exemplified a dichotomy: while some saw him as a perfectionist, others saw him as being lenient and down to earth. Another paradox is that even though he “would never tell you what you had done wrong,” he was known to really question associates on specific details of their work. Of course, it is always important to look at the background of those who make these appraisements and the relationships they had with the subject before their opinions are accepted as fair. Adam S. Bennion, whose association with President McKay in the Church Educational System lasted forty years, referred to him as “the inspiring teacher of our generation” and suggested that it was a shame that “we cannot all be like him.” Although not all teachers may be able to be exactly like President McKay, they may be able to infuse some of his positive characteristics into their own teaching personas.

Appearance and Gesture. Everyone can develop certain physical gestures and characteristics that can enhance the teaching process. Even a simple gesture can transform a plain classroom teacher into a magnetic teaching personality. For instance, Elder David B. Haight remembers a common gesture President McKay used; he would throw his arm into the air far above his head. Elder Haight found this motion impressive and moving. President Hinckley remembers the same hand movement and at times repeats it when he speaks at a pulpit.
President Hinckley recollects: "I can see [him] in my mind’s eye now at the pulpit—tall and stately and lifting his hand to that vast congregation as he spoke words that inspired and lifted and made everyone there want to live a little better." President Packer associated such words as *dignified, well groomed, and extremely courteous* with his memory of President McKay. These descriptions have not so much to do with his physical features as his personal bearing.

President McKay believed that an educator who wears professional clothing will bring professional results. President Thomas S. Monson remembers him always "dressed in spotless white summer suit." A successful teacher will remember that even amidst the relaxed cultural atmosphere of our generation, attire can still enhance an educational career. In religious education, a teacher’s dress should show respect for the subject matter.

**Optimism.** President McKay’s personal grooming grew from his basic educational aim of being positive. In the workaday world, being consistently positive is easier said than done. President McKay seized opportunities for accentuating the positive and thus produced a desire in his students and associates to please him. Being optimistic was one of his vital teaching characteristics. For instance, on a sweltering day, he commented, "Isn’t it good to get this warmth in your bones." By infusing such optimism into a sweltering teaching situation, teachers can bring a new comfort into their classrooms.

He was adept at turning difficult situations into positive exchanges. For example, a woman had spent an entire summer painting a picture for him of what she thought was President McKay’s ancestral home. When she presented the picture to him as a gift, he realized she had painted the wrong house. In response to this mistake, he told the artist: "The home you painted is the home next door, but in reality, that was the home I would see when I would lie on the bed in my ancestral home and gaze out the screen porch to that beautiful scene of the home you painted. You were inspired to paint that home." As in this case, his teaching methodology was to "build and lift and inspire."

Grandson Barrie McKay remembers that everyone President McKay touched and everyone he met was lifted up by his personality, even when the person did not warrant such encouragement. An example of this occurred when a member of the general Sunday School presidency was being very negative. President McKay suggested to the leadership that they could capitalize on one positive thing this person had done, and that emphasis could change the personality. By looking at some of President McKay’s other characteristics, we can glean...
threads from which we can also weave a fabric of optimism.

*Availability.* Teachers often find it difficult to infuse into their teaching personality a sense of availability. Grandson Alan Ashton found that his Grandfather McKay was always generous with his time.43 Focus was the key to this seeming availability. Elder Marion D. Hanks describes having President McKay’s full attention: “I was in his presence when he was educating, constantly teaching a constant sense of the importance of people and of the perfectability of people and the unostentatious sharing of the experiences of a great mind and a great heart and a great character, and a great life of experience.”

Elder Hanks also remembers that Walter Rutherford, a well-known labor leader, found President McKay to be highly available. After an interview with President McKay, Rutherford told an audience at the University of Utah that he had met with “the great leaders of the earth,” but he had never met a man like President McKay before. Rutherford said he did not think the next generation could ever produce a man like the prophet. Part of the reason Rutherford was so impressed was the intense attention President McKay paid to him and his family during a short visit to the Church Administration Building. Elder Hanks calls this McKay characteristic “a genuineness—a presence—that can’t be simulated.”44 Elder Rudd experienced this same intensity when President McKay personally greeted him and every other missionary who was called home from the Pacific Islands in 1940 because of World War II.45 In similar fashion, Vernon Tyler remembers a chance meeting with this prophet-educator that had a lasting impression when President McKay put one hand on his shoulder and the other hand in his and asked, “Who are you? What is going on in your life?”46

Developing this type of focus on individuals will, in the long run, save a teacher time and produce a sense of availability. Barrie McKay suggests that this characteristic was also displayed in President McKay’s son, David Lawrence:

When Lawrence was in his “hey-day” he was an extremely busy attorney. . . . When people came to see him unexpectedly time after time, he’d be on his way to a meeting. Lawrence would always greet them by saying, “How nice to see you! Sit down. . . .” When there was a pause he would say, “I have to be in court or at a meeting, I’ll be back at such and such a time and then I can meet with you.” People would usually answer, “That’s OK, I got what I needed.” In two to three minutes Lawrence would take care of it. David O. McKay had that same capacity to give complete attention and people felt that.”47
Part of the reason that David Lawrence and his father were able to focus so completely was their ability to "talk to most anybody on their own level." President McKay is remembered as having a "magical way of setting you at ease." Historian James Allen observed that President McKay was "interested in ordinary people, feeling a regular association for them."

Tolerance. Another way for teachers to create a positive atmosphere is not to take mistakes too seriously. Teachers often tend to overreact; President McKay tended to underreact. For example, one infraction involved someone illegally taking Church funds. When President McKay was approached about taking punitive action, he calmly said, "A dog does not know he is a dog unless he has fleas. . . . These things happen."

Even though he was resistant to imposing penalties on others, he was more than willing to admit his own inadequacies. After giving a speech at Brigham Young University in January 1939, President McKay wrote Brigham Young University President Franklin S. Harris, apologizing for his "feeble effort": "I use the word 'feeble' advisedly, for, though I said nothing to you and have mentioned it to only two of my other friends, I was in no physical condition to assume the responsibility for which that appointment called. . . . My thoughts were not organized as I would have had them, and I have felt very much dissatisfied ever since. Next time I will try to do better. Your generous expression of appreciation gives me encouragement."

President McKay’s willingness to admit inadequacy was connected to his openness and liberal attitude toward others’ mistakes, ideas, and behaviors. Elder Rudd remembers him as "very liberal and forgiving of those who did not fully sustain the Brethren." Because President McKay was willing to admit his mistakes, he was willing to be patient with others’ mistakes.

Teaching: The Apex of All Professions

For President McKay, "teaching is the noblest of all professions, . . . the noblest duty of organized society. . . . Every nation should make it its first and paramount object." When he talked about being a teacher, it was obvious he believed teaching to be the greatest occupation available. Elder Eyring believes that "[President McKay] left a legacy of the tremendous importance of education." He knew if an educator really liked what he or she was doing, and other characteristics such as kindness, courtesy, consideration, and encouragement followed. He felt that if teachers have a fondness for what they are doing, they will personify sincerity, honesty, and purity, and those char-
acteristics will be duplicated in the next generation. 56

Many have paid tribute to his accomplishments. One of the most powerful accolades comes from Joseph C. Muren, then an instructor in Sunnyvale, California:

To me, David O. McKay was the paradigmatic man of our dispensation in exemplifying . . . the rewards of Christian living. I've felt that no man with whose life I've been acquainted has lived this type of life more profoundly than he. For this reason I have become greatly concerned to search out, through studying the insights of this man, the keys to the happy life for myself, and I have personally resolved that my children and the university students I teach and counsel . . . will have further opportunities to know the prophet. It would be a great tragedy if the writings [and practices] of President McKay, with their sense of urgency as it relates to the family as the vehicle[s] by which personalities and attitudes can be changed, were to end up as "dust collectors" in our personal libraries. 57

This succinct expression captures the major objective of this article. President David O. McKay's educational practices can be used as a vehicle to change the attitudes, practices, and personalities of parents, educators, and learners in positive ways and thus guarantee that President McKay's instructional concepts will not become mere dust collectors. Contemporary educators who ponder his educational practices can infuse these concepts into their own educational lives and fit future generations of teachers to successfully survive the struggles of the modern classroom.

Notes

11. David O. McKay to George Albert Smith, 20 September 1923,
correspondence, George Albert Smith Collection, University of Utah Special Collections.


15. Thomas S. Monson, interview, 1996, transcription of interview on tape, Brigham Young University, David O. McKay School of Education, David O. McKay Symposium.


17. David O. McKay, 1897–1956, David O. McKay Microfilm, reel 7, number 492, Special Collections, University of Utah.


21. Loren C. Dunn interview.

22. Gunn McKay interview, 1995, interviewed by the author, Brigham Young University, College of Education, McKay Research Project.


24. Loren C. Dunn interview.


27. Gordon B. Hinckley interview, 1996, transcription of interview on tape, Brigham Young University, David O. McKay School of Education, David O. McKay Symposium.


29. Boyd K. Packer interview.


33. Glenn L. Rudd interview, 1996, interviewed by the author, Brigham Young University, College of Education, McKay Research Project.


36. David B. Haight interview.

37. Gordon B. Hinckley interview.

38. Boyd K. Packer interview.
39. Thomas S. Monson interview.
40. Robert L. Simpson interview.
41. Thomas S. Monson interview.
42. Barrie McKay interview.
43. Alan C. Ashton to the author, 19 September 1996, correspondence in possession of Mary Jane Woodger.
44. Marion D. Hanks interview, 1996, transcription of interview on tape, Brigham Young University, David O. McKay School of Education, David O. McKay Symposium.
45. Glenn L. Rudd interview.
46. Vernon Lynn Tyler interview, 1996, interviewed by the author, Brigham Young University, College of Education, McKay Research Project.
47. Barrie McKay interview.
48. Loren C. Dunn interview.
49. Robert L. Simpson interview.
51. Glenn L. Rudd interview.
52. David O. McKay to Franklin S. Harris, 28 January 1939, correspondence, in Franklin S. Harris Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
53. Glenn L. Rudd interview.
54. David O. McKay to Franklin S. Harris, 9 November 1923, correspondence, in Franklin S. Harris Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
55. Henry B. Eyring interview.
56. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, April 1914, 89.
“That Every Man Might Speak in the Name of God the Lord”: A Study of Official Declaration 2

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Official Declaration 2, tucked away quietly at the very tail end of the Doctrine and Covenants, is in many ways a fitting conclusion to the preface of the Doctrine and Covenants recorded 147 years before. In section 1 the Lord reveals much about the Restoration and about the divine pulley of the First Vision in particular. The term pulley emphasizes the two-way nature of the First Vision, for although Joseph prayed to know heaven’s will, God “called upon” His servant to initiate the Restoration. Although much has been said about the boy prophet’s request, surely God’s intent counts for just as much. The First Vision and resultant revelations were a two-way street: man searching, God revealing.

Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled, which was written by the prophets—

The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh—

But that every man might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world;
That faith also might increase in the earth;

That mine everlasting covenant might be established;

That the fulness of my gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.

Behold, I am God and have spoken it. (D&C 1:17–24)

“That every man might speak in the name of God,” with power and with priesthood, reflects the fact that Declaration 2 is a prophecy fulfilled, a promise realized, and a fervent prayer firmly answered.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to reexamine Declaration 2 on this the twenty-fifth anniversary of its pronouncement, looking not so much from the standpoint of what came of it—that is, the priesthood being extended to every worthy male within the Church regardless of race or color—but from the perspective of the process itself, the principles and distinguishing characteristics of revelation. That the blacks would now receive the priesthood was of great significance; no less important, however, was the declaration’s stunning reaffirmation of the overarching principle of divine direction over this and every other difficult issue facing the Church.

Response to Revelation

The revelation, in the form of a letter dated 8 June 1978 and now canonized as scripture, in part reads as follows:

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth, we have been grateful that people of many nations have responded to the message of the restored gospel, and have joined the Church in ever-increasing numbers. This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God’s eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly,
all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.

Upon hearing news of this announcement, President Jimmy Carter called Church headquarters almost immediately praising President Spencer W. Kimball's "compassionate prayerfulness and courage." It is more than a little interesting to note President Kimball's own relief at the response of the Church to the event. Remembered his son, Edward L. Kimball:

I recall one day arriving to visit my father and coming in on the end of a conversation that he was having with my mother about the revelation. "That never happened," he said. I caught my breath. Unaware of my reaction he went on, and it soon became clear that he was talking about stories of heavenly appearances and voices from heaven. "There was no voice," he said. Then I exhaled. But he also said, as earnestly as ever I heard him speak, that there was a revelation. "It is true," he said.

My mother had sensed the anxiety in him for some little while before the announcement. She heard him pray with special fervor. When she learned of the revelation one of her first thoughts was, "Will the people accept it?" I believe his anxiety was not about the revelation itself, but about the preparedness of the people to accept it, about the possible divisiveness of the change. One of the things that pleased him greatly was the high level of acceptance among the Saints.

The response of the membership of the Church to President Kimball's revelation was indeed overwhelmingly positive and, in most circles, generally and earnestly celebrated, not as a cave-in to the cry of civil rights activists but as a rightful change. Leonard Arrington and Davis Bitton argue that the new revelation "was received, almost universally, with elation." For example, some in Albany, Georgia, "called the bishop and expressed concern. Others asked questions. Generally, however, they wanted to accept the will of the Lord and do what was right. A member of the high council summed up the attitudes of many when he said, 'I have lived in the South all of my life. I've held prejudices. Now the Prophet and the Lord have asked me to change my views and practices. I'll certainly go along with it, support it, and sustain it.' He spent his family home evening talking with his family about how they could follow the intent of the Lord's manifestation."

Meanwhile, the response of the press to the First Presidency's announcement, as many today may remember, was couched in less scriptural language and makes for highly interesting front-page reading. The Salt Lake Tribune, not known for singing Latter-day Saint
tunes, responded in the spirit of "what took you so long" by quoting from Sterling M. McMurrin, well-known philosopher on Mormonism and dean of the Graduate School at the University of Utah: "I am very pleased at the action taken and had expected such action to have been taken in the late 1950s or early 1960s. I am rather surprised that it has been taken now." He said he had expected action to be taken sooner because "of the very liberal attitude of President David O. McKay and especially his counselor, Hugh B. Brown, with regard to ethnic matters and especially the position of the blacks in the Church."

The Los Angeles Times featured statements of praise from James Dooley, president of the Utah branch of the NAACP, while Kenneth A. Briggs, writing for the New York Times, believed the change in policy, as he put it, would benefit the Church in both the short and long run. "Many believe that the controversy has hindered the church's vigorous missionary activity. The change is expected to have both real and symbolic meaning."

The Chicago Tribune, quoting the entire letter of the First Presidency, reported that many members of the Church "were surprised but happy about the announcement." The Tribune went on to say that "most black members . . . indicated they were stunned. 'I never thought I'd live to see the day,' said Lucille Bankhead, 76, a black who has been a Mormon all her life. Judy Dunsson, another society member, lauded the decision but predicted that it might have negative results as well. 'I honestly feel that a lot of the white people will leave the church.'"

A full study of the reaction of the press is beyond the parameters of this article and waits for later careful academic study and analysis. But speaking of the Chicago Tribune in particular, Elder David B. Haight could not resist recording the following reaction:

Just a few hours after the announcement was made to the press, I was assigned to attend a stake conference in Detroit, Michigan. When my plane landed in Chicago, I noticed an edition of the Chicago Tribune on the newsstand. The headline in the paper said, "Mormons Give Blacks Priesthood." And the subheading said, "President Kimball Claims to Have Received a Revelation." I bought a copy of the newspaper. I stared at one word in that subheading—claims. It stood out to me just like it was in red neon. As I walked along the hallway to make my plane connection, I thought, Here I am now in Chicago walking through this busy airport, yet I was a witness to this revelation. I was there. I witnessed it. I felt that heavenly influence. I was part of it. Little did the editor of that newspaper realize the truth of that revelation when he wrote, " . . . Claims to Have Received a Revelation." Little did he know, or the printer, or the man who put the ink on the press, or the one who
delivered the newspaper—little did any of them know that it was truly a revelation from God. Little did they know what I knew because I was a witness to it.  

Prelude to the Revelation

President Spencer W. Kimball had many experiences in his life, particularly spiritual impulses, that led him to pray so fervently and so confidently as he did on the matter of the priesthood. First, President Kimball, from his earliest childhood, was well grounded in the process of prayer and revelation.

One day when Spencer was five and out doing his chores, little one-year-old Fannie wandered from the house and was lost. No one could find her. Clare, sixteen, said, “Ma, if we pray, the Lord will direct us to Fannie.” So the mother and children prayed. Immediately after the prayer Gordon [Spencer’s older brother] walked to the very spot where Fannie was fast asleep in a large box behind the chicken coop. “We thanked our Heavenly Father over and over,” Olive recorded in her journal. “We could think of nothing else all evening.” When her horses bolted on the road to Safford, Olive was terrified that someone would be hurt and the buggy broken. “We were frightened awfully. But the Lord heard my silent prayers and we got the horse stopped. Praise be to our Heavenly Father for His goodness to us.”

A terribly honest man, President Kimball, in a letter written to his parents during his mission in 1914, told of his struggles before telling others that he could truthfully say he knew the gospel was true: “I wanted to be very honest with myself and with the program and with the Lord. For a time I couched my words carefully to try to build up others without actually committing myself to a positive, unequivocal statement that I knew. When I approached a positive declaration it frightened me, and yet when I was wholly in tune and spiritually inspired, I wanted to so testify. I thought I was being honest, very honest, but finally decided that I was fooling myself to be reticent when the spirit moved me.”

Few passages in President Kimball’s biography are more revealing about his sense of revelation than the accounts of his deep anguish and personal struggle to gain spiritual confirmation of his call to the apostleship in July 1943. “Never had I prayed before as I now prayed,” he wrote in his journal of the experience that drove him to his knees on a high mountain in Arizona. “What I wanted and felt I must have was an assurance that I was acceptable to the Lord. I told Him that I neither wanted nor was worthy of a vision or appearance of angels or any spe-
cial manifestation. I wanted only the calm peaceful assurance that my offering was accepted. . . . I threw myself on the ground and wept and prayed and pleaded.” Almost ashamed, he said, of “trying to be dramatic,” he nevertheless persisted. “How I prayed! How I suffered! How I wept! How I struggled!”

Then came his answer, “a calm like the dying wind, the quieting wave after the storm is passed. . . . My tears were dry, my soul was at peace. A calm feeling of assurance came over me, doubt and questionings subdued. It was as though a great burden had been lifted. I sat in tranquil silence surveying the beautiful valley, thanking the Lord for the satisfaction and the reassuring answer to my prayers.”

Spencer W. Kimball’s invitation to the apostleship was, once again, unforgettable personal instruction, a careful tutoring into the workings of the Lord when making known His will to man.

Two years later, while his son Andrew was serving a mission, President Kimball summarized his understanding. “I have come to realize that the Lord does not expect to reveal to us generally in actual daylight vision as he did to Joseph Smith in the grove. Sometimes it will come in open vision, sometimes in dreams, sometimes in whisperings, but generally His revelations will come” through a burning in the heart. And so his preparations continued.

Then, with his call to become President of the Church in April 1977, President Kimball reiterated and refined these views, hinting in ways we now more clearly understand that a sea change in policy might be ahead:

In our day, as in times past, many people expect that if there be revelation it will come with awe-inspiring, earth-shaking display. For many it is hard to accept as revelations those numerous ones in Moses’ time, in Joseph’s time, and in our own year—those revelations which come to prophets as deep, unassailable impressions settling down on the prophet’s mind and heart as dew from heaven or as the dawn dissipates the darkness of night.

Expecting the spectacular, one may not be fully alerted to the constant flow of revealed communication. I say, in the deepest of humility, but also by the power and force of a burning testimony in my soul, that from the prophet of the Restoration to the prophet of our own year, the communication line is unbroken, the authority is continuous, and light, brilliant and penetrating, continues to shine. The sound of the voice of the Lord is a continuous melody and a thunderous appeal. For nearly a century and a half there has been no interruption.
He seems to have been prepared line upon line in yet another way. Blessed with a deep affection for the Native Americans and a desire to improve their blighted conditions, President Kimball fought vigorously on their behalf, championing the Indian Placement Program and disdaining racial prejudice of any kind. When asked by President George Albert Smith to supervise the first Indian mission of the Church in Arizona, President Kimball wrote, “I wondered if I was marked for destruction by the enemy of all righteousness—if I might be getting into a program which would upset the plans of the god of this world.”

In speaking of the Indians, he often reminded a mostly white Church membership that “the only difference between us and the Indian is opportunity. They are not stupid. They have a high I.Q. They are equal to us in their mental powers.” Seeking to change long-entrenched attitudes, he went on to say that the first part of the Church Indian program “is education of the Latter-day Saints at home, some of whom need their hearts opened, cleansed, and purged. . . . Racial prejudice is of the devil and of ignorance.”

When speaking at Brigham Young University, he took up the gauntlet once more and in no uncertain terms drove home his point. There are “too many Pharisees among the white men,” too many who worry about “unwashed hands; too many ‘superior’ ones who call, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ . . . too many who ascribe the degradation of the Indian as his just due, . . . too many priests who ‘pass by on the other side of the road,’ . . . too many Levites who pull their robes about them and pass by with disdain, . . . too many curiosity seekers and too few laborers.” He ended his speech with an impassioned plea “not for your tolerance—your pitying, coin-tossing tolerance—but for Christian help born out of love.” Just as he had a gift “to believe in the possibility of change in people,” he likewise believed that if the Lord saw fit, change could come at the collective level of the entire Church.

The fact that he lived a long and difficult life, enduring a myriad of physical ailments extending from painful boils to tumbling throat cancer, gave him pause to wonder why the Lord had suffered him to become President of the Church. In terms reminiscent of Wilford Woodruff, who himself believed he had lived long enough to proclaim the Manifesto ending plural marriage some eighty years before, President Kimball wondered if he too had been so spared: “Am I destined to do something important enough to cause the Evil one to desire my death?”

And as for becoming President of the Church, he firmly believed such appointments could never be coincidental, his own included. “I
am positive that the appointments of His Twelve by the Lord and the subsequent deaths control the Presidency of the Church," he once confided. "No man will live long enough to become President of this Church ever who is not the proper one to give it leadership. Each leader in his own peculiar way has made a great contribution to the onward march of the Church. No one of the nine Presidents had all the virtues nor all the abilities. Each in his own way and time filled a special need and made his great contribution. This I know."

President Kimball fully realized that previous presidents had not received all revelation and would have echoed the sentiments of his predecessor, President Woodruff, who said, "The Lord would not permit me to occupy this position one day of my life, unless I was susceptible to the Holy Spirit and to the revelations of God. It is too late in the day for this Church to stand without revelation. Not only the President of the Church should possess this gift and give it unto the people, but his counselors and the Apostles and all men that bear the Holy Priesthood. . . . We have not got through revelation. We have not got through the work of God." President Woodruff believed that just as the Prophet Joseph Smith, as great as he was, did not receive all revelation, neither had Brigham Young. "He accomplished all that God required at his hands. But he did not receive all the revelations that belong to this work; neither did President Taylor, nor has Wilford Woodruff. There will be no end to this work until it is perfected."

A Time of Change

President Kimball will be remembered for many positive changes in the Church besides his revelation on priesthood. In 1975, he activated the full First Quorum of the Seventy and canonized sections 137 and 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In 1978, the first all-Church women’s meeting was held with similar meetings for the Young Women beginning in 1980.

That he was, however, concerned with the matter of the blacks and the priesthood and the surging tide of criticism aimed at the Church cannot be questioned. Brigham Young University, in particular, at the height of the Civil Rights movement in 1968 had come under very sharp attack. Players on opposing teams wore black armbands, and Stanford University and the University of Washington announced that they would no longer schedule athletic contests with BYU. "There are many problems that face us," President Kimball remarked, "and every effort seems to be against us to force us to change the Lord's program concerning the Negro." Nonetheless, he decried violence of any kind
and was not one to surrender to secular pressure. He was his own man
attuned, as ever, to his own questions and to revelation from the Lord.

Years later, his son, Edward Kimball, testified of his father’s inde-
dependency of mind in the following:

My father was not a particularly prejudiced man, as his years of
working with American Indians and individuals of other races in an
open and completely accepting manner showed. And I am not
aware of any personal antipathy toward blacks. But I have no sense
that this change was on his personal agenda. As he himself said, he
had spent a long lifetime defending the Church position that blacks
were properly denied the priesthood. And he knew that change
would be identified by many as capitulation to pressures and thus
evidence of the humanness of the Church.

Putting spiritual witness aside, I say without the slightest doubt
that President Kimball would never have made the change unless he
was sure that it was the Lord’s will. Whatever his personal feelings
of compassion, he was simply not a man who could have acted from
expediency in such a manner.27

As President of the Church, President Kimball embarked upon a
course of direction that would inevitably bring the matter to the fore.
The first was his inspired vision of expanded missionary work that
would encircle the globe, with young men and women being called
from their own lands to preach to their own races and cultures. The
second was his determination to bring the blessings of the temple to
the Saints in far-off countries. His 1974 decision to construct a temple
in Brazil surely was evidence of his desire to confront the issue of the
blacks in a nation where culture and race combined in ways almost
impossible to distinguish.

Prayer and Pondering

The stage was now set for this modern prophet to seek the mind
and will of the Lord on this troubling issue: "Day after day I went
alone and with great solemnity and seriousness in the upper rooms of
the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go
forward with the program. I wanted to do what He wanted. I talked
about it to Him and said, ‘Lord, I want only what is right. We are not
making any plans to be spectacularly moving. We want only the thing
that thou dost want, and we want it when you want it and not until.’"28

Dale LaBaron, in his excellent research on this revelation and the
progress since of the Church in Black Africa, gives us the following:
Unknown to anyone except the First Presidency and the Twelve, President Kimball had asked each of them to carefully research the scriptures and statements of the earlier brethren, to make an exhaustive study of all that had been recorded concerning this issue. For months before the revelation, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve discussed these sacred matters at length in their temple meetings. He also met privately with each of the brethren to learn their feelings on the matter.

On Thursday, 1 June 1978, the general authorities held their regular monthly fast and testimony meeting. The members of the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric were then excused, and President Kimball, his two counselors, and ten of the apostles remained (Elder Mark E. Peterson was in South America, and Elder Delbert L. Stapley was in the hospital).

Before offering the prayer that brought the revelation, President Kimball asked each of the brethren to express their feelings and views on this important issue. For more than two hours they talked freely and openly. Elder David B. Haight, the newest member of the Twelve, observed: "As each responded, we witnessed an outpouring of the Spirit which bonded our souls together in perfect unity—a glorious experience. In that bond of unity we felt our total dependence upon heavenly direction if we were to more effectively accomplish the Lord’s charge to carry the message of hope and salvation to all the world.

"President Kimball then suggested that we have our prayer at the altar. Usually he asked one of us to lead in prayer; however, on this day he asked, ‘Would you mind if I be voice at the altar today?’ This was the Lord’s prophet asking us. Such humility! Such meekness! So typical of this special servant of all . . .

"The prophet of God pour[ed] out his heart, pleading eloquently for the Lord to make his mind and will known to his servant, Spencer W. Kimball. The prophet pleaded that he would be given the necessary direction which could expand the Church throughout the world by offering the fullness of the everlasting gospel to all men, based solely upon their personal worthiness without reference to race or color."

In response to a prophet’s humble prayer of faith, united with those of twelve other prophets, seers, and revelators, the Lord poured out his Spirit—and his answer—in a most powerful way.39

Elder LeGrand Richards elaborates further on this matter:

The Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric were excused, while there remained the President of the Church, his two counselors, and ten
members of the Council of the Twelve—two being absent, one in South America and the other in the hospital.

The question of extending the blessings of the priesthood to blacks had been on the minds of many of the Brethren over a period of years. It had repeatedly been brought up by Presidents of the Church. It had become a matter of particular concern to President Spencer W. Kimball.

Over a considerable period of time he had prayed concerning this serious and difficult question. He had spent many hours in that upper room in the temple by himself in prayer and meditation.

On this occasion he raised the question before his Brethren—his Counselors and the Apostles. Following this discussion we joined in prayer in the most sacred of circumstances. President Kimball himself was voice in that prayer. I do not recall the exact words that he spoke. But I do recall my own feelings and the nature of the expressions of my Brethren. There was a hallowed and sanctified atmosphere in the room. For me, it felt as if a conduit opened between the heavenly throne and the kneeling, pleading prophet of God who was joined by his Brethren. The Spirit of God was there. And by the power of the Holy Ghost there came to that prophet an assurance that the thing for which he prayed was right, that the time had come, and that now the wondrous blessings of the priesthood should be extended to worthy men everywhere regardless of lineage.

Every man in that circle, by the power of the Holy Ghost, knew the same thing.

It was a quiet and sublime occasion.

There was not the sound "as of a rushing mighty wind," there were not "cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2:2–3) as there had been on the Day of Pentecost. But there was a Pentecostal spirit, for the Holy Ghost was there.

No voice audible to our physical ears was heard. But the voice of the Spirit whispered with certainty into our minds and our very souls.

It was for us, at least for me personally, as I imagine it was with Enos, who said concerning his remarkable experience, "And while I was thus struggling in the spirit, behold, the voice of the Lord came into my mind." (Enos 1:10.)

So it was on that memorable June 1, 1978. We left that meeting subdued and reverent and joyful. Not one of us who was present on that occasion was ever quite the same after that. Nor has the Church been quite the same. 30
Principles of Revelation

Drawing freely upon modern apostolic witness of the divine origin of this declaration, we are now prepared to consider several of the ageless principles of revelation as evident in Declaration 2. Principles as clear as a Colorado blue sky in the fall, they are presented in no particular order of importance, as all combined comprise the essential elements of scripture.

1. “Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (3 Nephi 27:29). President Gordon B. Hinckley asserts that the matter had been before the highest councils of the Church for many years and that President Kimball was proactive and determined in asking God about this serious and difficult question. Prompted by the Spirit of the Lord, the Lord’s Prophet nevertheless had to make the request.

Elaborating on this doctrine, Elder Bruce R. McConkie in his memorable address, “All Are Alike unto God,” given at a BYU devotional in August 1978, remarked as follows:

Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. . . .

We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept. . . .

It doesn’t make a particle of difference what anybody ever said about the Negro matter before the first day of June of this year (1978). It is a new day and a new arrangement. . . . We now do what meridian Israel did when the Lord said the gospel should go to the Gentiles. . . .

Obviously, the Brethren have had a great anxiety and concern about this problem for a long period of time, and President Spencer W. Kimball has been exercised and has sought the Lord in faith. When we seek the Lord on a matter, with sufficient faith and devotion, he gives us an answer. . . . One underlying reason for what happened to us is that the Brethren asked in faith; they petitioned and desired and wanted an answer—President Kimball in particular.

While some critics scoff and charge that there was little of inspiration in changing what was a misdirected policy in the first place, church leaders saw it as a matter of faith, mighty faith, and fervent prayer.

2. In the same breath, Elder McConkie signals a second principle of revelation—that such comes on the Lord’s calendar and in His own way as per His terms and purposes. “The other underlying principle,” he confirmed, “is that in the eternal providences of the Lord, the time had come for extending the gospel to a race and a culture to whom it had
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previously been denied, at least as far as all of its blessings are concerned. So it was a matter of faith and righteousness and seeking on the one hand, and it was a matter of the divine timetable on the other hand."

3. Third, an essential prerequisite to revelation is the accompaniment and confirmation of the Holy Ghost. Church scripture has been clear on this point from the beginning: “Behold, you have my gospel before you, and my rock, and my salvation. Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, and you shall have the Holy Ghost, which manifesteth all things which are expedient unto the children of men” (D&C 18:17–18). Said Elder McConkie on a later occasion:

Revelations come in many ways, but they are always manifest by the power of the Holy Ghost. Jesus’ promise to the ancient apostles was: “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things” (John 14:26). Our modern scriptures say: “The Comforter knoweth all things, and beareth record of the Father and of the Son” (D&C 42:17). They also give us this promise: “By the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5).

When men are quickened by the power of the Spirit, then the Lord can reveal his truths to them in whatever way he chooses. . . .

Truly, the Holy Ghost is a revelator. He speaks and his voice is the voice of the Lord. He is Christ’s minister, his agent, his representative. He says what the Lord Jesus would say if he were personally present.

4. Fourth, revelation to God’s prophet will ever further the divine mission of His Church. It is a contradiction in terms and of our doctrine to believe otherwise. President Howard W. Hunter put it this way in a 1979 address:

Another significant development of recent date is the revelation on extending priesthood blessings to all worthy male members, regardless of race or color, which will assist also in accomplishing the commission to teach all nations.

Gradually nations are opening their doors, and the areas of the earth to which the gospel is being carried are increasing. With approximately 28,000 missionaries, more than at any time in the past, teaching is being increased. Missionaries are now extending the work to the west as far as Thailand, which leaves only Burma and Pakistan, to India, on the backside of the world. To the east there are missionaries as far as Iran, with only a short gap to India. They almost circle the globe.

From these revelations and developments, it should be manifestly
evident to members of the Church that our Father loves all of his children. He desires all of them to embrace the gospel and come unto him. Only those are favored who obey him and keep his commandments.34

5. There is much also to be said about how revelations are usually given. The scriptures make clear that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (2 Corinthians 13:1). In the case of the 1978 revelation, twelve others besides President Kimball bore unanimous witness to what they felt that day. Though many members were surprised at the following October conference that only one dedicated his remarks to this subject, those with ears to hear have noticed that in the months and years that followed, the others all gave witness in their own place and time. Said Elder McConkie: “The revelation came to the President of the Church; it also came to each individual present. There were ten members of the Council of the Twelve and three of the First Presidency there assembled. The result was that President Kimball knew, and each one of us knew, independent of any other person, by direct and personal revelation to us, that the time had now come. . . . The revelation came to every member of the body that I have named.”35

6. Elder Haight recalls yet another evidence of revelation—the joy and unity that come in its wake: “President Kimball arose from the altar. (We surrounded it according to seniority, I being number twelve.) . . . He turned to his right, and I was the first member of the circle he encountered. He put his arms around me, and as I embraced him I felt the beating of his heart and the intense emotion that filled him. He then continued around the circle, embracing each of the Brethren. No one spoke. Overcome with emotion, we simply shook hands and quietly went to our dressing rooms.”36

When the revelation was announced to the Quorum of Seventy, Elder Neal A. Maxwell recalled that President Kimball invited responses from all who cared to speak, and each man responded. Elder Maxwell said that he felt a spiritual witness, that his step was “revelation, not accommodation. The waves of the Spirit washed over us like a surf, and I shed many tears.”37

“All That God Has Revealed”

In conclusion, the purpose of this article was not to determine the reason for the revelation, although this has been hinted at. Likewise, the intent has not been to explore the results of such a dramatic change. Rather, it has been to revisit some of the abiding principles of
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revelation, for it may well be, after all is said and done, that as important as this revelation is to the history of the Church, no less equally significant is the very fact that God continues to speak to modern prophets in our times. Whatever troubling and daunting issues may arise in the future, the Church remains confident and assured. The Prophet Joseph Smith perhaps said it best: “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

Notes

1. I wish to thank my research assistant, Amber Seidel, for her research assistance for this article.
7. Los Angeles Times, 10 June 1978.
11. In preparation for this article, I reread the very insightful, highly readable biography of President Kimball, Spencer W. Kimball: Twelfth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977) written by his sons, Edward L. and Andrew E. Kimball. Published before the 1978 revelation, this solid, very candid study provides us with clues into his background and personality that bear upon our topic. Until the journals of President Kimball are made available to scholars, we must rely on such careful works as this.
13. Kimball, 76.
14. Kimball, 193-95
18. Kimball, 238.
22. Kimball, 297.
23. Kimball, 300.
24. Kimball, 269.
25. Discourse delivered by Wilford Woodruff, 8 April 1894, in Collected Dis-


32. McConkie, Sermons, 165.


35. McConkie, Sermons, 167.

36. Lucile C. Tate, David B. Haight: The Life Story of a Disciple (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 280.

One of the greatest challenges a priesthood holder faces is how to use God’s power and authority appropriately. According to Doctrine and Covenants 121:39, a common tendency among men is to exercise power and authority unrighteously. The consequence of unrighteous dominion is the loss of God’s Spirit and power and thus the inspiration needed for righteous leadership. Because God respects moral agency, liberty, and accountability (see 2 Nephi 2:26–27; D&C 101:78), so must a priesthood holder in order to receive guidance from the Spirit. Robert Ingersoll wisely noted: “Nothing discloses real character like the use of power: It is easy for the weak to be gentle. Most people can bear adversity. But if you wish to know what a man really is, give him power.”

Christ’s ministry is the perfect example of the righteous use of priesthood power. In obedience to His Father, He said, “Thy will be done” (Moses 4:2). During His mortal life, He loved even sinners and exhorted them to “sin no more” (John 8:11). In contrast, when Lucifer sought God’s throne for himself, he proposed, without the requisite right, power, or authority, that he could redeem all (see Moses 4:1). He claimed he would save all regardless of their works and consequently their desires; righteousness or wickedness was irrelevant. Lucifer became the icon for unrighteous dominion, the desire to control another.

Elder H. Burke Peterson describes how a man worthily endowed with the priesthood, whom he called the “Man of Power,” righteously uses priesthood power:
This power [the priesthood] from heaven is the power to bless, to strengthen, to heal, to comfort, to bring peace to a household.

- *The Man of Power* is one who presides—

- *By persuasion.* He uses no demeaning words or behavior, does not manipulate others, appeals to the best in everyone, and respects the dignity and agency of all humankind—men, women, boys, and girls.

- *By long-suffering.* He waits when necessary and listens to the humblest or youngest person. He is tolerant of the ideas of others and avoids quick judgments and anger.

- *By gentleness.* He uses a smile more often than a frown. He is not gruff or loud or frightening; he does not discipline in anger.

- *By meekness.* He is not puffed up, does not dominate conversations, and is willing to conform his will to the will of God.

- *By love unfeigned.* He does not pretend. He is sincere, giving honest love without reservation even when others are unlovable.

- *By kindness.* He practices courtesy and thoughtfulness in little things as well as in the more obvious things.

- *By pure knowledge.* He avoids half-truths and seeks to be empathetic.

- *Without hypocrisy.* He practices the principles he teaches. He knows he is not always right and is willing to admit his mistakes and say “I’m sorry.”

- *Without guile.* He is not sly or crafty in his dealings with others, but is honest and authentic when describing his feelings.

The attributes of a righteous priesthood holder—peaceable, patient, gentle, humble, kind, honest, and loving—are like those of Christ and are identified in Galatians as “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22). President Spencer W. Kimball added, “We must be selfless and give service, be thoughtful and generous. Our dominion must be a righteous dominion.”

Two examples from the Book of Mormon illustrate this style of leadership and stewardship in worthy men who bear the holy priesthood. The first example reveals the relationship of patriarch and prophet Lehi with his wife, Sariah, during a time of stress and difficulty; the second shows the future prophet, Nephi, chastising and forgiving his rude and rebellious brothers after their attempt to take his life. From these two examples we learn how to encourage another to develop his or her testimony, how to make a peaceful existence with siblings, and how to resolve conflict when sin is involved.
Sariah and Lehi

Nephi’s narrative shows his high regard for his mother and father (see 1 Nephi 1:1). In 1 Nephi 5, he shares an intimate and poignant glimpse of his mother, Sariah. From Nephi’s vantage point, we not only see the deep feelings of love that Sariah has for her family but also her struggles in obtaining a testimony of what her family had been called by God to do. In Jerusalem, perhaps she could easily recognize the apostasy surrounding them of which Lehi testified, but in the wilderness when his message involved danger to her sons, she expressed doubt that his words came from God.

After Lehi, Sariah, and their family left Jerusalem, Lehi sent his sons back to Jerusalem for the brass plates. While Nephi and his brothers were retrieving the brass plates, Sariah yielded to her maternal fears. Perhaps the trip took longer than she anticipated, exacerbating her already natural worries. Perhaps after several weeks in the wilderness, a woman used to the comforts of a home wondered what had possessed her to flee Jerusalem with few, if any, of her material possessions or to allow her sons—her most prized treasures—to return to a land where its people had persecuted and tried to kill her husband (see 1 Nephi 1:20).

Sariah mourned the loss of her sons, “for she had supposed that we had perished in the wilderness,” and complained against Lehi, “telling him that he was a visionary man; saying: Behold thou hast led us forth from the land of our inheritance, and my sons are no more, and we perish in the wilderness” (1 Nephi 5:2). Lehi, a righteous patriarch holding the priesthood of God, responded first by agreeing with Sariah, saying, “I am a visionary man; for if I had not seen the things of God in a vision I should not have known the goodness of God, but had tarried at Jerusalem, and had perished with my brethren” (1 Nephi 5:4). While Lehi had confidence in his sons’ safety because of what God had revealed to him, he recognized that hardship would challenge the faith of one not privy to the same vision.

Lehi could have appealed to priesthood authority and his role as a prophet in an attempt to control Sariah and achieve his ends. He could have used his superior physical strength to squelch her complaints. He could have misconstrued scriptural passages, criticized her, or in some other way ridiculed her fears and coerced her into silence. Instead, he reverenced her motherhood and attendant concerns for her sons. He recognized her sacrifice. As President Howard W. Hunter said, “Mothers perform a labor the priesthood cannot do. For this gift of life, the priesthood should have love unbounded for the mothers of their chil-
Lehi demonstrated respect and love for his wife by treating her as an important and necessary partner whose concerns needed to be addressed "in love and kindness and with a spirit of mutual reconciliation." First, he counseled with Sariah about his vision from God. President Hunter underscored the importance of a husband and wife counseling together when he said, "For a man to operate independently of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion." President Gordon B. Hinckley reiterated this point in his October 2001 address to priesthood holders: "Any man who is a tyrant in his own home is unworthy of the priesthood. He cannot be a fit instrument in the hands of the Lord when he does not show respect and kindness and love toward the companion of his choice." Because Lehi was respectful and loving as he counseled with Sariah, he made it easy for her to be receptive to his crucial second point, his testimony. Without his empathy, she may not have listened further, and his testimony would have fallen on deaf ears. Through bearing his testimony, Lehi implied that Sariah too could gain her own witness.

President Kimball offered priesthood holders advice that reflects Lehi's example: "Our sisters do not wish to be indulged or to be treated condescendingly; they desire to be respected and revered as our sisters and our equals. I mention all these things, my brethren, not because the doctrines or the teachings of the Church regarding women are in any doubt, but because in some situations our behavior is of doubtful quality." Seen in this way, Lehi's compassionate words acknowledged Sariah's misgivings and demonstrated righteous, Spirit-sensitive leadership.

Because Lehi exercised his "power or influence ... only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge ... and without guile" (D&C 121:41-42), Sariah's heart was open to the prompting of the Spirit. Doubtless she had been praying fervently, but Lehi helped create an environment conducive to her receiving the much-needed hope that his words were true. Not only did Lehi testify of a promised land for his family but, more importantly for Sariah, he reassured her that Jehovah was watching over them, for he said, "I know that the Lord will deliver my sons out of the hands of Laban, and bring them down again unto us in the wilderness" (1 Nephi 5:5). Lehi wisely did not use his position of authority to ignore her, minimize her fears, or silence her. Domination by authority as the sole basis for control is tyranny, the antithesis of "just and holy principles" ordained by God (D&C 101:77).
Upon the sons’ return, Lehi and Sariah were filled with great joy (see 1 Nephi 5:1). Her testimony now strengthened, Sariah affirmed that her visionary husband was a prophet of God and that her sons had been preserved by Jehovah. Sariah’s rejoicing took the form of a testimony, twice repeating the familiar words “I know” (see 1 Nephi 5:8). Just as her son Nephi knew “that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them” (1 Nephi 3:7), Sariah testified, “Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath commanded my husband to flee into the wilderness; yea, and I also know of a surety that the Lord hath protected my sons, and delivered them out of the hands of Laban, and given them power whereby they could accomplish the thing which the Lord hath commanded them” (1 Nephi 5:8). We can almost picture the whole family gathered together at an altar as Lehi and Sariah made offerings of appropriate sacrifices, joyfully thanking Jehovah for His tender mercy and care (see 1 Nephi 5:9). The furnace of affliction tested Sariah’s faith, and she emerged with new strength, resilience, and an unshakable testimony of Jehovah’s love for her family.

God needs both strong men and women, armed with understanding and testimony of Him and His ways. Through the comfort and guidance of a righteous Melchizedek Priesthood holder and by the power of the Holy Ghost, Sariah gained a personal spiritual knowledge to see her through the difficult times ahead. She became a new and powerful witness who could testify of Christ and of her husband’s calling.

Nephi and His Brothers

While Lehi’s interactions with his wife did not involve rebellion and sin on her part, rebellion, jealousy, anger, and sin shaped the lives of two of their sons (see 1 Nephi 7). As older siblings to Nephi, they suffered from a mistaken entitlement expectation: that priesthood authority and leadership are based on birth order rather than on righteousness, faithfulness, and designation by God. Such unbridled sibling rivalry provided an easy entry point for the sins of self-justified anger, rebellion, and even murderous conspiracy. Resolving, if it is possible, such devastatingly divisive family problems righteously requires respect for agency; forgiveness comes when sinners choose to repent. To help a person caught in sin, the priesthood holder must follow God’s plan for righteous leadership. In this story, Nephi is a young man, a prophet-in-training, who is learning by following the example of his father and the promptings of the Spirit.
The four oldest sons of Lehi and Sariah obeyed the command to return a second time to Jerusalem to bring Ishmael’s family. A survey of Laman and Lemuel’s short-lived “repentant” response to prophetic counsel as well as sacred ministrations indicates they never developed the requisite faith in God to learn true obedience. Thus, their obedience in returning to Jerusalem was likely because they would benefit by receiving a wife. Not surprisingly, as it was their pattern of behavior, Laman and Lemuel, on the return trip to the Red Sea wilderness encampment, led a rebellion against their younger brothers Sam and Nephi as well as against Ishmael, his wife, and three of their daughters concerning where they should go (see 1 Nephi 2:12; 3:31; 7:6-7). Laman and Lemuel wished to return to city life in Jerusalem, while Sam and Nephi wanted to return to Lehi’s camp.

Even before Nephi returned to Jerusalem the first time for the brass plates, the Lord recognized his faith, diligence, and humility and consequently promised Nephi that he would be made a ruler and teacher over his brothers (see 1 Nephi 2:19, 22). On the first trip back to Jerusalem, Nephi demonstrated why the Lord entrusted him with leadership responsibilities. He persuaded his brothers to accept an oath, binding them all to obtain the plates as they had been commanded (see 1 Nephi 3:15). Later, an angel informed Laman, Lemuel, and Sam that the Lord had chosen Nephi to rule over them (see 1 Nephi 3:29). Nephi further exemplified his leadership capabilities by obtaining the plates in a miraculous manner, being “led by the Spirit, not knowing beforehand the things which [he] should do” (1 Nephi 4:6).

Thus, on this second trip to Jerusalem, Nephi was fulfilling his leadership assignment when he said, “Behold ye are mine elder brethren, and how is it that ye are so hard in your hearts, and so blind in your minds, that ye have need that I, your younger brother, should speak unto you, yea, and set an example for you?” (1 Nephi 7:8). We sense his deep disappointment in his older brothers’ hard hearts and closed minds and his awkward feelings at having to chastise them. Nevertheless, a close examination of the narrative illustrates that Nephi had watched his father carefully. While in the desert, Lehi exhorted Laman to be continually righteous and taught Lemuel to be firm, steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of God. When Laman and Lemuel continued to murmur and complain, Lehi spoke to them by the power of the Spirit “until their frames did shake before him. And he did confound them” (1 Nephi 2:9-14). Following his father’s example, Nephi, as directed by the Spirit, reproved his brothers for their rebellion and warned them of danger in following their own course.
The entire focus of his chastisement was an exhortation to remember the Lord and to return to Him (see 1 Nephi 7:9–21). The Spirit constrained Nephi to warn his brothers that if they returned to Jerusalem, they would perish. Nevertheless, the choice was theirs. They could return to Jerusalem, but the Lord would not allow them to injure Nephi and those who desired to return with him to his father’s tent by the borders of the Red Sea. Unfortunately, Nephi’s words only exacerbated the feelings of hatred his older siblings had for him.

Laman and Lemuel responded angrily to the words of Nephi and not only bound him with cords but also determined to leave their younger brother in the wilderness to be eaten by wild animals (see 1 Nephi 7:16). By the power of Nephi’s faith, his bands were miraculously loosened, and Nephi stood again before his brothers to persuade them to change their minds (see 1 Nephi 7:17–18). Through the intercession of righteous women, the hearts of Laman and Lemuel were softened, strife and contention ceased, and the two men recognized the wickedness they had contemplated (see 1 Nephi 7:19). As the older brothers bowed before Nephi and asked forgiveness, Nephi recorded simply, “I did frankly forgive them all they had done, and I did exhort them that they would pray unto the Lord their God for forgiveness” (1 Nephi 7:20–21).

Nephi followed his reproof by an expression of great love toward his brothers. His complete forgiveness of gross sin, even an attempt to take his life, indicates an astonishing level of charity (see 1 Nephi 7:21). In directing priesthood holders, the Lord said, “Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy” (D&C 121:43). “Betim" means early, soon, and before it is too late. “Sharpness” means keenness of point and connotes a precise reproof, directed specifically to the point of error.21 When we have this understanding in mind, one interpretation of ancient Near Eastern talionic laws makes sense.22 Punishment should be precisely appropriate to the crime, no more and no less. Alma teaches this same principle to his son Corianton in a discourse on the law of restoration. It is “requisite with the justice of God” and part of the “proper order” of all things to restore precisely what a person has earned (see Alma 41). The Doctrine and Covenants in section 121 prescribes how priesthood holders are to exercise this law with those for whom they have responsibility: chastise immediately, justly, and lovingly as directed by the Spirit. Further, President Brigham Young wisely counseled, “You must learn to know when you have chas-
tised enough. . . . If you are ever called upon to chasten a person, never chasten beyond the balm you have within you to bind up. . . . When you have the chastening rod in your hands, ask God to give you wisdom to use it, that you may not use it to the destruction of an individual, but to his salvation.”

Despite Nephi's best efforts, his charity, and his Spirit-directed reproach, he could not make his brothers desire true repentance and obedience.

Throughout the book of 1 Nephi, Laman and Lemuel ride a spiritual seesaw. One moment they are rebellious, accusing Nephi of usurping their rightful positions of authority and contemplating his murder, and the next they fear for their lives and “repent” as a result of a miraculous display of God’s power. Laman and Lemuel’s erratic behavior provides a sharp contrast to the steadiness of Lehi and Nephi, whose examples serve as anchors in a turbulent sea of sin, thus enabling us to more clearly discern righteous priesthood leadership.

Some of Lehi’s last words to Laman and Lemuel corroborate Nephi’s righteous leadership:

Ye have accused him [Nephi] that he sought power and authority over you; but I know that he hath not sought for power nor authority over you, but he hath sought the glory of God, and your own eternal welfare. . . .

Ye say that he hath used sharpness; ye say that he hath been angry with you; but behold, his sharpness was the sharpness of the power of the word of God, which was in him; and that which ye call anger was the truth, according to that which is in God, which he could not restrain, manifesting boldly concerning your iniquities. . . .

It was not he, but it was the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, which opened his mouth to utterance that he could not shut it. (2 Nephi 1:25–27)

Lehi testified that Nephi’s power and authority came from God and that his chastisements had been bold, truthful, and directed by the Spirit.

Respect for Agency

The underlying principle of Doctrine and Covenants 121:34–44 is that proper use of priesthood authority respects agency and at the same time exhorts to faith and obedience under the direction of the Spirit. In the Lord’s eyes, agency is sacred. Because of His role in the creation, His atoning sacrifice, and the divine investiture given Him by His Father, Christ is our sovereign, the keeper of the gate, and the only one with the right to have dominion over us (see 2 Nephi 9:41; Mosiah
Nevertheless, He has allowed us agency to choose “liberty and eternal life” or “captivity and death” (2 Nephi 2:27). In His role as God, He created all things, “both things to act and things to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:14). Dominion to act was given to both Adam and Eve over the plant and animal kingdoms, those “things to be acted upon.” Further, the Lord specifically stated that because of the Atonement, we “have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for [our]selves and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:26). Adam was given the responsibility to preside righteously in the family (see Genesis 3:16; Moses 4:22; 1 Corinthians 11:3). This responsibility has strict boundaries, however, for even God refuses to control us.

Men and women are peers with responsibilities to lead and assist each other in various capacities. In the proclamation on the family, the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles declare that in the sacred responsibilities of providing for the family and nurturing children, “fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.” For example, President Hunter stated, “Presiding in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters.” President Boyd K. Packer indicated that the relationship between husband and wife is horizontal rather than vertical or hierarchical. Recognizing this side-by-side partnership encourages counseling together. Elder Spencer J. Condie called counseling together “one of the greatest safeguards against a disposition toward unrighteous dominion.” Our Heavenly Father’s plan for the patriarchal order of the Melchizedek Priesthood is one of order—of delegation and stewardship—not subordination.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “I teach them correct principles and they govern themselves.” Thus, priesthood leaders give proper direction and then allow individuals to choose their own course of action. The right to choose was given by God long ago; however, the choice of consequences was not. The rebellion in heaven was a war about ideologies: choice versus compulsion, inspired leadership versus unrighteous dominion. Usurping freedom by the use of unrighteous dominion is a short-term tactic that engenders resentment and eventually resistance. Ultimately, it will fail. Love and loyalty, essential features of God’s plan, can thrive only with agency. Righteous priesthood holders do not need to demand followers; as with Jesus, good people are drawn to such men and come willingly.

Elder Tad R, Callister wrote, “It should be no suprise that as we be-
Elder Tad R. Callister wrote, "It should be no surprise that as we become more Godlike we become more powerful." Thus, the "Man of Power" is a priesthood holder who has exercised power in righteousness and will continue to acquire more power because of his righteousness.

Lehi, a prophet of God, and Nephi, a prophet-in-training, demonstrate how priesthood power has bounds that God has set and to which righteous men must adhere. The God-given and essential principle of agency must be cherished and respected, regardless of how right we are and how wrong those we are called to lead are. Although both Lehi and Nephi exercised righteous leadership, only Lehi succeeded in helping a family member turn back to God. Nephi's righteousness and adherence to correct principles did not guarantee another's repentance or permit Nephi to override the agency of his rebellious brothers. The crucial factor in Lehi and Nephi's success or failure lay in the spiritual condition of the individuals they counseled, not their priesthood authority.

Clearly, Lehi and Nephi exemplify righteous priesthood holders who demonstrate why they were not only called but also chosen (see D&C 121:36-40). Through their examples, we have a clear contrast to unrighteous dominion, the attempt to control another. Righteous leadership demonstrates love unfeigned or charity, the perfect love that Christ possesses (see Moroni 7:47). Thus, the Book of Mormon acts as a primer for priesthood leadership by illustrating how the Spirit can teach receptive individuals to lead like Christ.

Notes

4. Although Lehi and Nephi lived in a dispensation in which the Melchizedek Priesthood had been taken from the general membership of the house of Israel, Lehi, as a prophet of God, held this higher priesthood and ordained others to it (see D&C 84:17, 25; 1 Nephi 1:5-13). Lehi's throne theophany demonstrates that he was called to be a prophet of God and thus was a holder of the Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God. Further, since no Levites were in Nephi's company, only the Melchizedek Priesthood could have been held. Joseph Smith taught, "All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 181).
8. The Hebrew words *yimashal-bach* have been translated "he shall rule over
you” (Genesis 3:16). In general, Old Testament usage of the root word *mashal* reinforces notions of the divine creation of the world with God delegating to mortals power to exercise dominion. Since dominion originates as part of the divine governing order, *mashal* connotes the function of serving God. For example, the sun and moon rule over the day and night and serve God as His “world clock.” God gave Adam and Eve dominion over all the animal kingdom, meaning they are to serve Him as gamekeepers “ruling over” all that moves (see Genesis 1:28; see also G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans' Publishing, 1974], 9:64–67). Thus, “rule” is based on power delegated from the supreme ruler, God, and is connected with serving Him and the assigned stewardship.


15. “If authority were the sole basis for control of individuals, families, quorums, auxiliaries, churches, nations, or the world, then difficulties would soon be everywhere. Authority alone—without any other virtue—is simply dictatorship” (Arlyn L. Jesperson, “Learning to Lead Our Family—‘Without Compulsory Means,’” *Ensign*, April 1983, 53).

16. Fronk suggests that “Lehi and Sariah together performed this sacred act of worship” (Fronk, “Desert Epiphany,” 11).


19. See, for example, 1 Nephi 2:11–14, 16, 18; 3:29–31. This pattern continues; see also 1 Nephi 16:1–5, 20, 35–39.


22. Talionic law, or *lex talionis*, is the law of retaliation and requires that punishment be quantitatively and qualitatively proportionate. For more information on this topic, see Bernard S. Jackson, *Studies in the Semiotics of Biblical Law* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 271–97.


As deacons carry the sacrament from row to row, they are delivering not only bread and water but also the symbolic means of the participants' salvation.

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The Preparatory Priesthood

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As a young Aaronic Priesthood holder, I learned that the Aaronic Priesthood was a preparatory priesthood. I always understood that to mean that the primary purpose for my holding the Aaronic Priesthood was that it would help prepare me to someday hold the Melchizedek Priesthood—hence the title “preparatory.” Although this is no doubt part of the Lord’s reason for allowing the young men of the Church to hold the priesthood, in my mind it somehow lessened the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood as a powerful and essential priesthood in its own right. I saw the Aaronic Priesthood as a sort of “training” priesthood to teach me how to eventually hold the “real” priesthood of Melchizedek.

It has only been as an adult, as a teacher and adviser of young men, and more recently as bishop in my ward, that I have come to appreciate the crucial saving power of the Aaronic Priesthood and its impact on the lives of every Latter-day Saint. In addition, I have come to understand in a more complete sense how the Aaronic Priesthood is indeed a preparatory priesthood. Thus, this article offers a basic overview to help teachers and leaders to better teach the sacred and powerful nature of the Aaronic Priesthood.

A Preparatory Gospel

It is interesting that the term “preparatory priesthood” is not found anywhere in the scriptures. However, in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Aaronic Priesthood is described as holding “the key of the ministering of
angels and the preparatory gospel” (D&C 84:26). What, then, is this “preparatory gospel”? Is there more than one gospel? And if the Aaronic Priesthood holds the key to the “preparatory gospel,” what gospel keys are held by the Melchizedek Priesthood?

The answer to the first question is found in the very next verse (27): “Which [preparatory] gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments.” This description reminds us of the words of John the Baptist to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery as John conferred this priesthood upon them. He said, “Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” (D&C 13:1; emphasis added).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, “There are two gospels—the preparatory gospel and the fullness of the everlasting gospel.” To understand this preparatory gospel, or gospel of repentance and baptism, and how it is that the Aaronic Priesthood holds the keys to the same, it is helpful to understand clearly the nature of ordinances and their relationship to covenants. In the priesthood session of the October 1991 general conference, Elder Jorge A. Rojas explained: “To make [an agreement between two parties] official, to make it stand, you both sign your name on that written agreement. When you want to make an agreement with the Lord official, you don’t sign a document; you perform an ordinance.” Thus, the performance of an ordinance is the means whereby we enter into a covenant, or two-way promise, with our Heavenly Father.

The Covenant of Baptism

The first major impact that the Aaronic Priesthood has in our lives is at our baptism. Baptism is an ordinance belonging to the Aaronic Priesthood and is essential to our salvation. The Savior said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). When we are baptized, we enter into our first covenant with God in mortality. We covenant to take upon us the name of Christ, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments (see D&C 20:37, 77).

Having made such promises with the Lord, what happens if we break them? President N. Eldon Tanner said: “Note that the Lord says (and I am not quoting word for word): ‘I cannot break this covenant, but if you break it there is no promise.’ Isn’t it something to think about when the Lord says he cannot break a covenant that he makes
with his people. That covenant stands as long as we will keep the covenant, but when we break the covenant, there is no covenant as far as the Lord is concerned." President Joseph Fielding Smith put it this way, "If a person violates a covenant, whether it be of baptism, ordination, marriage, or anything else, the Spirit withdraws the stamp of approval, and the blessings will not be received."

If, after baptism, we fail to keep our covenant, if we break the Lord’s commandments (which indeed we all do on occasion), then we have broken our baptismal covenant, and the promised blessings (in this case, entrance into the celestial kingdom) cannot be granted. This is bad news for us all.

**Repentance**

The good news is that there is repentance. Repentance is a great gift from God; indeed, the scriptures teach us that Christ "hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!" (D&C 18:12-13). But it is only through our entering into a covenant with God *through baptism* that repentance becomes truly effective. Many times in scripture the prophets and the Savior Himself use the phrase "baptized unto repentance." Alma, for example, taught, "Now I say unto you that ye must repent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness" (Alma 7:14).

Alma makes two points clear, the first being that forgiveness of sins does not come simply through repentance alone but that baptism is also necessary. Second, he shows that it is not the waters of baptism that cleanse us but rather the Lamb of God. Nephi clarifies that the remission of sins comes "by fire and by the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:17). Thus, we are cleansed from our sins only when the Holy Ghost places the stamp of approval upon us.

President Brigham Young taught: "Has water, in itself, any virtue to wash away sin? Certainly not; but the Lord says, 'If the sinner will repent of his sins, and go down into the waters of baptism, and there be buried in the likeness of being put into the earth and buried, and again be delivered from the water, in the likeness of being born—if in the sincerity of his heart he will do this, his sins shall be washed away.' Will the water of itself wash them away? No; but keeping the com-
mandments of God will cleanse away the stain of sin."6

Our sins, therefore, are remitted by the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost following our repentance and baptism by water. Continued repentance is then available only to those who have entered into a covenant with the Lord through the Aaronic Priesthood ordinance of baptism. Since the fruits of repentance (forgiveness and cleansing) are available only through the administration of the Aaronic Priesthood, the Aaronic Priesthood "holds the keys of . . . the gospel of repentance" (D&C 13:1; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:69).

Renewal of Covenants

There is yet another crucial aspect to this key of the gospel of repentance. Repentance, while bringing forgiveness of sin, doesn't necessarily reestablish a broken covenant. If through our disobedience to the commandments we have broken our covenant, how can we ever expect to lay hold upon the promised blessings? Here again, it is only through the administration of an Aaronic Priesthood ordinance, the sacrament, that we are able to enter again into a covenant relationship with our Heavenly Father. President Gordon B. Hinckley explained: "Every member of this church who has entered the waters of baptism has become a party to a sacred covenant. Each time we partake of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, we renew that covenant. We take upon ourselves anew the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and promise to keep His commandments. He, in turn, promises that His Spirit will be with us. We are a covenant people."7

Two Laws

Elder McConkie associated the Aaronic Priesthood and the Melchizedek Priesthood with two different laws: the law of Moses and the law of Christ.8 Section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants makes it clear that Moses' goal in bringing the children of Israel to Mount Sinai was to "sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God" (D&C 84:23). But the children of Israel "hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence," so the Melchizedek Priesthood was taken away and they were given the lesser, or Aaronic, priesthood.

The resulting set of performances and ordinances is known as the law of Moses. The Apostle Paul explains the purpose of this law: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). Thus, the purpose of the Aaronic Priesthood is to bring us to Christ and His law and to help us become "justified" (which we will look at shortly).
The higher law is administered by the Melchizedek Priesthood. This priesthood was originally called "the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God" (D&C 107:4) and is therefore the priesthood of Christ. The performances and ordinances belonging to this priesthood constitute the law of Christ. The ultimate purpose of the law of Christ is the same as Moses' ultimate purpose: "to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God." The Lord explains in the Doctrine and Covenants, "And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom" (D&C 88:21). The law of Christ sanctifies us to enter into the celestial kingdom of God.

So here we see another aspect of the preparatory nature of the Aaronic Priesthood. The Aaronic Priesthood’s ordinances and covenants help us to repent of our sins, thus preparing us to come unto Christ. The law of Christ and the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood then prepare us to come into the presence of the Father. "This is eternal lives," the Savior explained to Joseph Smith, "to know the only wise and true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. I am he. Receive ye, therefore, my law" (D&C 132:24).

Two Principles: Justification and Sanctification

The principles of justification and sanctification have been mentioned in the context of these two priesthoods. To be justified is to be in compliance with the law: to be without guilt. The simplest way to be justified is to live a sinless life, never to break a law. For all but the Savior, this way is impossible, so our Heavenly Father has prepared for us another way. It is the gospel of repentance administered through the Aaronic Priesthood. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the demands of justice (punishment for sins) have been met by the Savior. All those who exercise faith in Christ, repent of their sins, and covenant through baptism to keep His commandments and strive to do so are then justified by the grace of God.

Having been justified by grace through the Atonement, we are no longer under the grasp of the law; our guilt is swept away. But we are not yet prepared to enter into God’s presence because "no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom" (3 Nephi 27:19). Our basic nature has not changed; our hearts are not yet pure. Sanctification is what is needed. Sanctification is the process of becoming pure and holy—clean in a dimension beyond just being free from guilt. We are to become
new creatures in Christ (see Mosiah 27:26).

Sanctification comes as we put off the natural man and become "a saint through the atonement of Christ" (Mosiah 3:19). The Savior commanded the Nephites: "Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name [Aaronic Priesthood preparation-justification], that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand blameless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:20). It is through the gift of the Holy Ghost, received through the Melchizedek Priesthood, that we receive, as we follow the Spirit, a new heart and a new spirit (see Ezekiel 36:26–27).

Two Priesthoods

We live in a dispensation where there are two priesthoods given to man. In the words of Elder McConkie: "There are two priesthoods—the priesthood of Melchizedek and the priesthood of Aaron. . . . The Melchizedek Priesthood administers the gospel in its everlasting fullness, but the Aaronic Priesthood administers the preparatory gospel only, which preparatory gospel is the law of Moses and includes the law of carnal commandments."9

We call the Aaronic the "lesser" priesthood and the Melchizedek the "greater," but this should in no way suggest that the Aaronic Priesthood is unimportant. It is no small thing to be "lesser" than the very priesthood of God Himself, the power by which the universe was created and the plan of salvation set in motion through the Atonement. Indeed, the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood is that it prepares us for the blessings of this "greater" priesthood, which blessings include eternal life, "the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7).

How, then, is the Aaronic Priesthood the "preparatory priesthood"? Is it because it is the priesthood that prepares young men to become Melchizedek Priesthood holders? Well, certainly, in part. But the far greater reality is that the Aaronic Priesthood and its ordinances prepare every willing son and daughter of Heavenly Father to enter into covenants with Him to repent and keep His commandments. They then come to Christ, are forgiven of their sins, and become justified and prepared to enter into greater covenants, through the Melchizedek Priesthood, which can ultimately bring them into the presence of the Father. The Aaronic Priesthood prepares us all!

What an inspiring thing it can be for a young Aaronic Priesthood holder to know and understand that the priesthood he holds is not just some "training" priesthood but rather an essential part of each member's
The Preparatory Priesthood

salvation. Would it not humble a young deacon to know that as he carries a sacrament tray from row to row, he is not just delivering bread and water but the symbolic means of the participants’ salvation? He is helping to save eternal lives as a savior on Mount Zion (see Obadiah 1:21).

Notes

5. See Matthew 3:11; Mosiah 26:22; Alma 5:62; 6:2; 7:14; 8:10; 9:27; 48:19; 49:30; Helaman 3:24; 5:17; 5:19; 3 Nephi 1:23; 7:24, 26; Moroni 8:11; D&C 35:5.
Young people can develop stronger feelings of self-worth by learning about the Savior’s love for them and by internalizing gospel principles.
Spirituality and Self-Worth: The Role of Religion in Shaping Teens’ Self-Image

Brent L. Top, Bruce A. Chadwick, and Richard J. McClendon

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Self-esteem affects a wide range of attitudes and actions of young and old alike. Whether we call this trait self-esteem, self-worth, self-respect, or self-image, it is nonetheless linked to much of what we do in our daily lives. For example, in 1986 the California legislature created The Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility. The task force was challenged to devise ways to enhance the self-esteem of the state’s citizens. The politicians, scholars, and other members of the task force were convinced that raising self-esteem would reduce crime, delinquency, drug and alcohol use, school dropout rates, poor academic performance, unemployment, discrimination, the number of children born to unwed mothers, divorce, family violence, and a host of other destructive behaviors. The task force’s final report stated, “The past three years’ work has demonstrated that self-esteem may well be the unifying concept to reframe American problem solving.” The task force envisioned self-esteem as a “social vaccine” that would inoculate society against a variety of personal and social problems.

In addition, self-esteem’s significance shows up on newsstands, where popular magazines headline articles claiming to foster self-esteem to solve all sorts of personal, family, and social problems. Self-help books and seminars abound that promise feelings of greater self-worth.

Adolescence—that period between childhood and adulthood—is difficult as young people seek independence from parents and family despite not yet knowing who they really are. Feelings of self-worth are especially important during junior and senior high-school years when
adolescents make critical decisions about education, career, and marriage. Self-worth not only affects what youth think but largely what they do and how they respond to peer pressures to use drugs, experiment with sex, and so on. What, then, determines self-worth among Latter-day Saint teenagers? Stylish clothes, physical appearance, the number of friends, academic performance, and athletic accomplishments have been identified as factors associated with strong self-confidence. Undoubtedly, each of these various factors plays some role in the development of the self-image among Latter-day Saint youth.

Interestingly, religion has largely been ignored in the search for the forces behind self-esteem. Given the significance that religion plays in the lives of our teenagers, their religious beliefs, feelings, and activities should have an impact on their feelings of self-worth. The perceptions of being a child of God, insights into the purpose of life, the promise of forgiveness of sins, the hope of eternal life, as well as involvement in a caring organization may strengthen self-worth. President Harold B. Lee, in his last general conference as President of the Church, taught the importance of self-respect and its relationship to living the gospel:

As I have prayerfully thought of the reasons why one chooses this course [of wickedness], . . . it seems to me that it all results from the failure of the individual to have self respect . . . .

When one does not have that love for himself, . . . other consequences can be expected to follow. He ceases to love life. Or if he marries, he has lost love for his wife and children—no love of home or respect for the country in which he lives, and eventually he has lost his love of God. Rebellion in the land, disorder and the lack of love in the family, children disobedient to parents, loss of contact with God, all because that person has lost all respect for himself.

The few studies that have explored the relationship between religiosity and self-esteem in adolescents have produced mixed results. Some have noted that religion facilitated high self-esteem, most found no relationship, and a few discovered that religion actually produces lower feelings of self-worth. A recent study among a national sample of eighth-grade students found that religious involvement was strongly related to self-esteem. The authors concluded: “The present study also points out that religious involvement appears to have the largest impact on how early adolescents evaluate themselves. Adolescents who are not involved in religious activities are less likely than those who are religiously involved to evaluate themselves in a positive way and more likely than those who are religiously involved to evaluate themselves in a negative way. This finding seems to indicate that most churches teach
people to have positive images of themselves, and thus positive teaching may be able to influence early adolescents’ self-evaluations in a positive way.  

Over the past decade, we have studied nearly six thousand Latter-day Saint high-school students in the United States, Great Britain, and Mexico. We have been amazed at the influence of religion in these young people’s lives. Given the theological and theoretical ideas presented above, along with some limited research support, we hypothesized that religiosity was related to strong feelings of self-worth among these youth. Thus, we examined the relationship between various dimensions of religiosity and the self-worth of Latter-day Saint teenagers.

Self-worth emerges from many sources, and thus we studied the relationship between religiosity and self-worth in the context of peer relationship, school experiences, and family traits and experiences. Much research has been done in recent decades on the relationship between friends and adolescent self-esteem. The results, however, have been mixed. In addition to the influence friends have on teens’ self-concept, teachers have an important role in the development of self-image. The famous “Pygmalion in the Classroom” study and the hundreds of later replications reveal the powerful influence teachers have on the self-concept or self-esteem of students. One very important way teachers convey their evaluation of students is through the grades teachers give to students. We anticipated that students who receive good grades would have higher self-esteem and that the reverse would also occur. In addition to speculating about educational achievement, we also speculated that participation in extracurricular activities would be associated with higher self-esteem.

Considerable research has investigated the impact the family has on the development of children’s self-esteem. Three different aspects of parenting have been found particularly relevant: parental connection, parental regulation, and parental granting of psychological autonomy. Parental connection or support refers to the degree that parents are involved in the lives of their teenagers and express affection for them. Parental regulation involves setting family rules, observing compliance to the rules, and then administering appropriate discipline for disobedience. Finally, granting psychological autonomy occurs when parents encourage their children to have and express their own thoughts, ideas, opinions, and feelings. Teens still need to obey family rules, but parents focus on developing the mind or intellect of the youth. Several studies have found that family support or connection, family regulation, and granting psychological autonomy are powerfully related to self-image. Therefore, we included connection, regulation, and the granting of psy-
psychological autonomy between mothers and fathers and their children.

The study with which this article is concerned had three research objectives. The first was to compare the self-worth of Latter-day Saint high-school seniors to a national sample of seniors. This will show any differences in how Latter-day Saint youth view their self-worth as compared to their peers across the nation. The second objective was to examine bivariate relationships between several dimensions of religiosity and self-worth. The purpose of this analysis is to identify which aspects of the religious experience have the strongest relationship to teens' developing of positive feelings about themselves. The third objective was to test a multivariate model predicting self-worth using peer, school, and family characteristics as well as measures of religiosity. The theoretical model we tested is presented in figure 1, which hypothesizes religiosity as a significant predictor of self-worth, even when competing with such real-world factors as peers, school, and family.

![Figure 1. Model Predicting Self-Worth among LDS Students](image)

**Research Methods**

The data were collected from Latter-day Saint high-school students via a questionnaire mailed to their homes. Permission was obtained from the appropriate Church leaders, and then the list of potential seminary students was obtained. A random sample of Latter-day Saint students in grades nine through twelve was selected from this list. The potential seminary student list included all Latter-day Saint youth, both active and inactive. The student’s family was mailed a
packet that contained a cover letter to parents explaining the study and asking permission for their son or daughter to participate, a letter to the teen, the questionnaire, and a business reply envelope. Three follow-up mailings were sent to those who had not responded to increase the response rate. Over 60 percent of the students completed and returned the questionnaire. This return is a relatively high response rate for this kind of research survey.

Self-worth was measured by the LDS teens’ answering ten questions concerning how they feel about themselves. Responses ranged along a five-point scale from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Five questions focused on the student’s positive traits, and the other five gauged self-depreciation. Sample items are “I feel that I have a number of good qualities” and “Sometimes I feel like I am no good at all.” The responses to these ten questions were combined into a measure of self-worth.

Religiosity has been found in previous research to be composed of several dimensions, including beliefs, public behavior (attendance), private behavior, importance of religion (spirituality), and acceptance at church. Religious beliefs were measured by ten statements about traditional Christian beliefs as well as beliefs unique to Latter-day Saint theology. Examples of the questions are “Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God” and “Joseph Smith actually saw God the Father and Jesus Christ.” Public behavior included five questions about attendance at sacrament meeting, Sunday School, and priesthood or Relief Society meeting and participation in church activities. Private behavior was gauged by the frequency of personal prayer, personal scripture reading, fasting, and payment of tithing. Importance of religion and spiritual experiences was determined by answers to twelve questions about the role of religion in their lives and how often they have felt the Holy Spirit. Sample questions are “My relationship with God is an important part of my life” and “I have been guided by the Spirit with some of my problems or decisions.” Finally, Acceptance at church was gauged by three questions about how the student felt he or she fit in at Church. “I am well liked by members of my ward” is an example. All the attitudinal questions were answered with the same five-point scale used for self-worth.

Peer influences included rejection and mistreatment by fellow students, friends who engaged in delinquent activities, and friends who pressured the teens to engage in such activities. Victimization was measured by eight questions about how often peers at school verbally or physically attacked them. Sample questions are “How often has someone picked a fight with you?” and “How often has someone forced you to engage in sexual activities with them?” Peer pressure was tapped by asking whether their friends pressured them to participate in
forty different delinquent activities. *Peer example* was assessed by asking the teens whether their friends participated in these same forty different delinquent activities; in these instances, their peers were involved, but pressure was not placed on the teens to participate. Offenses against other people, such as bullying and fighting, were included, along with offenses against property such as shoplifting, stealing and vandalism, and status offenses including drug and alcohol use, truancy, and premarital sex.

*Family characteristics* included both family organization and processes. *Family structure* determined with whom the teen lived and identified single-parent families. *Maternal employment* ascertained whether a youth's mother worked part or full time outside the home. Family processes involved three aspects of the parent-teenager relationship. *Mother's/father's connection* was measured by ten questions about the affection, attention, and closeness the youth feels with his or her mother. *Mother's/father's regulation* focuses on the setting of family rules, monitoring compliance, and applying disciplining when appropriate. *Mother's/father's psychological autonomy* was measured by ten questions ascertaining a mother's use of psychological control, such as withholding love to control a teen's thoughts, opinions, and feelings. We discovered that the responses the youth gave in identifying their relationships with their mothers and fathers were so similar that it would be statistically problematic to create independent scales. Because more young people live with their mother than their father and because of the statistical strength of the mother's results, we deleted the father's connection, regulation, and granting of psychological autonomy from the analysis.

Two dimensions of the educational experience were included. First, we asked the students to report their cumulative high-school grade-point average (GPA). We also asked them to indicate which extracurricular activities they participated in and the number of hours devoted each week to these activities.

**Results**

Our first objective was to ascertain how Latter-day Saint youths' self-worth compares to that of youth across the nation. Each year a national study is conducted with a very large sample of high school seniors. The study asks what seniors intend to do following high school graduation and also obtains considerable information about a wide variety of other topics, including drug and alcohol use. Five of the ten questions from the Rosenberg scale that we used to measure self-worth are included in this national study. The comparisons
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Worth</th>
<th>United States National Sample</th>
<th>LDS Students</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take a positive attitude about myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times, I think I am no good at all</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>66.3</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>67.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Self-Worth of Latter-day Saint High School Students in the United States, Great Britain, and Mexico (by Gender—All Numbers with Decimals Represent Percentages)
A couple of interesting findings appear. First, the Latter-day Saint youth report somewhat lower scores on the self-worth questions. Lower scores appeared for both positive and negative statements. A couple of alternative explanations may explain these lower self-esteem scores. One common explanation is that the gospel and the Church place high expectation and demands on its members. As a result, youth (and adults) may experience a degree of guilt and inadequacy when they feel that they are not perfect or "measuring up," which may be expressed in lower appraisals of self-worth. An alternative explanation is that Latter-day Saints are taught to be humble and avoid pride and thus are more modest in answering questions like "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself." Whatever the reasons, Latter-day Saint high-school seniors report somewhat lower self-worth than do other seniors in the United States.

Another surprise in table 1 was the high self-esteem reported among the Mexican LDS youth, especially on the positive items. On these three items, their scores nearly approximate the national ones. Interestingly, their scores indicated much lower self-worth than the national average on the two negative items. Thus, on the three positive items, the Mexican youth express rather strong self-worth; but on the two negative items, they report weaker feelings of self-worth.

It should be noted that among all the samples, young men reported significantly stronger feelings of self-worth than did young women. There is growing and intriguing research that explains how young women's feelings about themselves dramatically decline during junior and senior high school. A discussion of the reasons for this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this article, but because of this difference, we analyzed the data from men and women separately.

The second objective of the study was to examine the bivariate correlations between the measures of peers, school, religion, family influences, and self-worth to identify the most important factors. This procedure isolates the relationship between two factors, such as public religious behavior and self-worth, from the influence of other factors like peer pressure and grades. Correlations vary between 0.0 and 1.0. Two factors that are totally unrelated will produce a correlation of 0.0, while a perfect relationship will generate a correlation of 1.0. The bivariate correlations are presented in table 2.

The number of factors that have a statistically significant relationship to self-worth is amazing. Obviously, self-worth is constructed from many sources, including parents, friends, teachers, and religious leaders, and from experiences in the home, playground, school, and church. The correlations produced by the three samples from the United States, Great
Britain, and Mexico are fairly similar with the exception of the British young men. For some unknown reasons, fewer of the religious, family, friends, and school factors influenced their self-worth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men (n=721)</td>
<td>Women (n=968)</td>
<td>Men (n=199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>.205**</td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>.214**</td>
<td>.308**</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>.298**</td>
<td>.380**</td>
<td>.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>.258**</td>
<td>.414**</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>.354**</td>
<td>.421**</td>
<td>.257**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single parent</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.111*</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ connection</td>
<td>.124**</td>
<td>.324**</td>
<td>.180*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ regulation</td>
<td>.181**</td>
<td>.255**</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ granting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological autonomy</td>
<td>.089*</td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td>.088**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers’ connection</td>
<td>.188**</td>
<td>.361**</td>
<td>.209**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers’ regulation</td>
<td>.169**</td>
<td>.212**</td>
<td>.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers’ granting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological autonomy</td>
<td>.187**</td>
<td>.324**</td>
<td>.294**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Peer Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Felt pressure to commit:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offenses against others</td>
<td>-.098</td>
<td>-.198**</td>
<td>-.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offenses against property</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>-.245**</td>
<td>-.165*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victimless offense</td>
<td>-.095</td>
<td>-.235**</td>
<td>-.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw examples of:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offenses against others</td>
<td>-.146*</td>
<td>-.261**</td>
<td>-.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offenses against property</td>
<td>-.112</td>
<td>-.246**</td>
<td>-.188*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victimless offense</td>
<td>-.141</td>
<td>-.229**</td>
<td>-.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victimized by peers</td>
<td>-.051</td>
<td>-.140*</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>.264**</td>
<td>.268**</td>
<td>.280**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
<td>.123**</td>
<td>.134**</td>
<td>.094</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at .05 level  ** significant at .001 level

**Table 2. Bivariate Correlations between Self-Worth and Religiosity, Family, Peer Influences, and Education (by Country and Gender)**

Perhaps the most important finding of this study was that for all three samples, the dimensions of religiosity produced the strongest bivariate correlations with self-worth. All five dimensions were significantly related to feelings of self-worth in the United States and Mexico for both young men and young women. Four of the five measures were significant for the young women in Great Britain, but only one was for the British young men. More importantly, the correlations between the dimensions of religiosity and self-esteem are higher than those produced by the other
factors. These results demonstrate that religious beliefs, public behavior, private behavior, the importance of religion, and acceptance at church are important in understanding high-school students’ feelings of self-worth.

The magnitude of the correlations associated with acceptance in church was most surprising. These results reveal that for every subsample of LDS high-school students, feelings of acceptance, warmth, and belonging in church are critical to the development of strong self-worth. Church leaders, advisers, and teachers of youth can make a major contribution to young people’s feelings of self-worth, as can other members of the ward, by helping youth feel welcome and valued.

Importance of religion not only includes the salience of religion in the young person’s life but also involves spiritual experiences. This dimension also produced rather strong correlations with self-worth for all the samples except the British young men. This is not surprising, as positive feelings about one’s relationship with God and spiritual experiences affirm feelings of personal worth.

Religious beliefs produced the lowest correlations with self-worth among the religion measures. We have noted elsewhere that Latter-day Saint youth have very strong religious beliefs but seem to have difficulty translating such beliefs into their daily behavior.11 In sum, we are amazed at the powerful correlations between the various measures of religiosity and self-worth among LDS teenagers living in three different cultures.

The third objective of this article was to test the power of religion to predict self-esteem while competing with other factors in a multivariate model. We used structural equation modeling, which assesses multiple factors at the same time. This analysis more closely simulates real-world conditions. Another advantage of structural equation modeling is that it identifies not only direct effects of a factor on self-worth but also indirect effects. For example, the model will test not only whether a mother’s connection has a direct effect on self-worth but also whether it has an indirect effect on self-worth through private religiosity. In other words, connection with mother may impact a teen’s private religiosity, which in turn may affect self-worth. The conceptual model presented in figure 1 shows both direct and indirect relationships.

Findings from the structural equation model show that religiosity has a powerful direct effect on self-worth for both young men and young women in the United States, Great Britain, and Mexico. Figures 2 and 3, along with table 3, report the beta weights of the various factors predicting self-worth. Insignificant factors were dropped from the figures. Interestingly, acceptance at church produced by far the strongest link with self-worth for both men and women. The beta coefficients were exceptionally strong, ranging from .257 to .398. It is not
surprising to find that feeling accepted is closely linked to how adolescents value themselves. What is unique for these Latter-day Saint youth is where and with whom they feel comfortable. It is within their wards and branches with leaders, teachers, and fellow members that acceptance has such a powerful relationship to feelings of self-worth. This finding demonstrates the power that church leaders and adult members have in helping youth to feel good about themselves.

Even though our model places acceptance at church as a predictor of self-worth, we recognize that this particular association is probably cyclical. In other words, not only does acceptance lead to stronger self-worth but, at the same time, feelings of self-worth probably contribute to feelings of...
acceptance at church. Theoretically, however, it seems most likely that the strongest direction of the relationship flows from acceptance to self-worth. How welcome youth feel at church with their leaders, friends, and other members is important in fostering positive self-feelings.

Importance of religion was also significantly related to self-worth. This measure represents how teens feel about the gospel and the level of spirituality they have experienced in their young lives. The bivariate correlations revealed that importance of religion and private religious behavior were so highly related that both could not be entered in the model at the same time. Essentially, these two dimensions of religiosity were measuring the same thing. Not surprising, those who have private prayer and participate in scripture reading are also the ones who value the gospel and have had spiritual experiences. We chose to include importance of religion in the model, knowing that if it were significant, we would know that private religiosity was also related to self-worth.

Based on the bivariate correlations in table 2, importance of religion had a strong correlation with self-worth for all the samples of LDS teenagers, except the young men in Britain. However, when entered in the structural equation model, importance of religion was a significant factor only for the women in the United States and the men in Mexico. For these two groups, both acceptance at church and importance of religion make important contributions to explaining self-worth. In the other groups, acceptance was so strong as to diminish the relationship of importance. Although acceptance has a stronger association with feelings of self-worth, importance can make an important contribution, especially in the absence of feelings of acceptance.

This analysis focused on religion's effect on self-worth. But it is also valuable to note the contribution that school success, as measured by grades, had on self-feelings. Grades were an important predictor of self-worth among both young men and women in all three countries. As can be seen in table 3, the beta coefficients ranged from .110 among young women in the United States to .216 for young women in Mexico. These results make it clear that approval of teachers, as well as the sense of accomplishment associated with good grades, significantly impacts the feelings of self-worth among Latter-day Saint youth.

Although not the primary focus of this article, the influence of parent-teenager relations on self-worth should also be noted. As mentioned earlier, because the feelings of connection, regulation, and psychological autonomy reported by the youth about their mothers and fathers were so similar, we could include only one parent's data in the model. Mothers' connection, the emotional ties the youth felt to their mothers, had a direct relationship with self-worth for all three of
the samples of young women and one sample of young men (see table 2). Mothers’ regulation—the setting of rules, monitoring compliance, and administering discipline—was significantly related to self-worth for both young men and women in the United States and Mexico. For some reason, parents had little importance in explaining self-worth among the British youth. Mothers’ granting psychological autonomy made a significant contribution to explaining self-worth only for young men in the United States and Mexico. These findings are interesting because most research finds a fairly modest relationship between parents’ behavior and teenagers’ self-worth. Parents’ emotional connections with teens and parents’ regulation of teen behavior were both meaningful factors in understanding their teens’ feelings of self-worth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Characteristics</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X²</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td>0.854</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religiosity</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>0.398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peers</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victimized</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ connection</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ regulation</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ granting</td>
<td>0.086</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychological autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.293</td>
<td>0.368</td>
<td>0.179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Summary of Structural Equation Models Predicting Self-Worth of Latter-day Saint High School Students

The structural equation model also identified the indirect effects of the three parenting behaviors on the youths’ self-worth. The results are presented in table 4, which reveals that mothers’ regulation makes an especially significant indirect impact on their teens’ self-worth. As can be seen, regulation has an effect through acceptance at church both for young men and women in all three countries. This same regulation makes an indirect effect through the grades the students reported both for young men and young women in the United States and Mexico.
Mothers and fathers who sit down with their teenage children and discuss important family rules such as responsibility for helping around the home, a curfew for when to come home at night, completion of homework, and so on score high on regulation. These mothers are also involved enough in their teens' lives to notice when the teens fail to obey the family rules. When rules are violated, these mothers administer the agreed-upon discipline, usually some type of grounding, loss of privilege, or extra chores. Mothers who provide this type of structure in the lives of their children help them realize the consequences of their behavior and also promote higher self-worth. Mothers who express love and acceptance and then encourage their teens to freely express their opinions and feelings indirectly contributed to self-esteem among some of the samples of young men and women in the three countries. But, as noted in table 4, connection and psychological autonomy were not significant as often as parental regulation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indirect Effects</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Great Britain</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers' Connection through:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance at church</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of religion</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation through:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance at church</td>
<td>.203</td>
<td>.166</td>
<td>.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of religion</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>.203</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Table 4. Indirect Effects of the Mother's Connection, Regulation, and Psychological Autonomy on Self-Esteem of LDS Youth in the U.S., Great Britain, and Mexico (by Gender)

Implications for Religious Educators

So what does all this mean to religious educators, youth leaders, and advisers? First and foremost, we learn that what we do can really matter in the lives of the young people we serve. We must understand that we are not just teaching lessons or helping the youth understand gospel teachings. It is not just about increasing their informational database. One of our critical goals is to make sure young people feel a spirit of love, acceptance, and warmth in the community of Saints. Feeling welcome in seminary, institute classes, religion classes, priesthood quorums, Scout troops, Young Women’s classes, Sunday School,
sacrament meetings, and other Church-sponsored activities is all-important in helping young people develop positive feelings about themselves. President Gordon B. Hinckley has reminded us that new converts need three things to stay strong in the Church: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing by the good word of God. It is apparent from this research that youth likewise need friends and feelings of acceptance from their church leaders, advisers, teachers, and peers if they are to be successfully nurtured in the good word of God.

This finding about the importance of feeling accepted adds to an earlier study by the Church that showed young men who felt close to their priesthood leaders were more likely to serve a mission and to marry in the temple. Church leaders and their relationships with the youth in their ward seem to influence a number of important feelings and actions, including personal prayer, the development of a testimony, moral worthiness, fulfilling a faithful full-time mission, and temple marriage. The feelings of acceptance by adult leaders and youth peers help create a fertile seed bed for nurturing faith. Both are needed and go hand in hand.

As religious educators, we have the responsibility to inspire, as well as instruct, about the Savior so that our students come to know Him for themselves. The more we can lead them on a personal journey of gospel internalization, the more confident they will feel, the greater their spiritual competency, and the better they will feel about themselves. We must inspire them to seek spiritual guidance in their lives and become familiar with their Heavenly Father through personal prayer and scripture study. The gospel we teach must not merely enter their heads but must enter their hearts powerfully. Ultimately, all that we say and do, whether in our classrooms or as we counsel with youth, should be to help them gain their own personal testimony of who they really are, what the gospel can mean to them right here and now, and that they are loved by the Savior with a perfect love. Our students not only need to feel love and acceptance from us and their peers in the Church but also need to be “nurtured in the good word of God” so they can come to know the Lord and feel loved and accepted by Him. As we accomplish these religious educational objectives, we will in turn be strengthening their self-worth. This is not the way to enhanced self-esteem as embraced by the world and pop psychologists, but it is the Lord’s way. Following the Lord’s way will give Latter-day Saint teens the type of self-worth that will give them the confidence and strength of character to resist temptations and stand strong against the many negative pressures they encounter.

In reality, our study validates what prophets and apostles have long
taught. Our study merely demonstrates with empirical evidence what President Harold B. Lee taught at the memorable general conference in October 1973. True spirituality, the kind of spirituality that comes from internalization of gospel principles forged with personal testimony, is self-respect. It is that kind of self-worth that evokes spiritual power. It works with youth, as well as with adults.

What a difference it would make if we really sensed our divine relationship to God, our Heavenly Father, our relationship to Jesus Christ, our Savior and elder brother, and our relationship to each other. . . .

I trust that I might have given to you and others who have not yet listened to such counsel, something to stimulate some sober thinking as to who you are and from whence you came; and, in so doing, that I may have stirred up within your soul the determination to begin now to show an increased self-respect and reverence for the temple of God, your human body, wherein dwells a heavenly spirit. I would charge you to say again and again to yourselves. . . . ‘I am a [son or a daughter] of God’ and by so doing, begin today to live closer to those ideals which will make your life happier and more fruitful because of an awakened realization of who you are.13

Notes


Eric Paul Rogers interviewing Tom Tyler at his home in Provo, Utah

Photo by Juan Henderson
"I Have Chalk in My Blood!" An Interview with Thomas L. Tyler

Eric Paul Rogers

Eric Paul Rogers is supervisor of strategic planning for the Church Educational System.

After thirty-nine years as a religious educator, Tom Tyler retired from the Church Educational System (CES) in 2002. Brother Tyler’s unique talents as a curriculum designer, teacher, and administrator had a profound impact on countless individuals and upon CES as a whole. Although retired, he is still actively engaged in teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. I visited with him just prior to his departure for California, where he was to deliver a Know Your Religion lecture in San Luis Obispo. He remarked, "I love to teach. I have chalk in my blood!" Returning to San Luis Obispo is like going home for him. One of his early teaching assignments with CES was at the institute at California Polytechnic State University.

Where did your curriculum experience come from?

My mother and father were always teaching in the Church. They often shared their preparations with us kids. That was my earliest curriculum experience. I worked in curriculum from early on. I had learned printing in high school. I loved printing and graphics. When I went on my mission to Chile, we didn’t have Church distribution centers. Each mission just did its own thing in terms of Sunday School, priesthood, and Relief Society manuals. We also borrowed from other missions. When they created the Chilean Mission in 1961, President A. Delbert Palmer brought me into the office because I had printing experience. I spent almost half of my mission producing the Church curriculum in Spanish for the mission. That was back when we had approximately two
thousand members of the Church in Chile in about fifteen branches.

When I came back from my mission, my brother Lynn was at the Church College of Hawaii. He wanted family around him because he had been away from family for so long. He is ten years older than I am. He sent me a plane ticket to Hawaii. I went over to go to school, but I needed a job. I am one of nine kids, and my parents didn’t have the resources to help. The Church College of Hawaii was looking for someone to help in the production of curriculum and graphics for religious education in the Church schools in the Pacific. Those schools had kindergarten through twelfth grade. I was hired, and I worked for two and a half years. I worked with artists and writers and then would get the materials in printed form for use in the Pacific schools. So my first couple of years in curriculum development were spent with the Pacific schools of the Church. My brother Lynn was one of the writers and supervisors of that effort.

I had just graduated with my bachelor’s degree from the Church College of Hawaii when the Pacific schools were merged with the Church Educational System as one unified system under Harvey Taylor. Then they brought the whole Pacific operation to the Brigham Young University campus, where there were more resources. I continued to work for them for another eight months, starting my master’s degree in the process. I was then drafted in the army.

When I came back two years later, I was married and needed a job to support my family. They were just starting experimental seminary home-study program in 1967. In those early days, Gerald Lund, David Christensen, Arnold Stringham, and Don Jessee were among our writers. I was the graphic artist who worked with all of them. They hired me part time. A month later they came to me and said, “We need you full time.” I went to work full time in January 1968 and was in curriculum until 1975. Other than doing my student teaching in order to be hired and spending the eight months in institute in California, I worked entirely on curriculum. I student taught for five weeks at Orem High School. Nylen Allphin was my supervising teacher. Twenty years later I was his mission president! What’s that old statement? “Be careful how you treat a deacon, because someday he may be your bishop.”

Did you have any previous teaching experience before being hired full time by CES or working on curriculum?

While in the Pacific, I had the chance to teach four credit hours of religion as an undergraduate teaching assistant at the Church College of Hawaii. During my junior and senior years, I was a part time instruc-
They treated me just like faculty even though I was still a student. I learned a lot about dealing with people from that experience. There was no difference between us three returned missionary undergraduate students who were teaching the non-Latter-day Saint kids and the rest of the faculty. When Harvey Taylor became the commissioner, he came to get acquainted with the faculty in Hawaii. In anticipation of a meeting with Brother Taylor, the faculty explained that they had these three undergraduate students who were teaching assistants in the religion department. He said, “They are part of the faculty. Please have them come.” He treated us with such gentility. There was no status. We were all just a team to bless the kids. That established the set of my sails in how to deal with teachers, faculty, and students. That was a wonderful experience.

About thirty-one years ago, I was working in the CES Curriculum Department at BYU on the lower campus, which is now the Provo City Library. I got a call and they said, “Wally Montague has had a serious operation and will be out of circulation for four, five, or six months. We don’t want his program to drop. Can you be down there Monday morning?” Now this was Friday! Marcia was about five months pregnant. She agreed—bless her heart. I left immediately and got down to Cal Poly that weekend. Marcia put the house up for sale, and I came back two weeks later to move the family. I taught Wally’s institute classes at Cal Poly and coordinated seminars all through that area. Eight months later they invited me back to Utah when George Horton was brought into the central office as director of curriculum. He wanted me to work with him because of my previous experience in that area.

**You have spent a considerable amount of time in your CES assignments in Latin America. Was your mission experience your first exposure to that part of the world?**

No. My stepfather, whom my mother married when I was two and a half, had served his mission in the Spanish-American Mission in south Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and northern Mexico. I grew up with my dad always telling us stories about Latin America. He loved the Mexican people. He spent the last fifteen years of his life, from about the age of seventy-five to ninety, as an active patriarch in a Spanish-speaking stake, giving most of his blessings in Spanish. So I grew up with a love for the children of Lehi from my dad. To go on a mission to Chile was just frosting on the cake.

Most of my early teaching experience was intercultural. At the Church College of Hawaii, starting my second semester, Lynn McKin-
ley was on sabbatical leave over there. Brother McKinley was a professor of speech and did some part-time religion teaching—masterful teacher, powerful, dynamic speaker—one of my heroes. When he came there and the administration said, “Let’s have a special religion class specifically for all the nonmembers,” there were only about eight hundred in the student body, of which about one hundred were not Latter-day Saints. That first semester, on Tuesday mornings, Brother McKinley would give them a lecture. On Thursday mornings at the same hour, we three returned missionaries would meet with them in small-group discussions. An assessment at the end of that first semester indicated that Brother McKinley was too powerful for them as investigators. But they really loved the small-group discussions. So I spent the next three semesters teaching four credit hours of religion to students at the Church College of Hawaii who were not Latter-day Saints.

In 1964, Trevor Christensen was the seminary coordinator in Hawaii. His son and I were good buddies at the college. Brother Christensen came to me and said, “I need a teacher in the Hau’ula ward near Laie to teach early-morning seminary.” So in my senior year I also taught early-morning seminary. We had about five delightfully friendly Samoan kids who would just smile at me. I could never get them to say anything in class. There were three or four Hawaiian kids who would speak mainly Pidgin English, which I didn’t understand too well. I didn’t know what they were saying much of the time. There were also about three kids who were Asian-Americans. If it hadn’t been for them with their openness and precision in their answers and understanding, I would have gone bonkers. It was an unusual seminary class, but I loved the kids.

Tell us about the historical development and philosophy behind CES curriculum.

When I was working on the home-study pilot project, Ernie Eberhardt was director of curriculum. He was at the tail end of his long and illustrious career. Boy, I tell you, he was a pioneer—just a glorious old warhorse of the kingdom! I loved to just listen to him talk about life and the gospel and kids and teaching. He’s the one that coined the phrase, “Keep a growing edge.” We now have the CES newsletter called The Coordinator, but in those earlier years it was called The Growing Edge. Ernie was impressed with what our little pilot group was doing with the experimental home-study program. He said that we needed to put that same kind of effort into our regular seminary curriculum.

In the early days of seminary, there were books written by won-
derful brethren who had a gift, like Brother Tanner and his Old Testament book. We didn’t really use the scriptures that much. They used textbooks like William E. Berrett’s *The Restored Church*. Ernie Eberhardt began the movement to get us out of these textbooks and into the scriptures themselves. Don Jessee, Arnold Stringham, and later Richard Sudweeks, Doug Larsen, Jerry Lund, and David Christensen—all young guys in their careers—were on that team that started doing the writing. That’s when we went from a textbook approach to more of a content approach centered in the scriptures. We would have lessons on different subjects based on either Church history or New Testament or whatever volume of scripture. The curriculum, as I recall, was largely oriented to the “stand and deliver” method.

The seasoned seminary teachers I knew early in my career, the old warhorses, had learned to love kids and deal with kids. We did not give them much help in methodology and how to appeal to getting kids involved in the learning process, but they did it remarkably out of their own experience and by the Spirit directing them. It was in the late sixties and early seventies when we started to redirect the curriculum into the use of exercises, student workbooks, activities, student involvement, and participation in the process. That was a major move forward.

In 1972 we moved into the Church Office Building. Writers were brought in like Steve Iba, Randy Hall, Stewart Glazier, Cory Bangerter, and others. The experience of so many of those brethren in developing curriculum was a foundation stone for them as administrators years later. Those who had had the curriculum experience were very teaching oriented; they focused on helping the teacher connect with the student. I have observed, on the other hand, other brethren who had brilliant minds with a great research orientation and ability but were focused more on disseminating information. However, those who had worked in curriculum were more focused on helping students to obtain a testimony, helping them to feel the doctrine that made a difference, not just becoming acquainted with factual information. They focused on what makes a difference in the testimony of a young person.

In about 1980 Jerry Lund, David Christensen, and Jay Jensen had the revelatory experience of sequential scripture teaching—study the scriptures in the order in which the Lord inspired them to be put together and to study the doctrine in context. That was a major move forward. I was fascinated over the years as I watched that develop.
Some teachers have perceived the call to sequential scripture teaching to involve a systematic treatment of every verse of scripture. How do you explain sequential scripture teaching?

To go verse by verse is almost ludicrous because there is no way to cover all the information in a forty-five minute or an hour-long class period. To illustrate, recently I had a teacher ask me to substitute for him when he was going to be out of town. The lesson was on Isaiah. Only one student showed up for this continuing education adult religion class. She was a bishop’s wife. This sister asked me, “How am I to understand Isaiah?” I said, “Let me give you several little keys that I have learned from good teachers on Isaiah. Why don’t we use as an example Isaiah 61:1–3 to illustrate these keys?” In the hour and a half we completed only those three verses. By the time we looked at the doctrinal content and the cross-references to passages by other prophets and discussed the Hebrew literary style, we had spent an hour and a half on three verses.

Now there is no way in all of mortality that a teacher in a classroom setting is going to get sequentially through the scriptures going verse by verse. What you do is follow a general sequential pattern. You teach the ideas in the order and context that the prophets talked about them. For example, in chapter 1 of 1 Nephi, Nephi makes some key points that set the stage for what he says thereafter. In a first period-class, you may hit three of those points, while in the second period you discuss two of the three, but the Spirit says to talk about another one. Sequential scripture teaching suggests that we look at the general flow and the essential ideas in the order and the context in which the prophet was inspired to write them—what is going on before certain verses and what is going on after them. You don’t have to get into a whole lot of Alma’s early life when you later cover Alma 36. You can say, “Remember back earlier to the end of Mosiah what Alma was doing.” Now you have put it in a context. Then you point out to the students, “Now notice from chapter 36 how Alma’s feelings affect how he deals with his son, Corianton, in chapters 39–42.” That is sequential scripture teaching, but it is not going verse by verse. That is the spirit of sequential scripture teaching as I understand it.

A teacher of the gospel has to be flexible. The Lord says, “If ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach” (D&C 42:14). We go around saying if you don’t get the Spirit, then you are not going to be able to teach. What the Lord is saying is if you don’t receive or accept the Spirit He is sending you, you won’t have the ability to teach, because it is the Spirit who is the teacher. Preparing your heart like Ezra is vital. The law
of consecration in ancient Hebrew was described in words of open-handedness, receiving, and giving. The Lord says, “Receive the Holy Ghost.” There has to be an openness and a willingness on the part of the teacher to receive what the Lord prompts. An effective teacher of the gospel is not saying, “What are my exciting ideas, and what is my agenda for teaching?” No, I have to receive the Spirit’s direction on what to choose out of this certain block of scripture because I can’t cover all the detail and information. What is the Spirit instructing me to prepare and to teach to the young people? You pay attention to that. You “receive it,” and you write essential ideas down.

Another thing that I have learned from the old warhorses in CES that were effective in the battle is that you never finish your preparation. You don’t sit down for an hour in your office and prepare a class. You may study awhile and do some of the mechanical aspects of preparation, but your mind never turns off. You are preparing constantly. While you are driving home, your mind is thinking about a certain block, verse, or passage of scripture. I keep a piece of paper close by because part of the act of receiving, like Elder Richard G. Scott has taught, is to write it down. When you get an impression, write the essence of the idea down. It is an act of showing the Lord we have received it. It also helps us to remember it. That receiving is essential.

Many years ago, I lived in Couer d’Alene, Idaho, and supervised CES in three-fourths of the state of Washington. I was driving down to Yakima to visit one of our teachers there. It was a three-and-a-half-hour drive, so I listened to the Old Testament on tape as I drove. I had my scriptures open on the seat next to me as I listened to Isaiah while driving down Interstate 90. When an idea would strike me as I was listening, I would reach over and scribble pencil notes in the margins of my scriptures that would help me remember the insight that came. All of a sudden, there were these red lights flashing behind me! As the policeman looked at my license—there were my scriptures in plain sight. He said, “Our aircraft overhead has noticed that you are weaving and wandering down the highway.” I said, “Oh my! I’m a teacher of religion, and I’ve just been listening to scripture on tape. When an idea strikes me, I’ve been jotting it down.” He laughed and said, “Please drive more carefully,” and left.

As you look at these notebooks here in my office, the idea of writing down ideas as you prepare is illustrated. The greatest value that I got out of my college education was learning how to synthesize information, how to think in a logical way, how to analyze and process, how to look at and evaluate references, and how to review literature. That
process I went through was far more valuable than most of the information. By working through an idea and preparing your heart, the inspiration flows and you write it down.

John Lund ignited my interest in Isaiah. Let me show you my study notes from over thirty years of my love affair with Isaiah. I've thought a lot of what my dad said about looking at life through the lens of the gospel. As I have raised my children and inspiration guided me as a father, the Spirit would say, "Write it down." I have hundreds of short articles that I have written to my children of what I have learned in life from the scriptures that has helped me to be a dad and a husband. Take the time to write it down. I know very little about my computer except as a word processor. When I was demoted to administration, I began to collect and write what I was being taught by the Spirit. I have three volumes of insights on what I have learned about leadership. I have ten file drawers full of notes and materials containing spiritual insights into scriptural passages that I was reading. I don't say that to brag or show off; I'm just trying to illustrate that I've learned from experience that writing down the spiritual insights is a critical part of the act of receiving inspiration. It makes a big difference.

I'm currently going back through decades of my family and Church correspondence. My boy is coming home from his mission next week, and I have a notebook for him with a copy of all of our correspondence. A couple of years ago I was having some real challenges, and I was very troubled. I was directed by the Spirit to go through some old correspondence and came upon a letter my mother had written to me in 1964 when I was a student at the Church College of Hawaii. Her bearing her testimony about something she had just had an experience with in the scriptures—in the first paragraph of that letter—was just like her talking to me today in my need. The value of writing those things down is immeasurable. It is scripture. Some teachers don't realize that the process is more than just underlining verses or writing a relevant cross-reference.

As the impressions flow, write them down, get them organized. A lot of times, like when I was driving to Yakima, I was getting enough of the essence of the idea in some key words to remember it. Then you go back and organize it in a lucid and logical sort of way. I have found what I have written in that process is what the Spirit often calls forth when I get in the classroom. At other times it may be something totally different than what I was planning on but usually springboarding from what was written in my notes.

In the early 1960s, a speech professor Preston Gledhill used a saying that I have found very valuable as a teacher. He taught, "When you are
preparing a talk, think yourself empty, read yourself full, and then speak yourself clear.” For a teacher of the gospel, you think yourself empty. You ask yourself, “What do I already know about this subject? What have I already learned?” Next, you read yourself full. You get into the scriptures, you go to the cross-references, and you may read a few carefully selected reference books. But about extensive reference books, I like what President Marion G. Romney said, “When I study the scriptures I want to go right to the fountain, not downstream where the cows have waded in it.” Then you speak yourself clear, or in Elder Scott’s terms, you write yourself clear. In the process of thinking myself empty, reading myself full, and writing or talking myself clear with family and colleagues, I have filled volumes. I have a great testimony of the value of writing. It’s not writing to publish; it’s writing so that you are formally receiving what the Lord is giving you and organizing it in your mind.

In 1960 when I went through the old mission home on Main Street in Salt Lake, starting my mission where the Conference Center is now, Elder S. Dilworth Young gave us motley bunch of missionaries a talk about learning and memorizing scripture. He said, “Use all your senses, take that scripture, and watch yourself copy it down on a piece of paper, and you say it out loud as you are writing it.” There has been great value in that for me. The process helps you get it into your mind and your heart and opens you up for revelation. You find yourself asking, “What does that word mean? What is that phrase trying to tell me?” We don’t just gloss over in casual reading!

**Why does this process of gospel learning you have described not have a more prominent place in our training and curriculum?**

Many of our teachers encourage students to engage in this process through the use of journals. But there is a phenomenon in the Church that President Boyd K. Packer described years ago when we made the change from ward teaching to home teaching. Ward teaching was a formalized visit with a printed lesson out of Salt Lake. With the change to home teaching came an expanded vision of the role of the home teachers. They outlined principles of caring for the needs of your families and giving them spiritual encouragement. Rather than reading the printed message in two or three minutes and feeling like you’ve done your duty for the month, they taught us to care for families. I remember at the time, President Packer said, “It will take about twenty years for this idea to get into the consciousness of the Saints.” I’ve watched that time frame in the move to sequential scripture teaching. We are now, twenty years later, to the point where sequential scripture teaching is becoming
as natural as breathing. Well, perhaps it isn’t natural yet for everyone because there are still those who are hammering verse by verse. But it takes time to learn and implement an idea.

When Elder Jacob de Jager was touring our mission in Texas years ago, we were talking about having to teach and teach and teach and reteach. “Just when you think you’ve got the missionaries ready, they are released. They go home and you have a whole new set of missionaries and it begins all over again.” Elder de Jager told me, “You know that quotation of the Prophet Joseph that we quote all the time about teaching correct principles? That is the Reader’s Digest version. The real version, what the Prophet really said, was ‘I teach and I teach and I teach and I teach and I teach, and finally they begin to govern themselves.’”

What was the focus of your own formal training in curriculum?

I did my master’s and doctorate in secondary education with an emphasis in curriculum and development. My doctoral dissertation was on the readability of the Book of Mormon course we were producing that year. We used Dale Chall’s formula, which was the preeminent readability formula at that time. There have been some refinements in readability formulas since then, but it gave us an indication of the readability of our materials. Our writers had never had a lot of formal experience in curriculum and readability, but we had good hearts, a little experience, and a humble desire for the Lord’s help. When I did the readability study on the home-study course, we found such crazy aberrations as doctoral-level instructions on how to do a third-grade-level exercise. We went through a little training exercise after that to teach our writers to write to the grade level of the kids—the seventh- to tenth-grade reading level! I also ran the Book of Mormon through the formula, and it came out to seventh- to tenth-grade reading level! I marveled at that. Here is a book written more than two thousand years ago, with Hebrew thought patterns and Egyptian alphabet, translated by a prophet with only a third-grade education. Yet the quotations that we were using in the course from the Prophet Joseph were postdoctoral level. He was brilliant! Yet the Book of Mormon, with that interesting background, came out at the seventh- to tenth-grade reading level. That is the level I had learned editors write to in order to reach the broadest readership in the public. I bore my testimony one day soon after that as to how remarkable that was to me. A sister in our ward who held a master’s degree and was a principal of a junior high school came to me and said, “Your testimony discouraged me.” I replied, “Oh?” She explained, “I read the Book of Mormon,
but I don’t understand it.” That triggered in me a question that has occupied my thoughts over the next twenty-five years. Why didn’t she understand what she was reading in the Book of Mormon?

When I watched good teaching that was having an impact, I was enthralled with trying to understand how the Spirit was working in the teaching process. What was the Spirit’s methodology? What technique is at play? What is the Spirit doing in the way the lesson is being presented that gives it impact? It isn’t just the Spirit bearing witness to the heart but also the Spirit giving you lists, showing relationships of ideas or contrasts. I made a list of over sixty different kinds of things that I observed great teachers doing when the Spirit was working powerfully through their teaching to help students understand. It was powerful to watch how our brethren, who were preparing curriculum, were guided into those kinds of things. Jerry Lund obviously is a master. He has the gift of teaching. I learned a lot from watching him and David Christensen and from my own experiences. That kind of awareness and focus on how to effectively reach out and involve students in the learning process in the atmosphere of the Spirit was a great effort during the eighties.

My dealing with curriculum after the formal schooling and several years in central office curriculum was as a supervisor of teachers in the field. About 1975, I left seminaries and institutes and went to the office of the Presiding Bishopric for two years. Elder Carlos E. Asay had been my early-morning seminary teacher. I idolized him. He came to BYU in the education department and then went to the Church College of Hawaii. He then came back to Salt Lake City as executive secretary to the Presiding Bishopric before being called as a Seventy. He asked me to come to the Presiding Bishopric’s office to be his staff assistant. I worked with them for a couple of years and came back to CES and went out as a coordinator. I learned many things about curriculum watching the Brethren and their concerns about curriculum.

My coordinating assignment was in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. I did that for about a year and a half and then was called to be the area director. I have fought my whole career to be in the classroom, and they kept me relegated to administration. I was area director of the U.S. Northwest area from about 1978 to 1982—in the eastern half of the Northwest area, the eastern half of Washington, northern Idaho, and Oregon. In 1982, I was transferred down to Nevada as the area director. I was there for about one year and then went out to Texas for three years as mission president. I came back from the mission and spent four years as area director in Nevada in the late eighties, and then in February of 1990 Stan [Peterson] asked me to be a zone administrator and
Describe the events surrounding your assignment as zone administrator and what you learned in that assignment.

I was just trying to keep my nose clean and stay out of the eyes of the administration and not be a problem—kind of “skin my own cat” down there in Nevada. Stan came down and visited the Nevada area. We spent about three days acquainting him with the programs in Nevada. We became good friends. One of my sisters had been in his ward when he was a young bishop in California. A woman in that ward whom Stan was very close to—a new convert—is now my stepmother. My father married her after my mother died about seventeen years ago. Stan and I have had a connection through family as well as a professional association. He just called me up one day in February 1990 and said, “Tom, I’ve discussed your name with President Hinckley. He’s in agreement. We would like you to come up and be one of the zone administrators.” You could have knocked me over with a feather! He said, “Go home and talk it over with Marcia and then call me back.”

It was fascinating to be a zone administrator and work with a group of brethren where our paths had crossed and crisscrossed over the years. I had worked previously with Garry Moore and Bryan Weston. I knew Clarence Schramm quite well from his early days in the system. Bruce Lake had been a long-time friend. I felt such a nurturing, mentoring spirit, where these more experienced brethren, like Stan and Clarence and Bruce, were always reaching out. I felt appreciated. I grew up as a poor city kid. I've often struggled with feelings of inadequacy. Watching these great and humble men as leaders and teachers as they reached out, mentored, loved, and gave opportunities profoundly impacted my life. I have tried to emulate those qualities as I have served in religious education. The old adage “They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” is true. The first role of a great teacher is to get acquainted with the kids. Get acquainted as an administrator with your teachers. Have dinner with them. I used to think as a young man, “Why did the Savior spend so much time talking with people over the dinner table?” Over the years I found out that sitting down and socializing with somebody and listening to their heart over a meal was one of the Savior’s very effective tools of reaching the heart of people.

You have mentioned several principles related to effective gospel learning. What makes for effective gospel teaching?
I was supervising seminaries up in the Panhandle of Idaho—1977 or 1978. I went into the class of a young married man, Carl Tenney. I had known his father for years. I sat in that early-morning class in Bonners Ferry. He was not an outwardly enthusiastic teacher. It was just kind of matter-of-fact. But the kids were all with him. He had twelve or fifteen in the class. There were no discipline problems. None of the kids were stirring it up and making it difficult for him. He would just make an ordinary statement about truth or something in the scriptures. The kids would turn to the scriptures and mark. Carl would ask a question, and one of the kids would raise a hand and answer. I thought, “Boy, this is remarkable. How does he do this?” If I sat there with Dan Bell’s checklist, I wouldn’t have checked very many things on this guy for being an effective teacher. But after class every kid had thirty seconds with him on the way out the door. One kid said, “Hey, here’s my photography project I’m turning in today.” Carl took a minute and looked at it. He gave an interested response and approval to him, “I like this picture here.” Every student had a special moment of a few seconds with the teacher. He did that with every one of them. One of them said, “My motorbike isn’t working right.” Carl replied, “I’ll stop by on my way home from work today and look at it.” I saw the power of his teaching, because he cared about kids, not in a major, time-consuming way but in a caring way. He was involved with each student as a person. That personal connection tends to get lost when you get classes of fifty, sixty, one hundred, or two hundred people. The Savior seemed to prefer the smaller groups. Even when He came to the Nephites and He had two thousand, He adjusted His schedule to make time for everyone of them. That is the foundation of making a difference in a student’s life. Show that personal, caring concern, one-on-one, as much as you possibly can.

That combines with the other essential ingredient of an effective religious educator. Let me explain in the words of my father. We called him Papa. When I was a young kid growing up, Papa would say, “Look at life through the lens of the gospel, and you will better understand what is going on in your life.” Once when I was a teenager I did a stupid, foolhardy thing. Papa took me out for a ride with him to run an errand. I think he made the errand up just to have some time with me. As we rode along, he told me about a similar experience he had as a teenager. He never told me what he did, but he told me about his father and how his father had dealt with him. Now I was receiving the benefit of my grandfather’s caring, gentle concern. Papa taught me
what he had learned from the experience. Then he said something that emblazoned itself on my soul. He said, “Tommy, never forget how you feel right now as you deal with your own children.” I have tried to do that in the classroom. When you talk about doctrine, you don’t just talk about it from your current, wiser, older, more mature, scholarly interest in the scriptures. You look at it through the lens of these kids’ experiences in life. The effective gospel teacher never forgets how he felt when he was that age. He doesn’t teach just from his exhilaration and fascination with information. He looks at the lives of the kids and what they’re experiencing. Then, based upon his own experience, with the Spirit giving that awareness to him, he helps the kids see their own lives through the lens of the gospel.

It isn’t just a matter of disseminating information. Every class is different. Each class has its own “chemistry.” First, remember how you felt when you were that age. Second, help kids to look at their own lives through the lens of the scriptures. For example, the scriptures speak of David and Bathsheba and the law of chastity, but those were two married people. I had a more potent experience as a young man reading about Amnon and Tamar, who were David’s son and daughter by different wives. Amnon tempted and seduced his half-sister. She said, “No such thing should be done in Israel.” That story is more realistic for kids and teenagers than is David and Bathsheba. David and Bathsheba ought to be in Relief Society and Melchizedek Priesthood meeting. You look and select based on those kinds of things.

The other thing that makes all the difference in the world is what Ernie Eberhardt used to say, “Keep a growing edge!” There are two kinds of spirits in the gospel teaching process. One is the spirit of preparation; that’s the spirit of Elias—the spirit that prepares. The Spirit will reveal truth to a teacher who is energetic in his constant eagerness to be in the scriptures and studying and understanding the word of the Lord. There will be a spirit that energizes his own soul and enlivens and broadens his own understanding. This spirit of preparation relates to Ezra. He went to prepare his heart in order to teach the people (see Ezra 7:10). A teacher having that vital, constant fascination—eagerness, hunger to be learning himself—keeps vitality in his ability to teach. But he has to realize that when he steps into the classroom, all those things that prepared his heart may not necessarily be the content that he’s going to give in the class.

I see so many teachers frustrated because they don’t “cover all the material.” You as a teacher, in an hour of prep time, may learn fifteen ideas that just absolutely spark your soul with an excitement to share.
When you get in the classroom, the Spirit may reveal two other things that you didn’t see in your preparation. Those are the only two that you may get through in the class. So you learn to walk out of the classroom not feeling frustrated that you didn’t cover the material; but you fed them spiritually that day in that class. You enjoyed the spirit of preparation and the spirit of presentation. The Lord says, “It shall be given you in the very hour, yea, in the very moment, what ye shall say” (D&C 100:6). The presentation doesn’t happen very well if the preparation is neglected. That’s what the Lord was telling Hyrum in Doctrine and Covenants section 11. If you don’t have the spirit of preparation, then the spirit of presentation is not going to be with you in its strength.

When I was a young teacher, overhead transparencies were the new innovation. That was the hot technology of the early seventies. It swept the country like PowerPoint does today. But I also discovered something. With overhead transparencies, you can get so locked into a content delivery that you forget the kids, and you forget the Spirit. You can have the Spirit guide you in the preparation of a PowerPoint presentation. PowerPoint has its place in certain types of formalized training. Recently I watched a guest professional educator using PowerPoint here in the chapel across the street. It was interesting. But when he left the formal presentation at scattered moments, here and there, and interacted with the audience, we felt a burst of spirit and vitality. Then he hurried back to his PowerPoint presentation. Transparencies did that for us back then. I learned early that you can forget the student when you get too technologically or methodologically focused on the presentation. Maintaining balance is crucial.

I used to do a lot of Know Your Religion lectures, and I had all my outlines prepared. I would go in with my overheads to facilitate the audience’s note taking. I then found that sometimes the Spirit wanted me to teach something differently or to use a different illustration to bless somebody in that particular group. I battled trying to stay true to my outline with teaching what the Spirit was directing me to teach. As I got older I moved away from a lot of technology in teaching. What you need are the scriptures and kids. The scriptures themselves have enough “technology and methodology” to them that you don’t need a lot of extraneous things.

I learned a great lesson in this regard. When I was serving as a mission president, I noticed that one of the truly great BYU teachers was coming down on a Know Your Religion lecture tour. I called Mac Palmer at Continuing Ed and asked if I could use the man at some
zone conferences. I told Mac, “I’ll save you a few travel bucks, and I’ll drive him to his locations. We’ll have zone conferences in those cities where he is going to be. I would love to have him teach the missionaries.” He was one of the foremost authorities on the life of the Prophet Joseph. I had never had a class from him, but I had friends who had. The first two zone conferences bombed. I was stunned! He didn’t connect with the missionaries. On the way to the final zone conference, he showed me his old “instant preparation” notebook of all these talk outlines that he had used as a mission president twenty years before. He would flip to something that he thought would be good, and then he would deliver it. His third zone conference had the same mediocrity. I prayed in my heart, “Heavenly Father, this man feels terrible. He knows he hasn’t connected. The missionaries were expecting something, and they didn’t get it. What can we do?” The impression came immediately. I jumped back up to the pulpit and said, “This man is one of the foremost authorities on the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Church today. Brother, would you come back up here, take all the time you need, and tell these young missionaries how you feel about the Prophet Joseph.” That was one of the most touching, powerful experiences of my life. All of a sudden he came alive, because he put his own heart and soul into it.

That was a great lesson for me. You don’t get locked into outlines and informational dissemination. You teach from your feelings for the Lord’s word. When you do, there is a power that changes lives. The missionaries from the earlier two zone conferences hardly made any reference to our guest having spoken to them in their weekly letter to the mission president. But most of those missionaries at the last zone conference wrote back and said, “Now I understand like never before why we preach Joseph Smith.”

Who stands out in your mind as being the kind of teacher you are describing?

I loved Wally Montague because he had that kind of a gift. Ernie Eberhardt did. Leland Anderson would tell us young bucks in summer school, “I’ve been a farmer long enough to know that you don’t back up the wagon and dump the whole load in front of the cows. Don’t do that to a seminary student. They’re not any different than cows.” Lynn McKinley had a tremendous impact on my life because I loved his dynamics. I loved his delivery. I loved how he focused on doctrine. I took a couple of classes from him at BYU as a young student. When he came to the Church College of Hawaii on a sabbatical, I took every
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class I could from him. In one class there were seven of us: three girls and four returned missionaries. Ray Sasaki was one of those students. He became a CES man in Hawaii and retired recently. Brother McKinley walked one day into class. It was a class on speech criticism—how to evaluate good public speaking. He put his books aside, and he said, “As I was walking to class, the Spirit whispered to me that this group would have a tremendous influence in building the kingdom of God.” He said, “I’m to teach you the three things I have learned that make a difference when you teach and talk in the Church.” That was powerful. With his books aside, he said, “Let me give you three keys. Number one, always direct your teaching to the youngest experience level in the group.” So when you are in a seminary class you don’t talk just to the active kids who come from faithful homes, you talk to the inactive boy sitting over in the corner whose parents are divorced and who doesn’t have much background in the gospel. Brother McKinley said, “The others will pick up on it. In sacrament meeting you talk to the children, and the adults will get the message.”

He also taught us to avoid the use of clichés. He explained, “Clichés deaden the mind. You can teach the same principle, but find a fresh way of saying it. Increase your vocabulary. Learn to use the metaphors of the gospel. They are many.” I don’t remember if he used this example or not, but it came to me at some point. How many times have you sat through home-teaching motivation talks to get you to get your home teaching done? I remember when I realized that home teachers are mortal ministering angels and the bishop has the keys or directing powers of the ministering of angels. All of a sudden, my function and duty as a home teacher took on a whole different meaning. You don’t have to give me a “rah, rah, rah!” to get it done by the end of the month. No, I have a vision now. I see how the Lord views my labor. So Brother McKinley said, “Find fresh ways to say it.”

The third piece of counsel he gave us was to teach the doctrine. Brother McKinley said, “Take your message and put it into a doctrinal frame of reference.” There are subjects that don’t carry the same convincing power of the Spirit as others. I’ll give you an example that I have observed. For seven years I supervised Mexico and Central America, the heartland of Father Lehi’s children. In the course of doing my work, I saw a lot of evidences, ruins, locations, and places where the events of the Book of Mormon took place. I read some of the academic books that tried to pinpoint archaeology and locations of various things. I remember reading a manuscript of a book on Book of Mormon archaeology that was later published. I was asked to read
through it. I had the hardest time getting through it—not that it wasn't interesting; it just didn't carry the Spirit. But when you talk about what happened in a place like that site and the doctrine the Lord taught, there is a power, there is a majesty that touches your soul! I think as religious educators our first and foremost charge is to reinforce and strengthen the testimony of young people by teaching the doctrine. A testimony of the Lord, His love, and His doctrines will allow them to live happy and productive lives.

Another point, I loved my university training because I had responsibility for my learning. I appreciated it when teachers dealt with me as a colearner. But on the other hand, I was subjected, like many students, to an informational overload. Between the time I finished my master’s and my doctorate, there had been so many changes in educational fads in those four years that two other fellows and I spent three months boning up on the latest fads and fashions of education in order to be able to pass our written exams. I watched preferred informational things come and go. But I can still see in my mind’s eye an undergraduate physics class taught by Richard Ord that I sat in forty years ago. I don’t remember much of the content of the course, but I do remember when Brother Ord, teaching us some law relative to our universe, opened his triple combination and said, “Look at what the Lord says about this.” That’s the one thing I remember from a whole semester because the power of the Spirit drove it into my heart.
Tom Tyler explaining to Juan Henderson the process of writing spiritual impressions while studying the scriptures.

Photo by Eric Paul Rogers
EXPLANATION OF THE ABOVE CUT.

Fig. 1.—The Angel of the Lord.
2. Abraham, fastened upon an Altar.
3. The Idolatrous Priest of Elkennah attempting to offer up Abraham as a sacrifice.
5. The Idolatrous God of Elkennah.
6. The " " " Libnah.
7. The " " " Mahmachrah.
8. The " " " Korash.
9. The " " " Pharaoh.
10. Abraham in Egypt.
11. Designed to represent the pillars of Heaven, as understood by the Egyptians.
12. Rukeyyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament, over our heads; but in this case, in relation to this subject, the Egyptians meant it to signify Shamau, to be high, or the heavens: answering to the Hebrew word, Shaumahyeem.

Facsimile 1, printed in the Times and Seasons, 1 March 1842
Teaching the Book of Abraham Facsimiles

Michael D. Rhodes

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One of the most difficult aspects of teaching the book of Abraham is dealing with the three facsimiles found there. Critics of the Church have raised numerous questions about them and the associated papyri, and students often ask about these criticisms. In this article, I will pass on my own experience gained while teaching about the facsimiles and the Pearl of Great Price at Brigham Young University.

Topics I cover when I teach the facsimiles include the history of the papyri, the questions critics have raised concerning the facsimiles and the papyri as they relate to the book of Abraham, answers to these criticisms, and the evidence that supports Joseph Smith’s interpretations of the facsimiles.

History of the Papyri

The three facsimiles found in the book of Abraham all derive from ancient Egyptian papyri that Joseph Smith obtained in Kirtland in 1835. Sometime between 1818 and 1822, Antonio Lebolo, who was working as superintendent of the archaeological excavations for Bernardino Drovetti in upper Egypt, discovered many mummies in a tomb in Thebes. In 1822, Lebolo returned to his native town of Castellamonte in Italy, taking eleven of these mummies with him. Sometime between then and his death on 19 February 1830, he arranged with the Albano Oblasser Shipping Company in Trieste to sell the eleven mummies he had brought back from Egypt.¹ The mummies
were sent to New York, where Michael H. Chandler purchased them in 1833. When he first obtained the mummies, Chandler, hoping to find something of value, unwrapped them and found several papyri in the mummy wrappings. For the next two years he traveled around the northeastern United States displaying the mummies and selling one now and then as the opportunity arose. In July 1835, Chandler arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, to display the mummies and papyri. At this point, he now had only four of the original eleven mummies he had purchased in New York. He met with Joseph Smith, who indicated interest in the papyri, and Chandler then decided to sell the remaining mummies and papyri to him. It was from these papyri that Joseph Smith translated the book of Abraham.

After Joseph Smith’s death in 1844, the mummies and papyri remained in the possession of his mother, Lucy Smith, until her death on 14 May 1856. On 26 May, Emma Smith Bidamon, the remarried widow of Joseph Smith, sold them to Abel Combs. Soon thereafter Combs sold at least two of the mummies and several of the papyri to the St. Louis Museum. In 1863, the St. Louis Museum closed and was moved to Chicago, Illinois. The two mummies and some papyri remained on display in the museum until it was destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871.

For many years, it was assumed that all the papyri were destroyed in this fire. However, in 1966, Dr. Aziz Atiyah, a professor at the University of Utah, found eleven papyri fragments in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art that were clearly part of the papyri that Joseph Smith had in his possession. These papyri were donated to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1967 and are now kept in the Church archives. The papyri fragments found in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art were purchased from the family of Alice Heusser, whose mother had been a nurse for Abel Combs before he died and to whom he had willed the papyri fragments on his death.

These papyri fragments came from three separate papyri rolls containing ancient Egyptian religious texts. The first is a Book of Breathings belonging to a man named Hor the son of Usirwer. There are also two copies of the Book of the Dead, one belonging to Tshemmin the daughter of Eskhons and the other to a woman named Neferirnub. Although it was not found among the Metropolitan Museum of Art fragments, Joseph Smith also had a third Book of the Dead belonging to Amenhotep son of Tanub and a document Egyptologists call a hypocephalus (facsimile 2) belonging to a man named Sheshonq.
Questions Raised by the Papyri

These Egyptian documents can be reliably dated to somewhere between 220 and 150 B.C. on the basis of the handwriting, the historical period in which the religious writings on these papyri were in use in Egypt, and the historical references to at least one of the original owners of the papyri. They cannot possibly date to the period of Abraham—around 2000 to 1800 B.C. This seems to contradict the statement in the introduction to the book of Abraham that states it was “written by his own hand, upon papyrus.” Moreover, the writing on the surviving fragments can all be translated, and none of it mentions Abraham or seems to be related to the text of the book of Abraham.

Modern Egyptologists maintain that the facsimiles do not at all represent what Joseph Smith said they do. The original of facsimile 1 of the book of Abraham is found at the beginning of the Hor Book of Breathings papyrus, and the hieroglyphic writing on it associates the figure on the couch (figure 1) with Hor, the owner of the papyrus, who is portrayed as being resurrected by the god Anubis, who stands over him. Above and to the right of Anubis, Hor’s soul is represented as a human-headed falcon. Facsimile 3, although not among the surviving fragments, also came from the same Book of Breathings, since the name Hor is found three times in the hieroglyphic writing on that facsimile. In this facsimile, Hor (figure 5), having been judged and found worthy, is being ushered into the presence of Osiris (figure 1), the god of the dead, who is seated upon his throne. Behind Osiris is his wife/sister Isis (figure 2). Hor is being escorted by the god Anubis, guide of the dead (figure 6), and Ma’at, the goddess of truth (figure 4). Like facsimile 3, facsimile 2 is not found among the surviving fragments, but the writing on it indicates it belonged to a man named Sheshonq, and the hieroglyphic writing on it deals with Sheshonq’s happiness and well-being in the Egyptian afterlife.

Resolution of the Problems

The statement in the introduction to the book of Abraham, that it was “written by his own hand upon papyrus,” does not necessarily mean that the papyrus Joseph Smith was translating was the original written by Abraham. The term “by the hand of” can simply mean that Abraham is the author of the book. In Hebrew, for example, beyad means literally “by the hand of,” but simply designates the agent of an action, generally rendered in English with the preposition by. So while the papyri Joseph Smith had were written nearly two thousand years
after Abraham, they nevertheless could have contained a copy of the book of Abraham, of which Abraham was the author. There are numerous examples of Egyptian papyri that have more than one text on them, and thus there could have been a copy of the book of Abraham on the same papyrus as the Hor Book of Breathings.

What about the association of facsimiles 1 and 3 with the Hor Book of Breathings? The likely explanation here is that the original illustrations done by Abraham had been modified and adapted for use by Hor, the owner of the papyrus. What Joseph Smith did with the facsimiles is similar to what he did with the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible—he gave the original meaning of the Abraham illustrations, correcting the distortions that had taken place over nearly two millennia. The same, of course, holds true for facsimile 2.

But is there any evidence that, even in distorted form, these illustrations were associated with Abraham anciently? There is indeed. I will discuss each facsimile in turn.

Facsimile 1. In an ancient Egyptian papyrus dating to roughly the first or second century A.D., there is a lion-couch scene similar to the one shown in facsimile 1. Underneath the illustration, the text reads “Abraham, who upon...” There is a break in the text here, so we do not know what word followed. The key point, however, is that an ancient Egyptian document, from approximately the same time period as the papyri Joseph Smith had in his possession, associated Abraham with a lion-couch scene.

Facsimile 2. Egyptologists call documents like facsimile 2 a hypocephalus, Greek for “under the head,” since the document was placed under the head of the deceased in the coffin. Over a hundred examples of them are located in museums around the world.

On an Egyptian papyrus of the early Christian period is the phrase “Abraham, the pupil of the eye of the Wedjat.” In the 162d chapter of the Book of the Dead, which tells how to make a hypocephalus, the Wedjat eye is described, and the hypocephalus itself is called an “eye.” The Apocalypse of Abraham, a pseudepigraphical text dating from the early Christian era, describes a vision Abraham saw while making a sacrifice to God. In this vision, he is shown the plan of the universe, “what is in the heavens, on the earth, in the sea, in the abyss, and in the lower depths.” This language is very close to the phrase found in facsimile 2 (figures 9, 10, and 11), which reads, “O Mighty God, Lord of heaven and earth, of the hereafter, and of his great waters.” In this same text, Abraham sees “the fullness of the universe and its circles in all” and a “picture of creation” with two sides. The similarity with
the hypocephalus, which for the Egyptians represents the whole of the world in a circular format, is striking. There is even a description of what are clearly the four figures labeled number 6 in the Joseph Smith hypocephalus. It also tells how Abraham is promised the priesthood, which will continue in his posterity—a promise associated with the temple. He is shown the “host of stars, and the orders they were commanded to carry out, and the elements of the earth obeying them.” This language shows a remarkable parallel to the wording in the book of Abraham.

Facsimile 3. In the Testament of Abraham, another pseudepigraphical text of the early Christian era, Abraham sees a vision of the Last Judgment that is unquestionably related to the judgment scene pictured in the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, thus clearly associating Abraham with this ancient Egyptian work. One of the Joseph Smith papyri is, in fact, a drawing of this judgment scene from the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, and facsimile 3 is a scene closely related to this.

The important point here is that we find ancient Near Eastern documents that are roughly contemporary with the hypocephalus and the other Egyptian papyri purchased by Joseph Smith that relate the scenes portrayed in facsimiles 1, 2, and 3 with Abraham, just as Joseph Smith said. Significantly, none of these documents had even been discovered at Joseph Smith’s time.

Joseph Smith’s Interpretations of the Facsimiles

What about Joseph Smith’s interpretations of the three facsimiles? Are they valid? Do they make sense? As we look at evidence in support of Joseph Smith’s explanations of the three facsimiles of the book of Abraham, it is important to recognize that whenever we do find a piece of evidence supporting Joseph Smith’s explanations, this must carry a great deal of weight, since the (secular) probability of the evidence being correct is much smaller than that of being wrong. This is something we all know from experience in trying to answer a multiple-choice question when we do not know the correct answer. If Joseph Smith explained one thing correctly, this could be attributed to chance, but when we find many examples of his explanations being correct, for all practical purposes, this eliminates chance or “good guessing.”

It is also important to remember that we do not have the original illustrations made by Abraham; rather, we have copies made nearly two thousand years later, with the consequent problems of changes and distortions. With these things in mind, let us again look at each facsimile.
This will not be a complete discussion of each facsimile but rather an attempt to highlight some of the most notable examples of Joseph Smith getting things right in his interpretations of the facsimiles.

Facsimile 1. The most important correlation, of course, is one already mentioned above—that another ancient Egyptian text dating from approximately the same time as the Joseph Smith papyri associates Abraham with a lion-couch scene. Critics have maintained that facsimile 1 portrays an embalming or resurrection scene, not a sacrifice. And indeed, in its present form, it does represent the resurrection of Hor, the original owner of the Book of Breathings papyrus. There are, however, some peculiar and unique aspects to the illustration. In all known ancient Egyptian examples of a resurrection scene, the figure on the lion couch has his legs spread, as in facsimile 1, but is wearing no clothing (for the Egyptians, resurrection was a rebirth; and when we are born, we have no clothes on). The figure in a resurrection scene also has only one arm raised, while the other is at his side. Facsimile 1 is unique in that the figure is clothed and has both hands raised in the classical Egyptian gesture of prayer—certainly a carryover from the original illustration by Abraham where he was praying.

Another criticism leveled against the interpretations of facsimile 1 is that the standing figure is not a priest but is, in fact, the Egyptian god Anubis. As represented on the papyrus, the figure is indeed Anubis. However, there are examples from Egypt of priests wearing masks of gods when carrying out their priestly duties. John Gee’s book on the Joseph Smith papyri shows an example of an Egyptian priest wearing a mask of Anubis as well as an actual mask of Anubis found by archaeologists.

The names of the idolatrous gods mentioned in facsimile 1 provide another example of the validity of the Prophet Joseph’s explanations. If Joseph Smith had simply made up the names, the chances of their corresponding to the names of ancient deities would be astronomically small. The name Elkenah, for example, is clearly related to the Hebrew 'el qānāh/qōneh “God has created / the creator.” Elkenah is found in the Old Testament as the name of several people, including Samuel’s father (see 1 Samuel 1:1). The name is also found as a divine name in Mesopotamian sources as 𒀉𒈩 ipaduk “God has created.” Libnah may be related to the Hebrew leḇānāh “moon” (see Isaiah 24:23) from the root lābān “white.” A city captured by Joshua was called libnāh (see Josuah 10:29). The name Korash is found as a name in Egyptian sources. A connection with Kōreš the name of the Persian king Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28), is also possible.
In conjunction with facsimile 2, which Joseph Smith indicates contains astronomical concepts among other things, it is noteworthy that the ancient Jewish historian Josephus states that Abraham taught the Egyptians astronomy. In the explanation to figure 1, Joseph Smith says that this is “Kolob, signifying the first creation, nearest to the celestial, or the residence of God.” The word Kolob is particularly interesting. There is a common Semitic root QLB/ORB that has the basic meaning of “heart, center, middle” and “to be near.” For example, the Arabic qalb means “heart, middle, center”; the Hebrew qereb means “middle, midst”; and the Hebrew qarab means “to be near.” In Arabic, the word qalb forms part of the Arabic names of several of the brightest stars in the sky, including Antares, Regulus (Arabic qalb al'-asad, “heart of the lion”); Regulus is the brightest star in the constellation Leo the Lion), and Canopus.

Also in the explanation to figure 1, Joseph says that the earth is called Jah-ah-eh by the Egyptians. This is the only place in the book of Abraham where he gives an actual translation of an Egyptian word. The Egyptian word for “earth, ground, field” is ḫr. In Egyptian, only the consonants were written, so we do not know what the vowels were. However, Coptic, the latest stage of Egyptian, used a modified Greek alphabet that included vowels. In Coptic, this word is Et(Ê)E, pronounced “yo-he.” If we assume that Joseph Smith is using the biblical convention of rendering a Semitic “y” as an English “j,” this matches up quite closely.

One more example—Joseph Smith says that the four standing figures of figure 6 represent “this earth in its four quarters.” For the Egyptians, these were the four sons of Horus, who, among other things, were the gods of the four cardinal points of the compass.

With facsimile 3, as with the other two facsimiles, it is important to keep in mind that the interpretation given by Joseph Smith is for the original illustration made by Abraham, which is different than the form we now have. Some of the most obvious interpretations are the designation of the female (figures 2 and 4) as the pharaoh and prince of pharaoh. If we had the original drawn by Abraham, the figures would have matched the Prophet Joseph’s explanation.

Summary

While critics of the Church often target the facsimiles of the book of Abraham in their attempts to disprove the Prophet Joseph Smith, in this paper I have shown that Joseph Smith correctly interpreted items
found on the three facsimiles of the book of Abraham and that ancient sources also associated Abraham with all of these illustrations. It is especially important to recognize that knowledge of these Egyptian matters was unavailable even to the best scholars of Joseph Smith’s day. This only reaffirms what every honest person can learn in earnest prayer, that Joseph Smith was truly a prophet of God and that he received these things through revelation.

Notes

13. Translation by author.
23. For a more detailed look at facsimile 2, see Michael D. Rhodes, *The Joseph Smith Hypocephalus . . . Seventeen Years Later* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for
Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994).


The year 2000 marked the 150th anniversary of the preaching of the gospel in Scandinavia and continental Europe by Latter-day Saint missionaries. In commemoration of that event, the Department of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University held a conference on European Church history. The conference was held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association (MHA), which was held in Copenhagen and Aalborg, Denmark. Several BYU Church history professors presented papers at the MHA conference. Following the meetings in Denmark, the conference continued with visits to historic sites related to Church history in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France, where papers and presentations were given on-site.

Editors Donald Q. Cannon and Brent L. Top selected essays for *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Europe* from the papers presented as a part of that conference. The book, the fourth volume in a series of publications sponsored by the Department of Church History and Doctrine, offers a wide look at struggles and successes of the Church in Europe. Essays include:

- Fred E. Wood’s description of a man named Gudmundur Gudmundsson, who introduced the gospel to Iceland in 1851.
- David F. Boone’s account of the evacuation of missionaries from Scandinavia at the outbreak of World War II.
• Robert C. Freeman's telling of the experiences of German Saints during World War II.

• Richard O. Cowan's essay on the Swiss Temple, not only the first temple in Europe but also the first to use audiovisual media in the presentation of the endowment.

• Arnold K. Garr's account of Mormon pioneers in Estonia.

These and other essays provide readers with an interesting look at key events and people associated with the organization and expansion of the Church in Europe.

This book will soon be available at Latter-day Saint bookstores.
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