INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Gospel Teaching and Writing: A Conversation with Elder Gerald N. Lund
Paul H. Peterson

The Bible—A Priceless Treasure
David M. Whitchurch

Chapters, Verses, Punctuation, Spelling, and Italics in the King James Version
Kent P. Jackson, Frank F. Judd Jr., and David R. Seely

The Radical Reformation and the Restoration of the Gospel
Stephen J. Fleming

Kindness: The Manifestation of True Conversion
Kendall Ayres

My Great-Grandmother and the Book of Mormon
M. Steven Andersen

A Tribute to Gospel Teachers
Rebecca McConkie

“The Way of an Eagle”: Birds in the Scriptures
Dale Z. Kirby

Helping Children to Be Lifelong Learners
Don and Ann Pearson

Blessed by Seminary
Robert Hasara

The Lord’s Suburban
Jeanne Boren

The Omniscience of God
Roger K. Terry

Profiles of the Prophets: Wilford Woodruff
Lawrence R. Flake

“There is great power in the story of the Restoration. It has all the elements of great drama—tragedy and triumph and courage and all the things that make a great novel.”
“It is a great privilege to be a storyteller, and I am very happy that I am able to do that, but I don’t ever forget where the real power lies.”

Elder Gerald N. Lund

ON THE COVER:
The beauty and drama of the Restoration are symbolized in this vista of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ISTOCKPHOTO
The Religious Educator is published three times a year by the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. This publication serves the needs and interests of those who study and teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ on a regular basis. The distinct focuses are on teaching the gospel; publishing studies on scripture, doctrine, and Church history; and sharing outstanding devotional essays. The contributions to each issue are carefully reviewed and edited by experienced teachers, writers, and scholars.

Articles are selected on their appeal to and appropriateness for religion professors at each of the Brigham Young University campuses, seminary and institute teachers, and other gospel teachers of adults and young adults. In every issue, we plan a selection of articles that will be helpful and appealing to this diverse audience. The beliefs of the respective authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Subscriptions. The subscription rate is $10 per year. Subscribers can place orders online at tre.byu.edu (preferred method) or by mail addressed to Creative Works, Brigham Young University, 3760 HBLL, Provo, UT 84602-6854. Mail subscriptions must include the following information: name, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address (optional; for renewal purposes only), current CES responsibilities, an indication of the number of years of subscription desired (up to three), and a check or money order made out to Creative Works.

Subscription Questions. Subscription questions should be sent via e-mail to catalog@byu.edu and should include “TRE Subscriptions” on the subject line. Back issues are available online only.

Editorial Questions. For questions or comments, e-mail us at thereligiouseducator@byu.edu or write to Religious Educator, 167 HGB, Provo, UT 84602-2701.

Submissions. Complete author guidelines, including suitable topics, are provided at tre.byu.edu. All manuscripts should be submitted electronically to thereligiouseducator@byu.edu. Hardcopy submissions are accepted but not encouraged; send to the editorial office at the address listed above.

Manuscripts must be word processed in double-spaced format, including quotations. A minimum of embedded word-processing commands should be used. Authors should follow style conventions of the Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition, and the Style Guide for Publications of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 3rd edition, as reflected in a recent issue of the Religious Educator.

Those manuscripts that meet all criteria and appear to fill current needs will be peer reviewed and will receive a friendly, but careful, review. Authors will then be notified of the decision about publication. This process generally takes four to six months, and publication will generally occur within a year after acceptance has been received.

If an article is accepted, authors will be notified and asked to provide photocopies of all source materials cited, arranged in order, numbered to coincide with endnotes, and highlighted to reflect the quotations or paraphrases. Photocopies of source material must include title page and source page with the quotations used highlighted.

ISSN 1536-4720

© 2006 by Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. All rights reserved

Printed in the U.S.A. on acid-free paper
Religious Studies Center

Director
Terry B. Ball

Associate Director
Richard D. Draper

Advisory Board
Richard E. Bennett
Arnold K. Garr
Kent P. Jackson
Dennis L. Largey
John P. Livingstone
David M. Whitchurch
Dennis A. Wright

Editorial Advisory Board
Jack R. Christianson
Kathy K. Clayton
Milly Day
Randall L. Hall
Lynne K. Speierman
Thomas R. Valletta
Victor L. Walch

Religious Educator Staff

Editor-in-Chief
Richard Neitzel Holzapfel

Executive Editor
R. Devan Jensen

Associate Editor
Ted D. Stoddard

Administrative Assistant
Joany O. Pinegar

Student Editorial Interns
Lindsay J. Davidson
Marisa A. Erickson
Elizabeth A. Pinborough
Stanley J. Thayne
Philip R. Webb

Student Assistants
Karyn Hunter Heath
Erin Tanner

Design
Stephen A. Hales
Brandon J. Barney
Stephen Hales Creative, Inc.

Subscription
Management
Mary Jo Tansy
Creative Works
Are writers naturally born, or can they hone their craft? How can writing be a venue for teaching the gospel? Elder Gerald N. Lund answers questions like these and shares ideas from his twenty-plus years of publishing and even longer experience as a gospel teacher.

The Old Testament is the focus in Sunday School this year, and we offer several articles featuring different aspects of the Bible, including its translation into English. Each takes a different approach, but, in the words of President Gordon B. Hinckley, they “seem to harmonize, one with another, each a thread in the tapestry of a grand and beautiful pattern” (Discourses of President Gordon B. Hinckley, vol. 2 [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005], 89–90).

Latter-day Saints sometimes undervalue the Holy Bible as the original testament of Jesus Christ. In “The Bible: A Priceless Treasure,” David M. Whitchurch shares accounts of the origins of our Bible, testifying of its importance in our canon of scripture. Next, Kent P. Jackson, Frank F. Judd Jr., and David R. Seely team up to provide a comprehensive and insightful look at the grammatical nuances of the Bible, including “Chapters, Verses, Punctuation, Spelling, and Italics in the King James Version.” Many Reformers gave their lives in defending the Bible and its truths. Stephen J. Fleming calls attention to an overlooked aspect of the Reformation, identifying the Anabaptists and other Radical Reformers as forerunners to the Restoration.

In “Kindness: An Outward Expression of True Conversion,” Kendall Ayres identifies the problem of self-righteousness and suggests that when we are truly converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we will reflect that light and attract others to the gospel.

Gospel teachers do not always realize what an impact they have, and the most important teaching takes place at home. M. Steve Andersen describes the profound effect his great-grandmother had in shaping his views of the Book of Mormon. Then Rebecca McConkie offers a tribute to gospel teachers in her life, describing the positive influence of her father’s love for the gospel and the effect that teachers who had paid the price of learning had on her.

From the fall of a sparrow to the majestic flight of an eagle, the Savior often used birds as symbols of spiritual qualities. Dale Z. Kirby discusses these beautiful creatures and their symbolism in “‘The Way of an Eagle’: Birds in the Scriptures.”

Don and Ann Pearson, parents of six children, share their experiences in instilling a love of learning through the “small and simple things” of parenting. Then, in “Blessed by Seminary,” Robert Hasara talks about the role of peers in leading him to the gospel, including early experiences while attending seminary.

In “The Lord’s Suburban,” Jeanne Boren teaches that even material possessions should be viewed as blessings from God that we should be willing to share with one another.

How well does God know His children? Is He merely guessing at the outcome of their lives? Roger K. Terry clears up some misconceptions about the omniscience of God, suggesting that such an understanding is essential for us to have faith in our Heavenly Father.

We close with “Profiles of the Prophets: Wilford Woodruff,” a look into the life of our fourth President of the Church.

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Editor-in-Chief
R. Devan Jensen, Executive Editor
Ted D. Stoddard, Associate Editor
## Contents

   *Paul H. Peterson*

13. The Bible—A Priceless Treasure  
   *David M. Whitchurch*

41. Chapters, Verses, Punctuation, Spelling, and Italics in the King James Version  
   *Kent P. Jackson, Frank F. Judd Jr., and David R. Seely*

65. The Radical Reformation and the Restoration of the Gospel  
   *Stephen J. Fleming*

79. Kindness: The Manifestation of True Conversion  
   *Kendall Ayres*

87. My Great-Grandmother and the Book of Mormon  
   *M. Steven Andersen*

91. A Tribute to Gospel Teachers  
   *Rebecca McConkie*

   *Dale Z. Kirby*

105. Helping Children to Be Lifelong Learners  
   *Don and Ann Pearson*

119. Blessed by Seminary  
   *Robert A. Hasara*

125. The Lord’s Suburban  
   *Jeanne Boren*

127. The Omniscience of God  
   *Roger K. Terry*

137. Profiles of the Prophets: Wilford Woodruff  
   *Lawrence R. Flake*

151. New Publications
Elder Gerald N. Lund

Courtesy of Visual Resources Library
Gospel Teaching and Writing: An Interview with Elder Gerald N. Lund

Paul H. Peterson

Elder Gerald N. Lund of the Seventy is Area President of the Europe West Area. Paul H. Peterson is a professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU.

Recently, Paul H. Peterson sat down with Elder Gerald N. Lund to discuss Elder Lund’s prolific career in the Church Educational System (CES). Elder Lund reflects on nearly thirty-five years of teaching, writing, and publishing—including the challenges of writing historical fiction such as The Work and the Glory and The Kingdom and the Crown—along with the joy and complexity of life in the CES.

Peterson: How early in life did you decide that you wanted to be a teacher, and why did you cast your lot with the Church Educational System?

Lund: Well, first of all, I decided that I enjoyed teaching on my mission. Up to that point, right up to my mission, I had planned to go into social work for juvenile delinquents. When I came home from my mission, I realized that I really enjoyed teaching, especially teaching the gospel. My eventual employment with CES is really one of those experiences where I give full credit to the Lord. As an undergraduate at BYU, I had a class from West Belnap, who was then dean of the College of Religion (what it was called back then). It was the old class “Your Religious Questions.” Brother Belnap was a great teacher. He was very open, he was willing to listen to various sides, and he encouraged us to think—all that a university professor should be. I remember I responded to one controversial question in a way that was probably not what you would call “strictly Mormon.” But he gave me an A on the paper and then said, “That’s an interesting point you make, but suppose I said to you, ‘Let’s assume this is true—what would you do to try to justify it?’” That was an interesting thought process.
One day, as we finished class, Professor Belnap called me up and said, “Have you ever considered a career in seminary teaching?” I have to admit, I didn’t even know there was such a thing as a career in seminary teaching. I went to seminary, but I didn’t know they paid the teachers. He said, “Let me give you the name of a couple of people you ought to see.” I took the class on teaching seminary, and here I am.

**Peterson:** When did you decide to begin writing, particularly fiction and historical novels?

**Lund:** Writing came when I had been with CES for about five years. I started collecting interesting quotes on the Second Coming, and then I would use them in class and firesides. People started saying, “How do you know this?” or “Where do we get those?” I’d say, “Well, you just go to a library.” They would reply, “But we don’t have access to the library like you do. Why don’t you write them up?” So I thought one night, “Why not?”

When I started the work on the Second Coming prophecies, I realized that writing was just another way to teach—to reach a much larger classroom, a broader audience. And I found it satisfying. I guess, to be honest, I got into writing fiction because of a conversation with my wife, Lynn. One evening when we were getting ready for bed, I was sitting on the edge of the bed taking off my shoes, and she was already
in bed and said, “You know, Cyndie [our oldest daughter] wants to go to BYU next year. Just how did you plan to pay for that?” I said, “I’ve been thinking I’d like to try my hand at fiction. I’d really like to write a novel if I could just get a good idea.” She said, “Well, you love Israel. Why don’t you write a novel about Israel?” That idea clicked and was the beginning of One in Thine Hand, my first novel.

So, at first, fiction was just primarily entertaining, although I hoped to include a few gospel points in the result. But the more I did it, the more I realized that fiction is a wonderful way to bring people into the “classroom” whom you couldn’t bring in any other way. I realized this when I had a thirteen- or fourteen-year-old boy come up to me and say, “I love your book The Alliance. I’ve read it twelve times now.” I said, “Wow, twelve times—that’s a lot.” He said, “You know what I finally realized? You’re trying to teach me about moral agency, aren’t you?” I said, “Bingo.” But if I had tried to sell him a book on agency or freedom, he would never have picked it up. And that became especially true with historical fiction. As I finished other novels, I realized that there are great things to teach about Church history and that writing is a wonderful way to get people into that wider “classroom.”

And let me add one more thing about the influence of writers. Probably one of the most influential things I’ve ever read was by Eric Ambler, a spy novelist. He said something like, “Whatever else a novel may do, it needs to entertain. Otherwise, it is just a tract.” That intrigued me. I looked up entertainment in the dictionary and found out that the Latin root means “to seize” or “to grab.” And that’s what a really good story does. There are nonfiction writers and historical writers who can write history that grabs you just like fiction. No matter what it does religiously, if it isn’t entertaining, it is only a tract.

**Peterson:** Is the ability to write that kind of novel—the kind that grabs you—essentially a gift? To what extent can it be cultivated?

**Elder Lund:** I have thought about that a lot. In a way, a gift implies something innate, something you have. There is always the possibility of someone possessing a natural talent. But first of all, thanks to good parents, I have been reading all my life and reading broadly. My dad was that way; he had a very broad interest. So I have been reading books for many, many years, and without even consciously thinking about it, I started to sense what makes a good story. I would ask myself, “Why do I like this?” or “Why do I not like this?” And then I would read what writers had to say about the skills of writing and try to see the things they do. I think the problem with many writers is that
they have a message they are trying to push instead of trying to hook
the reader. Another author said, “A good novel always has a hook at
the end of every chapter.” And that’s what people mean when they say,
“This is a real page-turner” or “I couldn’t put it down.”

So is the ability to captivate readers a gift or the result of learning from
very good writers? It is probably more the latter than the former. Certainly
it makes us feel comfortable to look at somebody who does something
well and say, “Oh, well, that’s their gift.” It gets us off the hook from
having to work. In reality, it is hard to write a book, and the truth is that
it takes a lot of time. I think Will Durant said something like, “Only 10
percent of genius is intelligence. The other 90 percent is harness.”

**Peterson:** Elder Lund, it seems you take every occasion to teach and
illuminate gospel principles. Was teaching and illustrating gospel truths
one of your major focal points or a foremost objective in your historical
novels from the beginning?

**Lund:** Well, I’m not sure it was as defined as that from the start.
But after I had written four novels, which were mostly entertaining,
I realized I only had a certain amount of time in life. So when I started
on *The Work and the Glory,* for example, I basically said, “I can teach
while writing. Why just throw another book on the shelf? Why not take
advantage of the opportunity to teach and write at the same time?”
I love to teach; I’m a teacher first and a writer second.

**Peterson:** How much of your writing—your vivid descriptions, for
example—is based on research, and how much is primarily the result of dis-
ciplining yourself through the years to have ears that hear and eyes that see?

**Lund:** Well, I’ve always loved to observe people. I wait in airports
quite a bit, and I don’t mind just sitting there watching people go by.
I love to watch people; I like to observe things. Ultimately, it requires
more than simple research. For example, if you’re going to write a
book on Trieste, Italy, books exist that tell you where the hotels and
landmarks are. But I really believe that if you haven’t been there, you
can’t describe it as well. I remember an evening at the Temple Mount in
Jerusalem. Earlier in our meeting we had sung “Jerusalem the Golden,”
and as I watched the sun go down and saw everything either bathed in
a golden glow or in silhouette, the song and the setting came together
and vivified the image of that beautiful, golden evening in my mind.
So when I wrote a description of Jerusalem at sunset as seen from the
Mount of Olives (in *The Kingdom and the Crown*), that scene came
back to me. The images mostly come out of experience. With that said,
however, description was the hardest thing for me as a writer. Dialogue came easier to me. You just have to sit down and hammer and hammer
the words until they start to make sense; now it comes easier.

Peterson: How much research did you do for your most recent historical novels—The Kingdom and the Crown series?

Lund: Well, when I was at Pepperdine University, I took some ancient history and cultural New Testament classes where I learned much about the contextual setting of the New Testament, and I began collecting material for a New Testament novel. By the time I was approached with the concept of doing The Work and the Glory, I already had three chapters of the New Testament novel done. I set it aside for ten years, which was a real blessing because it significantly changed the nature of that project into what The Kingdom and the Crown is today. As a result, before I ever began writing The Kingdom and the Crown, I had a whole cabinet full of three-by-five cards, probably close to a thousand cards for Roman culture, Roman history, and Palestinian culture. So when I actually came to writing the series, I had to go back to those sources and read them a lot, but most of the basic research had been done.

Peterson: In The Kingdom and the Crown series, you alluded to the challenge of interpreting scriptural text. Did the creating of such text also provide you with some of your more meaningful and inspiring moments during the composition process?
Lund: Yes, and this brings together some of your previous questions. Sometimes I thought, “Here’s a common thing many people don’t understand—a parable that’s confusing, for example, or one that we hardly ever talk about.” Most of the content of those explanations comes from such latter-day Apostles as Elder James E. Talmage and Elder Bruce R. McConkie. Obviously, in the writing I had my fictional characters. I do get nervous about putting doctrinal words into the mouth of Peter, for example, and I was very careful not to have him say things that are not in the scriptures. But it seemed like a legitimate thing to have a fictional character interact with real people. It seemed very real to me that such a person would have attended one of those sermons. It was a device, but it did make me a little nervous, and I tried to be very reverent because I was dealing with men we respect and honor.

Peterson: Even though as an author you incorporate your own words in your stories, the reader has the feeling that it is the voice of Joseph or of Jesus or Peter. How do you accomplish that?

Lund: Let me see if I can say it this way. Some people come up to me and explain that they previously had been totally inactive. “But,” they say, “your books changed my life, got me active again, and helped me to readjust.” Whatever the story, I always feel awkward about that, and I finally discovered why. There is great power in the story of the Restoration. It has all the elements of great drama—tragedy and triumph and courage and all the things that make a great novel. If I had made up that whole story, I would have every reason to be proud. But it’s really not my story—it’s God’s story. I’m just the storyteller. And the power to change lives rests in those original people; it rests in the Savior and in His teachings; it rests in Joseph and what he was and did. It is a great privilege to be a storyteller, and I am very happy that I am able to do that, but I don’t ever forget where the real power lies. So I have tried to be true in collecting and expressing that power, and I’ve tried to help the reader sense that power too. That power is what truly motivates us to change. The books are merely a medium to get us where we ought to be.

Peterson: With your calling to the Second Quorum of the Seventy, you obviously have a host of responsibilities. Is there any time for writing?

Lund: In a word, no. Not writing in the sense you mean. I spend a lot of time at the computer entering letters, creating training programs, and so forth. So I do a lot of writing, but not fictional writing for the LDS market or any other market at this time. There are so many other things going on, and this is a wonderful time for my wife and me to share together. I’m
not very excited about spending all day at the office and then going home and saying to her, “I’ll see you in a couple hours because I want to spend all night writing.” I suppose I could find the time if I really pressed for it. But for now I’m satisfied with letting this calling take priority over writing. Originally, *The Kingdom and the Crown* was going to be five volumes because I really wanted to tell the story of the apostolic ministry. So that may be where I’ll go first when I am released and get back to writing.

**Peterson:** As a person who has devoted his lifetime to teaching gospel principles either through verbal or written expression, what advice would you give those who teach religion for their livelihood? How can they enhance their preparation or presentations?

**Lund:** That is a very thought-provoking question, and I have thought before of what influences are most important to us in that. Brother Ross Cole, a colleague in CES, frequently used the phrase “to have the heart and mind of a religious educator.” I thought a lot about that and wondered what it means. I finally decided that the best way to describe it is captured in the story of Elder Henry B. Eyring and his father. Elder Eyring’s father used to put calculus problems on the chalkboard in the basement and have his sons solve them. He came back one day and found a problem was still there without being solved. So he called Elder Eyring and said, “I see you didn’t solve that calculus problem. Let me ask you a question, ‘What do you think about when you don’t have to think about anything else?’” For me, that’s really what it means to have the heart and mind of a religious educator, a gospel teacher. I think about teaching all the time. I read about something in the newspaper, and I think, “Hmm, that would be a great example to use in class.” So that’s one thing. But probably far more important were the influential teachers I had. I’d walk out of their classes and say, “If I could do for others what these people are doing for me, I’d be satisfied with life.” So I began to watch and learn from the best religious educators (many of whom, such as the Brethren, were not that by profession) and try to identify and articulate what it is they do, particularly skills like scripture teaching. I’d try to identify things like that and incorporate them into my life and practice them. That became very helpful for me. I still do it. I watch the Brethren now. In addition to listening to their messages, I watch them as teachers—and it’s very motivating to learn from them.

**Peterson:** What have you learned since you have been a General Authority?

**Lund:** If I were to summarize, I guess the primary thing I’ve learned is that what we are *becoming* is much more significant than
merely what we do and what we say. That’s a simple but profound statement because you don’t just say, “I’m going to become something today.” It is a long, slow process where the Lord has to take your hand. And that lesson has probably come as much from watching the senior Brethren as anything else. You see what they have become—what they say and do. The outcome is really inspiring. President Hinckley is the consummate example of that.

**Peterson:** Do you think it is helpful to write even if the material is not published? The Religious Educator, for example, has turned down manuscripts, and, as a result, the author might say, “Well, I just wasted my time.” Even if it doesn’t see the light of day, is it valuable?

**Lund:** I think those who say that have the wrong picture. Writing can still be good for you because you have an opportunity to sit and think and write logically. I often have people say, “I’d like to be a writer. What advice could you give me?” I have six pieces of advice: Read. Read. Read. Write. Write. Write. Because writing is a craft, you have to work at it. Another statement that had a big influence on me is, “Good books are not written; they’re rewritten.” It’s the same with music and with poetry. You just hammer and polish and revise, and that’s how to learn the craft. But there can be great satisfaction in taking something and organizing it and putting it on paper, even though it is never published.

Further, just the sheer exercise of writing makes you a better writer. I really believe that. I have got a nine-hundred-page novel sitting on my shelf at home that never saw the light of day—the first one I wrote, and it was for the world market. I thought I could break into that market, so I wrote it and got a devastating review back. I couldn’t stand to read that letter. It was so painful that I didn’t open it again for three months. But after absolutely devastating me, the reviewer said, “I think you have promise in your writing. This work is not salvageable in my mind. Just put it aside and go on to something else.” So I did.

**Peterson:** How valuable is it for seminary teachers, institute teachers, religious professors at BYU, and so on to do research with members of other faiths and outside sources?

**Lund:** Well, let me answer that by telling you a story that kind of strikes a balance. When I finished my master’s degree in sociology, I vowed that I would never again spend that much time on a worthless project as I did on my thesis. It was a good thesis for what it was, but as far as meaning something to me and to the world, it was just several hundred hours of grunt work. So that’s when I decided I wanted to
study the Bible. And I went looking; I applied to and was accepted at the Claremont Graduate School—the premiere Bible-oriented theological school west of the Mississippi—because I said I wanted to get a doctorate in that field. I was actually standing in the registration line, three people from the front, when suddenly I had this overwhelming feeling, “What are you doing here? This is not what you want.”

And so I turned around, ripped up my check, and walked away. That was one of those times when the Lord really took a hand in my life. I started looking, and I eventually found Pepperdine University, owned by the Church of Christ. They are conservative Christians who believe in the divinity of Christ and treasure the Bible. So I was still studying outside of Latter-day Saint culture but not immersing myself in the worldly (that is, countergospel) philosophies. There are some who say if we don’t study everything the world has, we can’t contribute to it. But there is so much out there that is off base and so corrupt that I think we have to be very careful. On the other hand, there are so many insights about history and culture and the language to be gained—it’s like taking a table lamp and focusing it on a particular scripture passage. And obviously, from my writing, I love that sort of thing because it illuminates the gospel so much more. So I think a person, if he or she is wise, can use outside sources as a tremendous and enriching aspect of teaching.

When I was in California, every time I had a chance, I used to go to used bookstores to peruse the religious books. I found that most of the nineteenth-century Bible scholars were “believers,” whereas many of the twentieth-century scholars were not. And so I quickly identified Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and commentaries that are useful and others that are not. They became very valuable resources, and they still are. In fact, I think the Doctrine and Covenants suggests that we ought to be studying these fields, gleaning what we can (see D&C 88:78–79, 118).

**Peterson:** What are the challenges and benefits of writing alone versus writing with others?

**Lund:** Writing alone is much less frustrating, but it is probably much more dangerous, particularly when you are writing about the gospel. There is something great that happens when you get several good minds, faithful people, together and interact. It is the priesthood principle of councils. When I was involved in writing institute curriculum, I recall that we used to call our review sessions the *abattoir*, which is the French word for “slaughterhouse,” because in them you sometimes felt like you were being cut to ribbons. But out of that came something better than what you had to begin with.
On the other hand, unless you get a really tremendous working partnership, it can be very frustrating to writers who want to work alone. I suggest following the rule of having six, seven, or eight people read your manuscript. When you are writing alone, you can get away from that “joint-author” frustration, but there is no built-in safeguard against “falling off the cliff.” So having people of wisdom and intelligence give you feedback is valuable. The first and most valuable reader for me is my wife because she has read all her life and has a good sense of what works. The second thing that makes her so valuable is that she is completely honest. Everybody else says, “Oh, this is wonderful.” She’ll say, “When you have that character do that, I don’t like it. I don’t like it at all.” And I listen.

**Peterson:** One of the dangers of being CES instructors or BYU professors—teachers who spend a lot of the time in gospel teaching—is that they may not always live what they teach. What are things you have done to keep the gap between knowing the gospel and living it as small as possible?

**Lund:** Well, there is always the rigorous self-examination that has to be going on, particularly for a teacher. One of my first principals, years and years ago while I was still in seminary, was Wally Montague. He made an interesting comment one day. He said, “There’s a real danger for a teacher, particularly a gospel teacher. The better you get at teaching, the greater the danger.” I said, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” And he said, “Well, for example, you finish a class and
somebody comes up and says, ‘Oh, Brother Lund, class was terrific today.’ And quietly you say in your heart, ‘Yeah, it really was.’”

I had done this before, so his words hit home pretty hard. So I asked, “What do you do? How do you protect yourself against that danger?” And he said this: “Number one, in every prayer, you always remind yourself and thank God for the gift. Because no matter how much you have developed your ability to teach, the gift basically, ultimately, comes from Him. Then, number two, you pray that you can develop that gift and use it for His purpose and His glory and not your own.” That has stuck with me a long time. And that is why I made the comment about what I have learned as a General Authority. You have to think about that all the time: What am I becoming? What am I doing? The natural man always thrives within us, so you always have to watch yourself and know yourself. For example, you need to ask yourself, “Does this accolade mean I’m a better person? If I’m not, who cares about the honors of the world?” On the other hand, look at President Hinckley. Much of the honor he now receives is because of what he has become—not just because he is a gifted, brilliant man. I think it always comes down to that rigorous self-examination, always measuring yourself against the ultimate measuring stick, our Savior and Heavenly Father.

**Peterson:** With all of your extensive reading and reflection on the life and mission of our Savior, what is the most important truth, assuming there is only one, you have learned about Jesus of Nazareth?

**Lund:** Well, let me preface my answer by saying that in the process of researching and writing about the Savior, I think I’ve learned more about myself. One thing I’ve learned is that you can never separate the Savior from the Father because they are so closely linked together. Another thing that has probably settled in more in the last decade of my life is just how literally incomprehensible is the mercy, love, and endless grace to us from the Father and the Son. I have never viewed God as harsh or punitive, but I have come to realize that, as it says in section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, He really does delight to honor us (see D&C 76:5). *Delight* is a verb I would have never thought of using with the Father and the Son. But everywhere we turn we see the mercy of God and His great love for us.

I will give you a final example. It is a simple example that happened when we were visiting for general conference in April 2005. We had all our family at home. Most were out in the backyard. I was sitting in the family room with one of our adult children. We were talking; we didn’t have the television on. And suddenly my three-year-old granddaughter
stood before me. She said, “Grandpa, can I watch TV with you?” I said, “Sure.” So she climbed up in my lap, and I turned on a cartoon channel. Two minutes later, she was sound asleep, and I realized that she wasn’t interested in television at all; she just wanted a safe place where she felt completely secure. And I was delighted that she chose me. After that happened, I thought, “That’s exactly how the Father is. When we come to Him for safety and security and blessings, He is delighted to respond.”
The Bible—
A Priceless Treasure

David M. Whitchurch

David M. Whitchurch is an associate chair of the Department of Ancient Scripture at BYU.

Four years ago, a friend and colleague invited me to participate in a writing project on the history of the English Bible.¹ I eagerly accepted his invitation. We began, as most research efforts do, by familiarizing ourselves with the literature. However, unlike many projects, we determined not only to understand how the Bible came forth but also to experience this marvelous book in other ways too. We included as part of our study a number of visits to some of the great English Bible repositories in the United States and Great Britain, where we could personally examine and photograph early editions of the Bible. I have a difficult time describing adequately the excitement we felt while holding a Bible of John Wycliffe (c. 1382) or printed Bibles translated by Martin Luther (1522), Desiderius Erasmus (1516), William Tyndale (1530, 1534), Miles Coverdale (1535), John Rogers (1537), John Knox (1560), and the like. With generous funding, we also traveled to numerous sites where the events actually occurred.² Standing at the church in Lutterworth, England, forcefully brought to mind the work of John Wycliffe, who stood firm against long-accepted practices of his day and who worked so energetically to produce the first complete Bible translated into English. We repeated experiences such as these again and again from Wittenberg, Germany, to Geneva, Switzerland.

I need not express verbally the feelings and depth of gratitude I have gained for the Bible and to those individuals who gave their all to bring it forth. Hopefully, some of my enthusiasm and personal discoveries about the Bible will benefit those who read this article.
My intention here is not to provide so much a history of the English Bible per se but rather to share some personal insights gained from my research endeavors. I have divided the article into two sections. The first will emphasize the Bible’s importance within Latter-day Saint canon, and the second will introduce just a few of the people and relevant events that are an integral part to the story of the English Bible.

Latter-day Saints and the Bible

I grew up loving the Bible stories taught to me in my youth—Joseph sold into Egypt, Samson slaying the Philistines, David defeating Goliath, Josiah finding the scriptures in the temple, Jesus casting out the money changers in the temple, the stoning of Stephen, and many more. They were exciting and impressed upon my young mind God’s dealings with His children. My understanding of the Bible, however, remained limited until I made a personal goal while on my mission to read it from beginning to end. Admittedly, I started studying the Bible with an intended purpose to establish “talking points” so I could better respond to or testify of the truths of the Restoration.

In my discussions with others about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I frequently included passages from the Old and New Testaments. As my understanding of the Bible increased, so did my ability to bear testimony to investigators about the connection between it and the Book of Mormon. For example, Ezekiel’s witness, “Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, . . . then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand” (Ezekiel 37:16–17), helped others see the need for an expanded canon.

Jesus’s teaching in the Gospel of John, “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold” (John 10:16), when added to the Savior’s statement in 3 Nephi 15:21, “Ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold,” powerfully testified that the Lord extended His guiding hand to all the house of Israel.

Just as important as my lesson regarding how the Bible testifies of Joseph Smith and the Restoration was my discovery about the power of the Bible itself. It, like all our standard works, bears a profound and powerful witness that “the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world” (1 Nephi 13:40).

How do Latter-day Saints feel about the Bible? The answer varies widely. Studying all of the standard works demands time and personal commitment. A number of years after returning home from my
mission, I started teaching seminary. The more I taught the Old and New Testaments, the more I noticed a tendency by some students and their parents to downplay tacitly the importance of the Bible. I often heard people express gratitude for the Book of Mormon, but seldom did they say anything of a similar nature about our other standard works. That outcome was understandable. Joseph Smith himself said that the Book of Mormon is "the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." On other occasions, I heard people justify their lack of effort in reading the Bible by referring to its seemingly unmanageable length or its archaic language or simply the difficulty they had relating to it. I have even heard people quote the eighth article of faith in an attempt to excuse themselves from reading the Bible. Although we might identify some basis for such excuses, they do not lessen our obligations as faithful Latter-day Saints to know and love the Bible.

Speaking to religious educators at BYU, Robert Millet observes, "While we do not subscribe to a doctrine of scriptural inerrancy, we do believe that the hand of God has been over the preservation of the biblical materials such that what we have now is what the Almighty would have us possess." President George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency reminds the members of the Church, "Our duty is to create faith in the word of God in the mind of the young student. . . . We are not called to teach the errors of translators but the truth of God’s word. It is our mission to develop faith in the revelations of God in the hearts of the children." To these thoughts we could add the words of the Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi, "For behold, did not Moses prophesy unto them concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that God should redeem his people? Yea, and even all the prophets who have prophesied ever since the world began—have they not spoken more or less concerning these things?" (Mosiah 13:33–35; emphasis added).

The prophets and apostles have continually emphasized the importance of the Bible. In response to questions asked of him—"Do you believe the Bible?" and "Do you receive the Bible as the word of the Lord?"—Brigham Young says: "In all my teachings, I have taught the Gospel from the Old and New Testaments. I found therein every doctrine, and the proof of every doctrine, the Latter-day Saints believe in, as far as I know. . . . There may be some doctrines about which little is said in the Bible, but they are all couched therein, and I believe the doctrines because they are true, and I have taught them because they are calculated to save the children of men."
Loving the Bible extends far beyond a simple recognition of its long-standing place within Latter-day Saint canon. President George Q. Cannon believed that “a knowledge of the Bible obtained in childhood has its effect on the whole after-life. Unconsciously its grand truths are impressed upon the minds of children, and they are influenced by them. Children trained in the reading of the Bible, all other things being equal, are more likely to be truthful, virtuous and honest men and women than if they had been brought up without the knowledge of it.”

In other writings, President Cannon reminds members of the Church:

Now, as Latter-day Saints we do not set forth the idea that the Bible is a perfect book. . . . But, with all its faults, it still stands as a grand monument of God’s dealings with the human family and of man’s industry and zeal in preserving it. Our present civilization and the advancement which the world has made in the right direction are due more to the Bible than to any other book in existence. . . . This book is of priceless worth; its value cannot be estimated by anything that is known among men upon which value is fixed. . . . To the Latter-day Saints it should always be a precious treasure. Beyond any people now upon the face of the earth, they should value it, for the reason that from its pages, from the doctrines set forth by its writers, the epitome of the plan of salvation which is there given unto us, we derive the highest consolation, we obtain the greatest strength. It is, as it were, a constant fountain sending forth streams of living life to satisfy the souls of all who peruse its pages.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught, “We cannot avoid the conclusion that a divine providence is directing all things as they should be. This means that the Bible, as it now is, contains that portion of the Lord’s word that the present world is entitled and able to receive.” On another occasion, Elder McConkie taught Church leaders that the Bible contains the fulness of the gospel: “Before we can write the gospel in our own book of life we must learn the gospel as it is written in the books of scripture. The Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants [and the Pearl of Great Price]—each of them individually and all of them collectively—contain the fulness of the everlasting gospel.” In 1831, the Lord gave to Joseph Smith in Kirtland, Ohio, the revelation known as “the law of the Church.” Joseph instructed priesthood holders, “And again, the elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in which is the fulness of the gospel” (D&C 42:12; emphasis added).

President Ezra Taft Benson told the Saints: “I love the Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments. It is a source of great truth. It teaches us about the life and ministry of the Master. From its pages we learn of the hand of God in directing the affairs of His people from the very
beginning of the earth’s history. It would be difficult to underestimate the impact the Bible has had on the history of the world. Its pages have blessed the lives of generations.” President Spencer W. Kimball shared a powerful personal experience to encourage the Saints to read the Bible. In a conference talk in 1985, he said:

I found that this Bible that I was reading had in it 66 books, and then I was nearly dissuaded when I found that it had in it 1,189 chapters, and then I also found that it had 1,519 pages. It was formidable, but I knew if others did it that I could do it.

I found that there were certain parts that were hard for a 14-year-old boy to understand. There were some pages that were not especially interesting to me, but when I had read the 66 books and 1,189 chapters and 1,519 pages, I had a glowing satisfaction that I had made a goal and that I had achieved it.

Now I am not telling you this story to boast; I am merely using this as an example to say that if I could do it by coal-oil light, you can do it by electric light. I have always been glad I read the Bible from cover to cover.

Presiding authorities of the Church continue to endorse Bible study. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin taught: “We believe the Bible to be the word of God. . . . We read and study the Bible, we teach and preach from it, and we strive to live according to the eternal truths it contains. We love this collection of holy writ. . . . God brought forth the Book of Mormon as a second witness that corroborates and strengthens the Bible’s testimony of the Savior. The Book of Mormon does not supplant the Bible. It expands, extends, clarifies, and amplifies our knowledge of the Savior.”

The more I learn about the history of the Bible, the more I stand in awe. The same holds true of all our standard works. I love the Book of Mormon, in part, because I know what it took for Nephi, Alma, Mormon, Moroni, and Joseph Smith to bring it forth. They gave their all. The story of the Bible is just as dramatic. It too deserves our attention. To know the events and people of the Bible is to see the hand of God at work among His children. In the following stories about Caedmon, Johann Gutenberg, Thomas Bilney, William Allen, Gregory Martin, Edmund Campion, and King James, I provide a few poignant examples of those who contributed significantly to the coming forth of the English Bible.

Caedmon: Singing the Bible

“The Lord never intended that [His children] should be kept in ignorance.” The Lord told Joseph Smith, “And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth...
every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit” (D&C 84:46). President Harold B. Lee, commenting on this verse, says: “That means that every soul who walks the earth, wherever he lives, in whatever nation he may have been born, no matter whether he be in riches or in poverty, had at birth an endowment of that first light which is called the Light of Christ, the Spirit of Truth, or the Spirit of God—that universal light of intelligence with which every soul is blessed.”

Even during the Middle Ages, glimmers of light broke through the shadows to offer hope to those in need. Cultural and political forces kept much of the light at bay until the likes of John Wycliffe, Martin Luther, and John Calvin opened the door through which the gospel would be restored. But even before these men came on the scene of world history, the Lord in His goodness reached out to listening ears to safeguard and perpetuate his word. Men such as Caedmon, Bede, and King Alfred recognized a need for scriptures to be translated into English. They believed, much like Paul’s counsel to Timothy, that the “holy scriptures” were “able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

One of the earliest glimpses we have of Bible stories being told in English comes from the writings of an eighth-century author known as the Venerable Bede. In his well-known book, *The History of the English Church and Nation*, Bede tells of a remarkable person known as Caedmon. No one knows the date of Caedmon’s birth, but from Bede’s account, we ascertain that Caedmon died sometime between 670 and 680. Caedmon worked as a laborer at the Whitby monastery in Northumbria (founded in 657). During feast days, the people gathered together to entertain themselves by taking turns singing to each other. Aware of his inability to sing, Caedmon always found reason to leave the festivities before it was his turn to perform.

On one such occasion, he left the gathering. As he slept that night, an angel came to him in a dream and called him by name:

“Caedmon,” he said, “sing me something.” Caedmon answered, “I cannot sing; that is why I left the feast and came here because I could not sing.” Once again the speaker said, “Nevertheless you must sing to me . . . about the beginning of created things.” Thereupon Caedmon began to sing verses which he had never heard before in praise of God the Creator, of which this is the general sense: “Now we must praise the Maker of the heavenly kingdom, the power of the Creator and his counsel, the deeds of the Father of glory and how He, since he is the eternal God, was the Author of all marvels and first created the heavens as a roof for the children of men and then, the almighty Guardian of the human race, created the earth.”
After awaking, Caedmon remembered what he had sung in his dream and added additional verses in praise of God. Clearly, the Lord had granted Caedmon heavenly grace. From that point on, Caedmon memorized scripture and created “melodious verse: and it sounded so sweet as he recited it that his teachers became in turn his audience.”

His ability must have been exceptional, for Bede writes of him: “He used to compose godly and religious songs; thus, whatever he learned from the holy Scriptures by means of interpreters, he quickly turned into extremely delightful and moving poetry, in English, which was his own tongue.”

**Johann Gutenberg: Printing the Word of God**

One of the most impressive lessons we can learn from studying the history of the English Bible has to do with movable-type printing. Writing is the life breath of any civilization, ensuring both cultural stability and covenantal continuity. Once discovered, this monumental, even singular, development swept across Europe like a windblown prairie fire that spread mass communication, with the Bible leading the way. President Joseph Fielding Smith reminds us, “There has never been a step taken from that day [the time of Columbus] to this, in discovery or invention, where the Spirit of the Lord . . . was not the prevailing force, resting upon the individual, which caused him to make the discovery or the invention.”

The work of restoration needed the printing press. It was so important that Elder John A. Widtsoe considered that our modern civilization began with its invention and was “part of the divine program to prepare the world for the restoration of the gospel.”

From the outset of its discovery, people recognized the revolutionary power of printing. Martin Luther stated that printing was “God’s highest and extremest act of grace, whereby the business of the Gospel is driven forward.” John Foxe, the well-known Reformation author, wrote: “In this very time so dangerous and desperate, . . . the Lord began to work for his church; not with sword and target to subdue his exalted adversary, but with printing, writing, and reading: to convince darkness by light, error by truth, ignorance by learning.”

Scholars almost unanimously identify Johann Gutenberg as the person responsible for the invention of movable-type printing. Knowing something about fifteenth-century Europe may, in part, help explain Gutenberg’s passion for inventing the printing press. Europeans desperately needed to produce greater quantities of written material. An educational revolution was underway as universities extended themselves beyond class distinctions and opened their doors to any who could afford an education. By the fifteenth century, university enrollments grew at
an unprecedented rate. As the demand for textbooks and other written material mushroomed, so did the industry for reproduction—so much so that bookselling became a lucrative business. Writing centers, called scriptoria, and the number of professional copyists associated with them multiplied throughout Europe.

Even with an expanding market for written material, copyists constantly faced two major challenges: speed and accuracy. A good scribe produced approximately “two high-quality, densely packed pages a week.” In many instances, a single, well-scripted, quality book—like the Bible—would take years to complete. Copyists fought a losing battle to keep up with the heavy demands. Gutenberg’s hometown of Mainz had upward of 350 monasteries and convents alone. Each required its own Bibles, missals (books used for mass), as well as other religious documents. In addition to religious institutions, schools needed books for both students and faculty. Gutenberg most certainly realized the potential need. But figuring how to replicate large quantities of materials at an affordable price was no easy matter. Getting the printed word on paper would take inspiration, persistence, genius, and venture capital—a lot of each of them. President Joseph Fielding Smith says, “If you will take time to reflect, you will find that in the matter of discovery and invention things have come about in a logical way, step by step, as the people were prepared to receive them, and each step has been in the direction of establishing the truth of the everlasting gospel.
upon the earth.”

Requisite blessings from heaven mixed with the right learning opportunities afforded Johann Gutenberg the physical and intellectual capability to transform society.

Gutenberg’s triumph in mass producing writing came when he adapted several known technologies and used them in conjunction with some profound personal innovations. One of the first completed books off the press was a Latin Bible—better known today as the Gutenberg Bible. This masterpiece employed approximately twenty craftsmen who operated six presses to produce an estimated 180 copies of the first printed Bible (135 on paper and 35 on vellum). Skilled illuminators rubricated and decorated by hand its many pages to add even greater beauty to the bold black text.

A surviving letter written in March 1455 reveals the excitement surrounding the printed Bible: “All that has been written to me about that marvelous man seen at Frankfurt is true. I have not seen complete Bibles but only a number of quires of various books of the Bible. The script was very neat and legible, not at all difficult to follow—your grace would be able to read it without effort, and indeed without glasses. . . . I shall try and see if I can have a copy for sale brought here which I can purchase on your behalf. But I fear that won’t be possible, both because of the length of the journey and because buyers were said to be lined up even before the books were finished.”

The door of religious reformation opened ever wider as the Bible and other printed materials made their way into the hands of the general populace.

Initially, almost all printers were of German stock. S. H. Steinberg, a prominent historian, wrote, “It is no exaggeration to describe Gutenberg’s invention as Germany’s most important single contribution to civilization.” Within decades, however, citizens from Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal all had their own master printers. These, in turn, spread ideas in the common vernacular throughout Europe. Elder McConkie notes, “Few tools were more effective than printing in paving the way for the great revival of learning, for the religious reformation, and for the breaking away of peoples and nations from religious domination.”

**Thomas Bilney: Early English Reformation**

The Reformers helped prepare the way for the Restoration of the gospel. President Joseph F. Smith states: “Calvin, Luther, Melanchthon, and all the reformers, were inspired in thoughts, words, and actions, to accomplish what they did for the amelioration, liberty, and advancement...
of the human race. They paved the way for the more perfect gospel of truth to come. Their inspiration, as with that of the ancients, came from the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the one true living God.” As Latter-day Saints, we express our gratitude for the strength and courage that the Reformers displayed as they broke from religious orthodoxy.

One such Reformer was Thomas Bilney. He lived in England at the same time that Martin Luther and his followers established religious independence from the Catholic Church on continental Europe. He was not alone. Jan Hus, John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and a host of others endured tremendous suffering and hardships. The pattern conveys familiarity—standing firm in one’s beliefs leads to persecution, betrayal, expulsion, and, for some, martyrdom. The scriptures affirm such consequences: “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29).

Thomas Bilney’s life mission, as he saw it, was to bring the word of God to the people. He, and others like him, opened the door to the English reformation. His story is a representative reminder to us all of the many who lost their lives holding fast to what they believed and, in so doing, moved us closer to a time when a young boy could earnestly implore God in a sacred grove, receive a witness of the truth that exceeded all expectations, and restore the gospel in its fulness.

Bilney’s story begins in Cambridge, England, when he was introduced to a Bible published in 1516 by Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), a Dutch scholar, theologian, and humanist. Erasmus’s Bible instigated what was to become a lasting challenge to Roman orthodoxy. In 1509, Erasmus moved to Cambridge, England, where he systematically prepared a parallel-column manuscript for a Greek/Latin New Testament (Novum instrumentum). This Bible also contained nearly four hundred marginal notes that identified and supported changes from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate. The Roman Church took a strong stance against Erasmus’s Bible. Yet, with the printing press and its ability to mass produce books, the Bible quickly made its way into the universities of England and Europe. In England, as elsewhere, it was received with great enthusiasm—“Everywhere it was sought after and read” by the Greek scholars and those learned in Latin.

Thomas Bilney has been recognized as the first at Cambridge to come to “the knowledge of Christ.” John Foxe described Bilney as little in “stature and very slender of body, and of a strait and temperate diet, given to good letters and very fervent and studious in the
As Bilney struggled to know his standing and personal relationship before God, he turned to fasting, prolonged prayer, and acts of penance through confession of his sins before a priest. The sources do not indicate how long he endured this inner struggle for peace, but relief did not come until he discovered the scriptures. A change of heart began when one day he overheard some friends talking about Erasmus’s New Testament. Torn between personal curiosity and duty, he finally purchased a copy. “At last he took courage. Urged, said he, by the hand of God, he walked out of the college, slipped into the house where the volume was sold in secret, bought it with fear and trembling, and then hastened back and shut himself up in his room.”

In a letter to Cuthbert Tonstal, bishop of London, Bilney wrote:

But at last I heard speak of Jesus, even then when the New Testament was first set forth by Erasmus. . . . I bought it even by the providence of God, as I do now well understand and perceive: and at the first reading (as I well remember) I chanced upon this sentence of St. Paul (O most sweet and comfortable sentence to my soul!) in 1 Tim. i., “It is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be embraced, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief and principal.” This one sentence, through God’s instruction and inward working, which I did not then perceive, did so exhilarate my heart, being before wounded with the guilt of my sins, and being almost in despair, that immediately I felt a marvellous comfort and quietness, insomuch “that my bruised bones leaped for joy.”

From this point on, Bilney immersed himself in the scriptures. They were, he says, “more pleasant unto me than the honey or the honey-comb.” As his pursuit of truth continued, Bilney stated, “At last I desired nothing more, than that I, being so comforted by him, might be strengthened by his Holy Spirit and grace from above, that I might teach the wicked his ways, which are mercy and truth; and that the wicked might be converted unto him by me.” Others soon joined Thomas Bilney in Cambridge, where a private group was formed to discuss the scriptures.

On July 23, 1525, Bilney received a license to preach in public outside of Cambridge. At about this same time, Thomas Wolsey (cardinal in the Catholic Church and lord chancellor to Henry VIII) determined he must forcefully confront those who promoted heretical ideas—for the spreading of heresy was “worse than multiple murderers, because their victims lived on to harm others in turn.” Bilney’s preaching did not escape Wolsey’s attention. He summoned Bilney sometime during the year 1526 and demanded that he not teach Martin Luther’s
doctrines. Bilney agreed. In his mind, he did not teach the doctrines of Luther; rather, he taught the gospel as contained in the scriptures. The following year, Bilney and an associate preached a series of sermons at a number of parishes throughout England. Their lectures led to their arrest and imprisonment.\(^{55}\)

Throughout the trial, Bilney never countermanded the authority of the church or openly rejected the authority of the pope.\(^{56}\) In his view, “he would not be a slander to the gospel, trusting that he was not separate from the church.”\(^{57}\) The trial lasted eleven days. In the end, Bilney gave in to the pressures placed upon him and recanted.\(^{58}\) Afterward, he was required to walk before the procession at St. Paul’s Church bareheaded, carrying a bundle of sticks used as fuel on his shoulder, where he stood before the preacher at Paul’s cross and was publicly exhorted to repent. He then spent the next year as a prisoner in the Tower of London.\(^{59}\)

Returning to Cambridge brought no relief to Bilney. John Foxe writes that “he was in such an anguish and agony, that nothing did him good, neither eating nor drinking, nor even any other communication of God’s word.”\(^{60}\) More than two years passed before Bilney determined that he must be true to his convictions. He once again began preaching what he knew to be true. Shortly thereafter, Thomas Bilney was arrested for a second time. And once again, he was imprisoned at the Tower of London. This time, however, his trial venue was moved to Norwich so that the Roman Church could show those in that area what happens to heretics.

As a relapsed heretic, Bilney had no chance of defense. The night before his execution, several of his friends from Cambridge visited him in prison. The records indicate that Bilney greeted them with a “cheerful heart and quiet mind.”\(^{61}\) The horrors of martyrdom seem almost unfathomable in our day, yet for Bilney and others, it demonstrated “conformity to an ancient course of action, grounded in scripture and epitomized in the crucifixion of Christ himself.”\(^{62}\) Bilney was taken by the guards to the place of execution (called Lollard’s Pit) located just outside the city gate about a mile from the prison. As he left the prison and walked to the place of martyrdom, his friends came to him and prayed he take his death patiently. Bilney responded: “Ye see when the mariner is entered his ship to sail on the troublous sea, how he for a while is tossed in the billows of the same, but yet, in hope that he shall once come to the quiet haven, he beareth in better comfort the perils which he feeleth: so am I now toward this sailing; and whatsoever storms I shall feel, yet shortly after shall my ship be in the haven, as I doubt not
thereof, by the grace of God, desiring you to help me with your prayers to the same effect.” After arriving at Lollard’s Pit, he offered a prayer, where, in part, he quoted from Psalm 143:1–2, “Hear my prayer, O Lord! Consider my desire. And enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” When he finished his prayer, the officers chained him to a stake, placed reeds and faggots about him, and lighted the fire that ended the life of Thomas Bilney.

Many received the fate of martyrdom for their beliefs—including Hugh Latimer, William Tyndale, and, in centuries to come, Joseph and Hyrum Smith. Yet for these early martyrs, their lives and deaths combined to ignite a fire not to be extinguished. Within just a few short years of Bilney’s death, English Parliament stopped all contributions to Rome and give Henry VIII supreme control over the Church of England. Although England’s move toward independence is seen as more of a political maneuver, it nonetheless opened the door for even greater religious diversity. It also brought the availability and accessibility of the scriptures to the common person one step closer to reality. By 1539, efforts were under way to place the first authorized English Bible in every church throughout England. In time, Bible reading would be not only legal but also mandatory.

**Gregory Martin: The Catholics Fight Back**

I grew up believing that the Protestant movement was the impetus for the Restoration. In many ways, I suppose that such was the case. However, the story of the English Bible reveals much more than two sides vying for truth. It exposes pervasive prejudice and tyrannical intolerance. The miracle of the Restoration takes on added meaning when we view it through the lens of history. From the time of Constantine, political forces commonly worked hand in hand with Christian hegemony to extinguish perceived and real threats to their supremacy. When men such as Hus, Wycliffe, Luther, and Tyndale wrested the key of scriptural interpretation from the religious elite, they unlocked the door to an ever-widening power struggle that engulfed continental Europe and England.

Typical of the day, each side implemented heavy-handed measures against opposing views. Whether Catholic or Protestant, “true” believers demonstrated a readiness to die for their beliefs. The scriptures clearly advocated such measures. The Savior taught: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”
(Matthew 5:10, 12). The truly dedicated submitted to God’s will—no matter the cost, no matter the side. The story of the Douay-Rheims Bible tells of devoted men and women who wholeheartedly believed in the Catholic cause. This Bible helps set the stage for the King James translators as they produced what was destined to become one of the most important English Bible translations of all time.

Turmoil seized England after the death of Mary Tudor. Her reign had sought to reestablish Catholicism following the Protestant reforms of her half brother, Edward VI, and her father, Henry the VIII. Queen Mary (1553–58) labored to remove what she perceived as the deadly disease of Protestant heresy from her kingdom. In less than four years, she and her chief advisers sent 277 people to the martyr’s fiery flames at places such as Smithfield. When Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, ascended the throne in 1558, she well understood the religious quagmire left behind by her half sister. Unwilling to reveal her own religious views too quickly, Elizabeth strategically distanced herself from the political fray by taking what appeared to be a middle-of-the-road approach to the situation at hand. For the first six weeks of her rule, she demonstrated acute political skill as she carefully appointed advisers who publicly adhered to Roman Catholic ritual but privately held Protestant beliefs. Within a year, however, she had cleared her court of most who embraced Catholicism.

With her religious biases exposed, Elizabeth then established support for her anti-Catholic position. Rome reacted quickly to Elizabeth’s rejection of the ancient church. After nearly a decade of continually deteriorating relations, an exasperated Pope Pius V issued a papal bull against Elizabeth. This official edict declared Elizabeth as the “pretended queen of England” who had “seized on the Kingdom, and monstrously usurped the place of Supreme Head of the Church in all England.” The edict also threatened all Roman Catholics who submitted to the queen’s rule. Rather than bring about Elizabeth’s demise, the pope’s harsh words garnered her support. An overwhelming majority of people throughout England expressed outrage with the pope for presuming he had the authority to release them from allegiance to their queen. One scholar noted: “No event in history, not even the Gunpowder Plot, produced so deep and enduring an effect on England’s attitude to the Catholic Church as the bull of Pius V.”

Elizabeth and her chief adviser responded in kind to the papal decree. As such, the regime interpreted nonconformity to the Church of England as disloyalty to the crown. Increasingly explicit laws were passed, affirming that all Catholic priests in England were ipso facto
guilty of treason.\textsuperscript{69} English Catholic laity caught in the government’s tactical strategy to block Rome’s assault on their state religion often faced harsh realities as they lived among their Protestant neighbors. Elizabeth’s measured steps against the Roman Church took their toll. Fines became the primary method used by the government to control religious deviancy. But much stronger punishments stood ready for those who actively sought to hide priests or spread Catholic dogma. Hundreds were imprisoned and executed during Elizabeth’s forty-five-year reign.\textsuperscript{70}

With each death also came a renewed resolve. In spite of the increased persecutions, the Catholic Church remained firmly committed to its presence in Elizabethan England. With personal resources and voluntary contributions, William Allen, an exiled Oxford theologian, opened an English school in northern France.\textsuperscript{71} He initially formulated a plan whereby an army of priests could be trained, readied, and waiting to return to the shores of England upon the exile or death of Queen Elizabeth. This missionary force, when called upon to do so, would provide immediate help to England’s waning Catholic membership.\textsuperscript{72} The school quickly grew to become the religious center of English Catholicism. Its influence would be felt for the next two hundred years.\textsuperscript{73} Allen’s initial plans took a decided turn about five years after the Douay school opened when he realized the possibilities and benefits of sending missionaries to England while Elizabeth still reigned.\textsuperscript{74} These specially trained priests learned the art of defending against and counteracting Protestant theology so that they could return to their homeland and stop their people from halting “between two opinions” (1 Kings 18:21).

The first Catholic missionaries departed for England in 1574. Edmund Campion holds the distinction as the first English Jesuit missionary and martyr in England. Born in London, he excelled in school and eventually earned a scholarship to Oxford University, where he gained considerable notoriety for his intellect, scholarly capacity, wit, and personal charm.\textsuperscript{75} For nearly a year, his zeal, gentle disposition, and likable personality helped him achieve great success in converting and recommitting people to the Roman Church after arriving in England. However, his very success also attracted attention from those who opposed Catholicism. A real sense of Campion’s missionary endeavors can be seen in a letter he wrote after his first five months in England to William Allen:

\begin{quote}
I ride about some piece of country every day. The harvest is wonderful great. On horseback I meditate my sermon; when I come to the house, I polish it. Then I talk with such as come to speak with me, or hear their confessions. In the morning, after mass, I preach. They hear
\end{quote}
with exceeding greediness, and very often receive the sacrament, for the
ministration whereof we are ever well assisted by priests, whom we find
in every place. . . . The Priests of our country themselves being excellent
for virtue and learning, yet have raised so great an opinion of our society,
that I dare scarcely touch the exceeding reverence all Catholics do unto
us. I cannot long escape the hands of the Heretics; the enemies have so
many eyes, so many tongues, so many scouts and crafts. I am in apparel
to myself very ridiculous; I often change it and my name also. I read letters
sometimes myself that in the first front tell news, *That Campion is taken*,
which, noised in every place where I come, so filleth my ears with the
sound thereof, that fear itself hath taken away all fear. *My soul is in my own
hands ever* . . . . Threatening edicts come forth against us daily. . . . I find
many neglecting their own security, to have only care of my safety.  

In July 1581, the civil authorities caught, arrested, and incarcerated
Campion. For over four months, he endured miserable living conditions
while imprisoned at the infamous Tower of London, including torture
that so often accompanied such arrests. The final outcome of Edmund
Campion was determined by his captors long before his arrest. Judge
and jury found him guilty and sentenced him to be hanged, drawn,
and quartered at Tyburn. In death, as in life, Campion stayed true
to his faith. Not surprisingly, he also demonstrated deference for his
divided loyalties. Someone in the crowd taunted him about the 1570
bull issued by Pius V that excommunicated Elizabeth. While standing
on the scaffold at Tyburn, he responded with a prayer that included the
simple phrase, “Yea, for Elizabeth, your queen and mine.”

A fundamental premise of the Reformation included every person’s
right to read scripture in the vernacular. The work of Wycliffe, Luther,
Bilney, Tyndale, and many others greatly complicated the Catholic
Church’s efforts to resist this sweeping tide of scriptural accessibility. As
the movement gained momentum, people—including many Catholics,
clamored for scriptures they could read. With trepidation and reluc-
tance, William Allen and other Catholic English scholars succumbed to
the need for having their own English translation of the Bible. Far too
often, the marginal notes, commentaries, and controversial textual bias
in the popular Geneva Bible (and others like it) misrepresented Catho-
lic dogma. Priests and laity alike needed a means to better defend
themselves. The opening page of the Rheims New Testament sets the
tone for their translation: “All things that are read in Holy Scripture,
we must hear with great attention to our instruction and salvation,
but those things especially must be commended to memory which
make most against heretics, whose deceits cease not to circumvent and
beguile the weaker sort and the more negligent persons.”
William Allen asked Gregory Martin to take the lead in translating what today is commonly referred to as the Douay-Rheims Bible. Martin’s personal background and education prepared him well for the task at hand. For the next three and a half years, Martin invested heart and soul into translating both the Old and New Testaments into English. By the project’s end, Martin’s disregard for personal health left him exhausted and ill. He died in 1582, almost the same time the New Testament was published at Rheims. He was only forty-two years old.  

Financial considerations kept the Old Testament from publication for twenty-seven years until it was finally published in 1609–10.

Martin openly disclosed his aims in translation on the title page: “The New Testament of Jesus Christ, translated faithfully into English, out of the authentic Latin, according to the best corrected copies of the same, diligently conferred with the Greek and other editions in divers languages; with arguments of books and chapters, annotations, and other necessary helps, for the better understanding of the text, and especially for the discovery of the corruptions of divers late translations, and for clearing the controversies in religion, of these days.”  

He then reminded his readers that before the invention of printing, the scriptures were kept in libraries, monasteries, colleges, and churches for bishops and priests and were, therefore, never intended as “table talk” by the profane. Martin reminded the faithful followers of the pope that said students were never intended to teach their doctor, nor were sheep intended to control the shepherd.

Martin also decided that many of the original Latin terms should be retained when a suitable English equivalent was unavailable. For example, “So also Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many” (Hebrews 9:28). This practice made for rather awkward reading, but the end product retained a certain academic precision that the translators desired, enabling the “discrete” readers to “deeply weigh” and “consider” so they would not “miss the true sense” of what “the Holy Ghost” was teaching them. Martin’s “Latinisms” definitely lack the rhythmic harmony of the King James Bible but, in accuracy and scholarship, established a credible resource from which the King James translators would draw, including such phrases as “Bethlehem of Judea,” “despitefully use you,” “where to lay his head,” “pieces of silver,” “an evil eye,” “from the uttermost part of the earth,” “to take away my reproach,” “which the builders rejected,” and “the only begotten of the Father.”

When King James I issued his instructions for his new translation, he mandated that the Bishops’ Bible be followed as the primary text
but that all other English Bibles should also be consulted. Although not specifically mentioned by name, evidence clearly shows that the King James translators relied on the Rheims New Testament for several passages they included in their translation. The work of Gregory Martin and his colleagues added one more dimension to an emerging Bible that would galvanize both the world and the Restoration.

Historical evidence clearly demonstrates that the Reformers and Counterreformers did all in their power to remove heterodoxy. Most of those who sought reform fought passionately against pluralism. For them, “executions were not only legitimate, but obligatory.” Such restrictive thinking necessitated a new understanding. From the Reformation to the Restoration, literally thousands died as religious martyrs. Yet, through it all, they wanted something that society was not yet willing to give them—the ability to live in a society that allowed freedom of conscience. Elder James E. Talmage taught that throughout the Apostasy, the world “had not been left wholly to itself. The Spirit of God was operative so far as the unbelief of men permitted.” Good men and good women did all in their power to follow the dictates of their conscience. But true freedom demanded political reform. Each Bible translation (whether Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Geneva, or the Rheims New Testament) brought political and spiritual reform one step closer to reality.

King James I: A Lasting Impact

The message of the Restoration needed constitutional protection. In his inaugural address, George Washington said: “No people can be found to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of Providential agency.” King James became a pivotal figure during the religious melee Great Britain experienced in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. His role deserves special attention. Not only did he instigate a new translation of the Bible but also he, like his predecessor Queen Elizabeth, forced radical religious groups out of England. These “reformers,” or “separatists” as they were called, were led by determined men like Captain John Smith, William Brewster, Richard Clifton, William Bradford, and the Reverend John Lothropp. They and others like them eventually came to America, where their descendants realized a need to establish a government that not only tolerated religious freedom but also constitutionally protected it. King James I, the
Hampton Court Conference, and the translation of one of the most influential English Bibles ever published were important precursors to this religious freedom.

James had kept a hopeful eye on the English crown throughout much of his reign in Scotland. As Elizabeth drew her last breath, Sir Robert Carey, an English gentlemen seeking the good graces of the new king, sprang into action. He rode night and day from Whitehall Palace in London to Holyroodhouse Palace in Edinburgh so he could personally report the queen’s death. Having fallen from his horse along the way, he arrived at the king’s residence on the evening of March 26 somewhat bloodied and bruised. The thirty-six-year-old James was elated when he heard the news. His relative obscurity had ended.

James left Edinburgh in a royal coach on April 5, 1603. His journey to London lasted a month as he stopped along the way to celebrate. Thousands came to witness the pomp and pageantry of his ascendancy to the throne of England. En route to London, the Puritans presented James with a petition supposedly signed by “a thousand ministers.” The Millenary Petition (named after the number of signatures) detailed specific practices the Puritans wanted changed in the Church of England. Their plan worked only to the extent that James agreed to hold a conference where their concerns would be discussed.

Puritan and anti-Puritan propaganda flooded England during the spring and summer of 1603. The Puritans had a daunting task before them. They needed to convince James to change a religious system thoroughly integrated with monarchical powers and, at the same time, not come across as conspirators against him and his government. Success would require thoughtful planning and great tact. While on the throne in Scotland, James had proved that he was open to new ideas and would tolerate controversy regarding the Church of England. But what they did not know, yet, was that James would not tolerate the idea of separating church and state. The Puritan cause seemed doomed from the beginning.

The conference, originally scheduled for the first of November, did not take place until January 12, 1604. The warm fires inside Hampton Court and the frigid temperatures outside set an appropriate tone for the three-day conference about to unfold. Those who attended were men of great learning and influence who were moderate, highly reputable, with sound judgment, and “king-friendly.” Each had been carefully selected and summoned to the king’s estate. Those in attendance included eight bishops, seven deans, two doctors (theologians), and four Puritans. The contrast and divisions between the
two sides could not be more real. On a personal level, they were already acquainted and friendly enough toward each other, but theologically they were deeply at odds.\textsuperscript{107}

James took control of the conference from the start. His three decades of experience as king in Scotland taught him how to handle a bitterly divided nation.\textsuperscript{108} He skillfully set the agenda of the conference to ensure rational discourse rather than verbal mayhem. On the second day of the conference, the Puritans were brought before the king, followed by the bishops, deans, and doctors.\textsuperscript{109} As he had done the day before, James began with a short speech outlining his concerns and purposes in gathering the group together. Now ready to hear the complaints, James brought the four Puritans forward where they kneeled before him. John Reynolds, the spokesman for the Puritans, congratulated “his Majesty” on being king and then summarized the Puritans’ main grievances.

James addressed each concern during the three-day conference. William Barlow, an attendee at the conference, recounts the exchange between John Reynolds and the king during the second day’s proceedings: “After that, he [Reynolds] moved his Majesty, that there might be a new translation of the Bible, because, those which were allowed in the reigns of Henry the eight, and Edward the sixth, were corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the original.”\textsuperscript{110}

When no one objected to Dr. Reynolds’s recommendation, James instructed “that some special pains should be taken in that behalf for one uniform translation (professing that he could never, yet, see a Bible well translated in English; but the worst of all, his Majesty thought the Geneva to be) and this to be done by the best learned in both the Universities, after them to be reviewed by the Bishops, and the chief learned of the Church; from them to be presented to the Privy-Counsel; and lastly to be ratified by his Royal authority.”\textsuperscript{111}

Furthermore, the king ordered: “No marginal notes should be added, having found in them which are annexed to the Geneva translation . . . some notes very partial, untrue, seditious, and favoring too much, of dangerous, and traitorous conceits. As for example, Exodus 1:19, where the marginal note allows disobedience to kings.”\textsuperscript{112}

King James then provided two guidelines: “First, that errors in matters of faith might be rectified and amended; [and] secondly, that matters indifferent might rather be interrupted, and a gloss added.”\textsuperscript{113}

The Hampton Court Conference left a lasting impact by first confirming the king’s commitment to the Church of England. This outcome left the most ardent Puritans little choice but to flee England in search for
a place where they could worship in their own manner. The second long-term outcome that resulted from the conference was the pronouncement to make a new translation of the Bible. In time, both decisions would impact a young, fourteen-year-old boy in upstate New York.

The translators began the actual work on the project sometime in the fall of 1604. They took three years to complete the preliminary phases of translation before circulating their work for review by other companies. It would take approximately two more years (1608–9) before the general committee would be selected, made up of one representative from each of the six companies. Those who participated in the translation of the new Bible were sufficiently prepared to bring about the far-reaching work. The seemingly simple decision made at Hampton Court to make a new translation of the Bible prepared by the most learned, reviewed by the bishops, presented to the Privy-Counsel, and ratified by the king himself would impact not only those who lived during the reign of King James but also people for centuries to come. Nephi saw in vision that the “record of the Jews” would be “of great worth unto the Gentiles” (1 Nephi 13:23). In time, the King James Version of the Bible would take hold as the preferred Bible of nineteenth-century New England settlers. It would one day become the family Bible of Joseph and Lucy Smith, from which their son Joseph read and carefully contemplated the words of James in the spring of 1820: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

A marvelous ending to the story of the King James Version of the Bible can be had by looking at the preface. The translators certainly realized the power of scripture and the need to reach out to others in their native tongue. Miles Smith, in writing his eleven-page preface to the newly published Bible (1611), eloquently reminded his readers about the need for the word of God: “So hard a thing it is to please all, even when we please God best, and do seek to approve ourselves to every one’s conscience.” Furthermore, he wrote: “If we be ignorant, they will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us. . . . Love the Scriptures, and wisdom will love thee.” Eventually, the book took hold to become the most popular English Bible of all time.

**Conclusion**

In 1938, President J. Reuben Clark Jr. told the seminary and institute teachers at Aspen Grove, “The youth of the Church are hungry for
things of the spirit; they are eager to learn the Gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted. They want to know about the fundamentals I have just set out—about our beliefs; they want to gain testimonies of their truth; they are not now doubters but inquirers, seekers after truth.”

Twenty-nine years of my own teaching experience bear witness of the truthfulness of President Clark’s statement. Students regularly express their appreciation to me for what they learned while studying the scriptures. Our youth want to learn the gospel, including those precious truths taught in the Bible. Far too often, students tell me of their surprise at finding so many of the doctrines of the Restoration in both the Old and New Testament. In addition, they express their profound gratitude for the power, poetry, and beauty in which these teachings have been preserved. President Hinckley affirmed that “we are a biblical church. . . . This wonderful testament of the old world, this great and good Holy Bible is one of our standard works. We teach from it. We bear testimony of it. We read from it. It strengthens our testimony. And we add to that this great second witness, the Book of Mormon, the testament of the new world, for as the Bible says, ‘In the mouths of two or three witnesses shall all things be established’” (Matthew 18:16).

Two final quotes express my own appreciation for the Bible and its influence in my life. The first is from Brigham Young: “I believe the words of the Bible are just what they are. . . . I believe the doctrines concerning salvation contained in that book are true, and that their observance will elevate any people, nation or family that dwells on the face of the earth. The doctrines contained in the Bible will lift to a superior condition all who observe them. . . . Follow out the doctrines of the Bible, and men will make splendid husbands, women excellent wives, and children will be obedient; they will make families happy and the nations wealthy and happy and lifted up above the things of this life.”

The second quote is taken from Miles Coverdale, who helped publish the first complete Bible printed in English. In his 1535 dedicatory letter for this Bible, he reminded his readers of the efficacy and power of this most holy book: “Go to now, most dear reader, and sit thee down at the Lord’s feet and read his words, and . . . take them into thine heart, and let thy talking and communication be of them when thou sittest in thy house, or goest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up . . . in whom [God] if thou put thy trust, and be an unfeigned reader or hearer of his word with thy heart, thou shalt find sweetness therein and spy wondrous things to thy understanding.”

—The Religious Educator • Vol 7 No 2 • 2006
Notes


2. Heartfelt gratitude is given to the Religious Studies Center, the Department of Ancient Scripture, the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies, and Brigham Young University Honors Department.


4. “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.”

5. Elder Neal A. Maxwell addressed such an attitude: “Occasionally, a few in the Church let the justified caveat about the Bible—‘as far as it is translated correctly’ (A of F 1:8)—diminish their exultation over the New Testament. Inaccuracy of some translating must not, however, diminish our appreciation for the powerful testimony and ample historicity of the New Testament” (“The New Testament—A Matchless Portrait of the Savior,” Ensign, December 1986, 20).


20. Whitby is located about a hundred miles north of modern Manchester, England.


22. Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 419.


24. Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City:
29. Man, *Gutenberg*, 89; emphasis added.
31. Gutenberg’s prospects for financial gain may also help explain much of the secrecy, and hence some of the mystery, associated with him and his discovery.
35. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, 17.
37. For additional statements from Latter-day Saint leaders about the Reformers, see the following: Edward L. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 426; Gordon B. Hinckley, in Conference Report, October 2002, 85; Bruce R. McConkie, *BYU Speeches of the Year* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1984), 45.
39. A few years ago, while visiting Norwich, England, I happened upon a public tour of the very prison where Thomas Bilney was held before his martyrdom in 1531. Standing in the cold and dimly lighted dungeon forcefully reminded me of the sacrifices that he and hundreds of others like him made to stay true to his conscience.
40. See also Matthew 5:10; 24:9, 13; and Acts 5:41.
48. See 1 Timothy 1:15.
63. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 4:654. Bilney’s response while going to Lollard’s Pit is somewhat reminiscent of Joseph Smith as he traveled to Carthage in the summer of AD 1844. The Prophet said, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men” (Doctrine and Covenants 135:4).
71. Other sources of funding would come later.
77. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 5:293–95. Parts of Campion’s body were placed on display at the four gates of the city of London to warn other Catholics against similar practices.
80. The New Testament of Jesus Christ (Printed at Rhemes by John Fogny, 1582), preface.


84. New Testament of Jesus Christ, title page; spelling and punctuation modernized.

85. New Testament of Jesus Christ, preface; spelling and punctuation modernized.

86. New Testament of Jesus Christ, preface; spelling modernized.


93. Scholars estimate that from 1523 to 1680, about five thousand Protestants, Anabaptists, and Catholics were killed as religious martyrs (see Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 6).


97. In contrast to the jubilant reception King James received en route, a plague simultaneously swept through the poorer sections of London. By the end of 1603, an estimated thirty thousand people died from the dreaded disease. While James and his entourage enjoyed the extravagances and luxuries afforded to kings, thousands of others suffered the intolerable conditions of a city ravaged by death. James avoided the deplorable conditions by staying at a number of royal places just outside of London, like Hampton Court (see Nicolson, *Power and Glory*, 22–23).


106. William Barlow, *The Summe and Substance of the Conference which it pleased his Excellent Majestie to have with the Lords, Bishops, and other of his Clergie . . . at Hampton Court, January 14, 1603 (1604)* (Gainesville: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1965), 1–2; spelling and punctuation modernized in some citations.


120. Quoted in Daniell, *Bible in English*, 188–89.
THE HOLY BIBLE,
Conteyning the Old Testament,
AND THE NEW.

Newly Translated out of the Originall
tongue; & with the former Translations
diligently compared and revised, by his
Majesties speciall Commandement.

A speciall Commendation
Imprinted at London by Robert
Barker Printer to the Kings
most Excellent Maiestie,
ANNO DOM.1611.
The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek in the everyday spoken languages of the ancient Israelites and the early Christians. But because few readers today know those languages, we must rely on translations and hope the translators conveyed accurately the words, thoughts, and intents of the original writers as recorded on the original manuscripts.

The English Bible

William Tyndale (1494–1536) is the father of the English Bible; unfortunately, however, few Latter-day Saints know of him and of his profound contributions to the scriptures. In violation of the law and in constant danger of imprisonment and death, Tyndale translated and published parts of the Bible into English and created the translation from which much of the King James Version ultimately descended. Tyndale, like Martin Luther and other Reformers of their time, believed that the Bible should be in the language of the people and available to believers individually. The medieval Christian church, in contrast, taught that access to the Bible should be controlled by the church through the priests and that the only legitimate Bible was the Latin Vulgate translation that had been in use in the church for a thousand years—though very few Christians could read it. Tyndale knew that the original Hebrew and Greek texts, in the words of the ancient prophets and apostles themselves, were more authoritative than any man-made translation could be. And he knew that the manuscripts in those languages that were closest to the writers’ originals should be the sources from which translations should
come. Using editions of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament that only recently had appeared in print, he undertook the first English translation of the Bible from the original languages.

He succeeded wonderfully. In addition to being a courageous Reformer and advocate of religious freedom, Tyndale was also a master linguist and wordsmith. His goal was to make the Bible so accessible that every plowboy in England could own and read a copy. To that end, the New Testament and the Old Testament sections he translated and published were small, portable, and relatively inexpensive. Tyndale’s translation is characterized by what Nephi called “plainness” (2 Nephi 25:4). It is in clear and simple English, the language of middle-class people of Tyndale’s own time, and it is deliberately free of the elegant and affected literary trappings of the monarchy and the church. His choice of words has endured. Computer-based research has shown that over 75 percent of the King James Old Testament (of the sections on which Tyndale worked) comes from Tyndale as well as over 80 percent of the King James New Testament.

Tyndale translated and published the New Testament (editions of 1526, 1534, 1535), Genesis to Deuteronomy (1530, 1534), and Jonah (1531). He probably also translated Joshua to 2 Chronicles (published after his death). Before he could translate more, however, he was captured, imprisoned, strangled to death, and burned at the stake for his heresy. Other Protestant translations followed in succession, and all were built on Tyndale’s foundation, including the Coverdale Bible, Matthew’s Bible, and the Great Bible. The most important successors to Tyndale’s Bible came next—the Geneva Bible, the Bishops’ Bible, and the King James Bible.

The Geneva Bible (1560) was translated and published by exiled Reformers who had fled to Protestant Switzerland to avoid persecution in Britain when it was under a Catholic monarch. It was an excellent translation that, for the most part, was a revision of Tyndale. Its translators shared Tyndale’s vision of making the Bible accessible to ordinary people in their own tongue. To assist readers, they added explanatory marginal notes, maps, illustrations, cross references, and numerous study helps. It was what we now call a “study Bible,” and it enabled readers to drink deeply from the words of the prophets and apostles without the mediation of priests or the church. More than any other Bible in English, the popular Geneva Bible liberated the word of God from its medieval past and placed it in the hands of hundreds of thousands of readers. It was also the Bible of Shakespeare and his contemporaries and was an important foundation of modern English.
In contrast, the Bishops’ Bible (1568) was created with a different intent, and it produced a different outcome. It was prepared by conservative Anglican bishops who were not altogether comfortable with the idea of giving ordinary people free access to the word of God. Thus, they produced a translation farther removed from the common language of the people than the Geneva Bible was. The vocabulary and sentence structure were throwbacks to earlier times, with an increase of less-familiar Latin-based words and Latin word order. It was intended primarily to be used in churches; and, to that end, its large, heavy, volumes were chained to pulpits all over England. It also lacked many of the study helps and all of the marginal notes that the bishops found offensive in the Geneva Bible. Predictably, people found the Bishops’ Bible unappealing, bought few copies of it, and continued to purchase the Geneva Bible instead. It soon became apparent to authorities of the Church of England that the Bishops’ Bible would not do, so they decided to undertake another revision, the one that is known to us as the Authorized Version or King James Version (KJV).

The King James translation was motivated as much as anything else by the politics of the day, including the continuing popularity of the Geneva Bible. Geneva was popular with the nonconformist Puritans, whose loyalty to the monarchy and the Church of England was under suspicion. Its abundant marginal notes, written to assist readers to study the Bible on their own, reflected independence from both the church and the crown and, in some places, reflected Calvinist ideas that the king and his advisors found bothersome. The decision was made to undertake a new translation free of undesirable influences and under the careful watch of authorities. All but one of the committee of approximately fifty translators appointed under King James’s direction were bishops or priests of the Church of England, and among them were the best Hebrew and Greek scholars in Britain. Their instructions were to make a revision of the Bishops’ Bible, and thus each member of the committee was given a fresh unbound copy (or part of a copy) to work from. They also had before them the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament, as well as earlier English translations, including Geneva and Tyndale.

The translators worked patiently through all parts of the Bible, scrutinizing every passage. The outcome was the most consistent and carefully produced of all the English Bibles to that date. In general, their work succeeded best when they followed the original languages and Geneva (and hence Tyndale); it succeeded least when they remained true to their instructions to follow the Bishops’ Bible. Awkward passages from the Bishops’ Bible survived in many instances,
as in Matthew 6:34: “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (compare with “The day hath enough with his own grief” [Geneva], and “The day present hath ever enough of his own trouble” [Tyndale]).

But in other instances, the translators wisely abandoned the Bishops’ Bible and followed Geneva instead, often improving upon Geneva’s wording. On the whole, the King James translation is strongest in the Gospels, where it is most firmly based on the genius of William Tyndale. It is least strong in the Old Testament prophetic books, which Tyndale never translated.

When the King James Bible was published in 1611, it included an eleven-page, small-print introduction titled “The Translators to the Reader.” That work, rarely included in Bibles now, makes the translators’ strong case for the necessity of publishing the Bible in the contemporary language of its readers. Interestingly, the introduction’s frequent quotations from scripture come not from its own translation but from the Geneva Bible instead. And sadly, it never mentions the King James translation’s debt to William Tyndale, who was still viewed with suspicion by some. The bishops who produced the King James Version were themselves less enthusiastic than Tyndale and the Geneva translators about turning the Bible over to lay readers. This attitude is reflected in interesting ways. Whereas the first Geneva title page had an illustration of Moses parting the Red Sea, inviting readers into the promised land of reading the Bible in their own language, the King James title page depicted a massive stone wall, guarded on all sides by statues of prophets and evangelists. The King James Version’s title contained the words “Appointed to be read in Churches” (after “by his Maiesties speciall Commandment”). Thankfully, that phrase was not included in the title in the Latter-day Saint edition, first published in 1979. Although most Geneva editions were small and portable and were printed in roman type—by then the type familiar in most books and the same type in which this article is printed—the 1611 King James Bible was huge (11 by 16 inches), very expensive, and printed in archaic black-letter type. Fortunately, the people’s desire for the word of God prevailed, and the King James Version was soon printed in much more economical and reader-friendly formats.

Many of the Puritans left England to escape persecution from King James and the very bishops who had produced the new translation. Included among them were the Pilgrims who colonized New England. They brought with them the Geneva Bible, and thus it became the Bible of most of America’s earliest English-speaking settlers. The king soon outlawed the printing of the Geneva translation in England,
but it was printed elsewhere in Europe for three more decades, and English readers continued to use it.\footnote{11} Over the following decades, the King James Bible became more appreciated, both by scholars and by lay readers, and political, commercial, and cultural factors combined to bring about its eventual success.\footnote{12} In the meantime, it underwent numerous changes, evolving in practically each new edition until it arrived at its present state in 1769.

By the time of Joseph Smith’s birth in 1805, the King James translation had become the Bible of the English-speaking world, and most people were not even aware of other translations. When English speakers said “the Bible,” they meant the King James Version. For the most part, it remained that way until midway through the twentieth century.

Whereas the Bible in modern languages is the word of God “as far as it is translated correctly” (Article of Faith 8), much of what we see in our Bibles is the work of men. The King James translators and their predecessors, like all Bible translators from ancient times to the present, had to make hundreds of thousands of decisions while choosing words and phrases to convey as best they could the intent of the ancient writers. Our interest in this article, however, is not with the word choices in the Bible but with the other things that scholars, translators, editors, and printers invented to organize and present those words on the page—the chapters, verses, punctuation, spelling, and italics.

**Books of the Bible**

The Bible is a huge book—containing 766,137 words in English (KJV). And yet the modern reader can instantly turn to any particular passage in this massive book by following the data given in a simple formulaic reference such as Matthew 7:7. From this reference, a reader knows to turn to the book of Matthew, chapter 7, verse 7, where the reader finds the passage, “Seek, and ye shall find.” But this system was not part of the original texts of the Bible. The book divisions occur because the Bible is a collection of many different books; the divisions into paragraphs, chapters, and verses are all artificial and were done centuries after the texts were written.

The English word *Bible* is derived from a Greek word *biblia*, meaning “books,” reflecting the fact that the Bible is a collection. Many books were written in antiquity that were considered sacred by various groups in various places and at different times. Whereas there is much scholarship that investigates the canonization of the books of the Bible, there is little if any explicit information from the earliest historical circumstances of why and how certain ancient books were preserved
and considered as canonical or standard works. At some point in ancient times, a collection of those books was made that eventually became what we call the Old Testament. One of the earliest examples we have of such a collection is the plates of brass from 600 BC, which contained the books of Moses, a history of Israel, a collection of prophetic books, and genealogy (see 1 Nephi 5:10–14). Early Jews thought of the Bible as a collection of three different kinds of material, as reflected by the fact that Jesus spoke of “the law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms” (Luke 24:44).

The earliest list of the thirty-nine specific books of the Old Testament is from the end of the first century AD and records that those books were originally found on twenty-four scrolls—because several of the smaller books could fit onto a single scroll (see 4 Esdras 14:44–46). Because the texts were written on separate scrolls, there was little need to organize them in any particular order. But there was a sense that the Bible contained three types of books and that, just as on the plates of brass, the Law or Torah (the five books of Moses) had preeminence. The rabbis and Jesus often referred to the Old Testament collection of books as “the Law and the Prophets.” The Jewish canon established a tradition that organized the books according to the three categories: Torah, Prophets, and Writings. The Christian canon, preserved in all Christian Bibles to the present, followed a slightly different order, with historical books (Genesis through Esther), poetic books (Job to Song of Solomon), and prophetic books divided between the Major Prophets (longer books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel), and the twelve Minor Prophets, from Hosea through Malachi.

Just as in the case of the Old Testament, we know very little about the process by which twenty-seven of the many ancient Christian books came to be considered as scripture. The earliest surviving canon list is the Muratorian Canon, likely from the third century AD, which lists most of the books that make up the New Testament today—and in a similar order. It appears that the New Testament came about as a compilation of three different collections: a collection of four Gospels, a collection of fourteen epistles of Paul, and a collection of seven epistles from other church leaders, completed with the addition of two texts: the Acts and Revelation.

From the various Gospels that circulated anciently, the church by the middle of the second century had accepted four: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The book of Acts was inserted between the Gospels and the letters to provide a link between the life of Jesus and the ministries of the Apostles and the history of the early church. The fourteen
Pauline Epistles were eventually organized more or less by length from the longest to the shortest—from Romans to Philemon—followed by Hebrews because early Christians were uncertain about its authorship. The seven surviving epistles from other church leaders were added, followed by the book of Revelation.

**Divisions of the Biblical Text**

Divisions of the texts in the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament have their own history and can be treated separately. It was only when the Christian Bible combined the two Testaments, and especially as the Bible was translated into various languages, that the texts were treated similarly, and a uniform system of numbered chapters and verses was superimposed upon the text that now survives. Because the earliest surviving texts of the Bible date from centuries after the original authors, no one knows the nature of the original divisions. From what is known about the history of the divisions of the texts in the various manuscript traditions, three simple necessities can be identified that motivated the gradual creation of various units and later the systems of numbering those units. First, there was a need to identify and isolate specific units that could be read in worship services in the synagogue or the church. Second, the need occurred to provide a simple way of referring to a specific passage in the Bible to facilitate preaching, teaching, study, discussion, and debate. Finally, both Jewish and Christian scholars created concordances of the language of the Bible—and small numbered divisions of the text were almost a necessity for such concordances.

**Old Testament Paragraphs and Verses**

The oldest surviving Hebrew Old Testament texts are among the Dead Sea Scrolls, found beginning in 1947 in the caves at Qumran—the earliest dating to about 250 BC. These scrolls were written with pen and ink on pieces of leather that were sewn together to form scrolls. The Hebrew text was written in horizontal lines reading from right to left, in columns that were also read from right to left, and the scribes usually left slight spaces between the words. Interestingly enough, the system of division attested in these earliest biblical texts is neither chapters nor verses but paragraphs according to thematic or sense units.

The system of division into paragraphs was preserved in the Jewish tradition and eventually became part of the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible (see below). The logic of paragraph divisions can be illustrated by several examples. In the Hebrew text of the Creation
story in Genesis 1:1–2:3, the text is divided into seven paragraphs coinciding with the seven days of creation. Within historical narrative, the paragraphs divide a story into episodes. Thus, 1 Samuel 1 is divided into five episodes that trace the life of Hannah and the birth of Samuel, and Isaiah 1 is divided into six paragraphs of varying lengths that indicate different topics. Paragraph divisions dramatically illustrate the episodic nature of biblical narrative and help the reader see the basic sense units of the text.

In addition to the division of the text into small paragraph units, the Jewish tradition also developed a system of dividing the Torah into fifty-four larger units, each consisting of many paragraphs called parashoth. Those divisions provided suitable units to be read in the synagogue each Sabbath with the intent that the whole of the Torah could be read in a calendar year. Each of those sections received a title based on the first word or words of the passage, but they were never numbered. The titles provided a label as a point of reference for teachers and students in the discussion of a text. The whole of the Hebrew Bible, except for the Psalms, is divided into paragraphs, but only the Torah is divided into parashoth.

The division into verses preceded the division into chapters. Within the paragraph divisions, Jewish scribes in the Mishnaic period (AD 70–200) developed a system of dividing the biblical text into verse units that roughly coincided with sentences. In addition to ordering the text for easier study, the verse divisions had a function in the reading of the Torah in the synagogue. Because it was customary to read a section of the Bible in the original Hebrew and then stop and translate the passage into Aramaic, verses provided convenient places for the reader to stop and allow the interpreter to speak. Just as with the paragraphs and parashoth, the scribes never numbered those verses.

About AD 500, a group of rabbinic Jewish scribes and scholars, called the Masoretes, saw that the text of the Bible as it was being transmitted began to show signs of changing through the years. The Masoretes standardized the Hebrew text by developing a system to write vowels. They also formalized word divisions; developed a set of accents to indicate ancient traditions of reciting the text; created concordances; counted all of the paragraphs, words, and letters; and inserted notes of explanations, references, and statistics in the margins and at the end of the texts to help future scribes. Their work is called the Masoretic Text. It became the model for all future scribal copying and the standard Bible for most Jews in the world to the present day.

Elements of the paragraph and verse divisions that were preserved
in the Masoretic Text were later superimposed in various ways on the
texts of the Greek and Latin translations of the Bible that were used by
Christians. The King James translators had access to the Masoretic Text
and implemented in their translation the original Jewish system of verse
divisions together with the system of numbering that they had inherited
from other Christian Bible editions and translations. Following the model
of the Hebrew paragraph divisions, the KJV translators or editors also cre-
ated a system of paragraph markers throughout the Old Testament (¶)
that most often parallels the divisions found in the Hebrew Bible.

New Testament Paragraphs

As with the Old Testament, we do not have any original New Testa-
ment texts. But we do have very early textual evidence of the New
Testament from the beginning of the second century, and those earliest
manuscripts were written in the tradition of Greek texts of their day,
in all capital letters, with no division between the words or sections.
Although the modern reader may be bewildered by a text that has
no apparent breaks, the ancient Greek has a set of rhetorical particles
that indicate natural pauses and breaks in the text. Most New Testa-
ment texts were written on parchment or papyrus, and by the second
century, they began to be written in codices (books with leaves bound
together—singular, codex) rather than on scrolls.  

Just as in the Hebrew tradition, the first system of division in the
New Testament text was the paragraph, which naturally followed the
rhetorical and grammatical particles in the text. One of the earliest sys-
tems of division in the New Testament is attested in the Greek Bible
manuscript Vaticanus, dating from the fifth century AD. In Vaticanus,
the scribes used a system of unknown origin in which the text was divided
into sections corresponding to the break in sense. Those divisions were
called in Greek kephalaia, which means “heads” or “principals.” They
were named and numbered in the margins and are the first attested form
of a sort of chapter division in the New Testament. In Vaticanus, for
example, the Gospel of Matthew was divided into 170 such units—62 in
Mark, 152 in Luke, and 50 in John. The kephalaia were much smaller
in length than the present-day chapters and are much closer to the para-
graphs. In other Greek manuscripts, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation
were similarly divided into chapters and smaller sections.

As they did with the Old Testament, the King James translators
indicated paragraph divisions in the New Testament with paragraph
markers (¶). Often, but not always, their paragraph divisions coincide
with ancient kephalaia and chapter divisions known from early manu-

scripts, but for some reason that mystifies scholars to the present day, they end at Acts 20:36. At the same time the *kephalaia* divisions in the New Testament were being made, rudimentary smaller divisions, indicated by simple forms of punctuation (sixth through eighth centuries), were beginning to be marked in the Greek texts; these divisions would eventually be reflected in the chapter and verse divisions after the thirteenth century.

**Today’s Chapters and Verses**

Eventually, the Christians developed a need for a more precise way of citing scriptural passages for the Old and New Testaments, especially in the creation of concordances. The Christians incorporated in their biblical texts the Jewish paragraph and verse divisions of the Old Testament and the medieval *kephalaia* and chapter system of the New Testament.

The creator of the system of chapters that is used to the present time is Stephen Langton (1150–1228), a professor of theology in Paris and later the archbishop of Canterbury. Langton introduced his chapter numbers into the Latin Bible—the Vulgate—in 1205, from which they were transferred in the ensuing centuries to Hebrew manuscripts and printed editions of the Old Testament as well as to Greek manuscripts and printed editions of the New Testament.

The system of verse divisions that has prevailed to the present was the work of a Parisian book printer, Robert Estienne (Latinized as Stephanus; 1503–59). In the printing of his fourth edition of the Greek New Testament in 1551, he added his complete system of numbered verses for the first time. For the Old Testament, Stephanus adopted the verse divisions already present in the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible and within Langton’s chapters, he assigned numbers to the verses. Following his own sense of logic as to the sense of the text, Stephanus took it upon himself, also within the framework of Langton’s chapters, to divide and number the verses in the New Testament. His son reported that he did this work as he regularly traveled between Paris and Lyon. Whereas he probably did much of the work in his overnight stays at inns, his detractors spread the story that he did it while riding on his horse, and they attributed what they thought to be unfortunate verse divisions to slips of the pen when the horse stumbled. In 1555, Stephanus published the Latin Vulgate—the first whole Bible divided into numbered chapters and verses. Soon, those divisions became standard in the printed editions of the scriptures in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and eventually in all of the modern languages. The first English Bible to have the numbered chapters and verses of Langton and Stephanus was the Geneva Bible in 1560.
Some scholars have criticized Stephanus’s verse divisions as seemingly arbitrary, citing the fact that although they often coincide with a single sentence in English, sometimes they include several sentences, sometimes they divide a single sentence, and sometimes they separate direct quotations from the situation of the speaker. But clearly the advantages of organizing the text for reading and finding passages far outweigh any disadvantages. In the King James Bible, the translators typographically created a new, separate paragraph in each verse by indenting the verse number and first word and capitalizing the first letter of the first word, even if it was in the middle of a sentence. For the casual reader, this procedure can provide a rather serious obstacle, giving the false impression that the Bible is composed of a collection of disconnected sentences and phrases and making it difficult to see and understand any particular verse in its larger context. Consequently, a conscientious reader of the King James Version should always make a concentrated effort to see the bigger context of any particular verse of scripture, being aware that the chapter and verse divisions are artificial and subjective additions to the text that should not constrain us in the interpretation of the Bible.

The preference of Joseph Smith and the early Latter-day Saints seems to have been for longer content-based paragraphs rather than short verses. On the original manuscripts of the Joseph Smith Translation, the Prophet’s assistants, presumably working under his direction, created verses that are much larger than those in traditional Bibles, corresponding more with paragraphs. For example, Genesis 1 contains nine verses in the JST but thirty-one in the King James translation. Similarly, in the first printing of the Book of Abraham, Joseph Smith or his assistants divided the text into nine large paragraph-length verses, as opposed to the thirty-one verses in the same chapter in the Pearl of Great Price today. And the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants (1835) had numbered verses much longer than those we use now. Most modern Bible translations preserve Stephanus’s verses but do not create separate paragraphs for each verse, dividing the chapters instead into paragraphs based on the internal content of the scriptural text.

Punctuation

The 1611 King James Bible was published by the firm of Robert Barker of London. Barker’s family had been in the printing business for decades, and he had the distinction of being “Printer to the Kings most Excellent Maiestie,” as is noted on the Bible’s title page. With that designation, his company held the new Bible’s franchise (sometimes with partners)
usually, punctuation differences are inconsequential, but sometimes they affect meaning. note acts 27:18, which also has a word difference, a spelling difference, and an italic difference:

The edition of 1612 made punctuation changes, and every printing thereafter for a century and a half made more. each printing house that published the Bible modified the punctuation in some way in virtually every edition, and thus of the numerous editions between 1611 and the late eighteenth century, none were identical. Mathew Carey, an American printer of the early 1800s, noted that the punctuation differences between various Bibles were “innumerable.” He gave as an example Genesis 26:8, which had “eight commas in the Edinburgh, six in the Oxford, and only three in the Cambridge and London editions.”

In 1762, Professor F. S. Parris produced an important revised edition for the Cambridge University Press, continuing the process of revision and modernization that had been underway since 1611—not only in punctuation but in all areas of the text. In 1769, the Oxford University Press, under the direction of Professor Benjamin Blayney, revised the Parris edition further. Blayney made numerous punctuation
changes, adding much punctuation to the text.\(^\text{26}\) He also made many other changes, such as strictly applying to the text archaic grammatical rules that neither were part of the language in 1611 nor were intended by the translators. For example, in the current KJV, the pronoun *ye* is always used for the second-person plural when the subject of the sentence, and *you* is used for the second-person plural in all other cases. This is an artificial consistency imposed on the text by Blayney. In the 1611 KJV, the two forms were used more interchangeably; and even long before 1611, both forms were in common usage in the singular as well as in the plural. The fluid use of the pronouns in the Book of Mormon reflects these developments in the language.\(^\text{27}\)

Blayney’s new edition soon came to be viewed as the standard for British publishing houses and eventually for American publishers as well. It remains so today, and most King James printings now, including the Latter-day Saint edition, are virtually identical to Blayney’s Oxford edition of 1769.\(^\text{28}\)

But punctuation usage in modern English has continued to evolve since 1769, and thus Bible readers today see commas, colons, and semicolons used in ways that are different from how we use them now.

As we discussed earlier, the verses in the Hebrew Bible are most often self-contained grammatical units, although there are many exceptions. But the earliest manuscripts of the Old Testament contained no punctuation. The Masoretes, working about a millennium after most of the original writers, formalized a system of punctuation that included sentence-ending marks and various marks within sentences to show major and minor breaks. The evidence suggests that in some cases, the Masoretes may have made mistakes in sentence division; but, on the whole, they did an extraordinarily good job, and their work was a profound accomplishment. When the translators and editors of the King James Bible and its predecessors applied European punctuation, in most cases they honored the Masoretic sentence endings because they kept the verse divisions of Stephanus from the previous century. Thus, sentences in the King James Old Testament almost always end where sentences end in the Masoretic Text. But within sentences, the English translators frequently subdivided the text differently.

In New Testament manuscripts, rudimentary punctuation marks began to appear gradually in the sixth and seventh centuries, usually indicating breaks in sentences. It was not until the seventh century that marks for breathing and accents began to appear, and it was not until the ninth century that the continuous writing in the texts began to be broken into individual words.
The texts of the manuscripts Sinaiticus and Vaticanus contain a system of punctuation as indicated by a single point of ink on the level of the tops of the letters, or occasionally by a small break in the continuous letters or by a slightly larger letter, to indicate a pause in the sense of the text—a break that usually corresponds with a sentence. Later New Testament manuscripts from the sixth and seventh centuries developed a more complex system of marks, usually made by dots indicating a pause, a half-stop, and a full stop, and later a mark of interrogation, corresponding to the English usage of a comma, semicolon, period, and question mark. Occasionally, there were slight spaces between words to indicate a break in the sense. Ninth-century manuscripts show that the scribes began to insert breaks between the words in their texts, and punctuation marks were more frequently put at the end of words rather than above the letters as before. It should be noted that any markings or spaces added to the original continuous writing of the earliest New Testament manuscripts involved a subjective act of interpretation by the scribe. There is evidence of ancient scribal disagreement in terms of punctuation and even word divisions. In addition, later scribes often went back and inserted marks of punctuation above the lines of earlier manuscripts (as in the case of Vaticanus) to reflect their own interpretations.

Therefore, the Greek texts used by the translators of the Bible into English, including Tyndale and the King James translators, already contained systems of word division, punctuation, breathings, and accents that certainly influenced the way the texts were interpreted and translated. The translators of each different English version had the ancient markings and divisions before them, but they variously punctuated their translations according to their understanding and interpretation of the text. Absent in the King James translation are quotation marks, which did not appear commonly until long after 1611. Capital letters are used to show where a quotation begins, but the end of a quotation can be determined only from the context. That is not always easy, as is seen in Genesis 18:13–14: “And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the LORD?”

The punctuation in today’s KJV, dating to Blayney’s edition of 1769, is generally systematic and quite consistently done. It uses periods to end sentences, colons and semicolons for major breaks within sentences, and commas for smaller breaks. On the whole, the colons, semicolons, and commas seem to have been applied according to the objectives of the translators and later editors—not necessarily with the intent of reflecting the punctuation in the Hebrew and Greek texts.
By today’s standards—and even by the standards of 1611 and 1769—the King James Version often feels overpunctuated, and readers sometimes find themselves tripping over its many tiny clauses that interrupt the flow of the text and occasionally make the meaning less clear. But this is neither unexpected nor accidental; it was intended to be that way. We should recall that when the translation was originally conceived and published, it was “Appointed to be read in Churches.” Its creators filled it with punctuation, believing that the congregational reading for which it was primarily intended would be enhanced by the short clauses, each set apart by a pause. Had they known that the Bible’s greatest use would eventually be with families in private homes, perhaps they would have done otherwise.

Spelling

The printing of the Bible in English contributed greatly to the standardization of English spelling. In Tyndale’s day, there was much variety in spelling, and indeed Tyndale’s own publications showed considerable inconsistency while at the same time contributing to the establishment of spelling norms. Early in the next century, when the King James translation appeared, English spelling was still in flux, and it differed in many instances from the spelling in use today, as can be seen in the comparison of the 1611 KJV of Isaiah 7:13–14 (left) and the current LDS edition (right):

13 And hee said, heare ye now, O house of Dauid; is it a smal thing for you to ideary men, but will ye idere my God also?
14 Therefore the Lord himselfe shall give you a signe: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and beare a Sonne, and shall call his name Imanuel.

13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?
14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Spelling conventions evolved rapidly in the seventeenth century, as is reflected in early printings of the KJV. Barker’s 1611 first edition has the spellings “publique” (Matthew 1:19), “musicke” (Luke 15:25), and “heretike” (Titus 3:10), with three separate spellings for the same grammatical ending. Within a few decades, all of those were standardized to “-ick.” At 1 Timothy 4:16, the 1611 edition reads, “Take heed unto thy selfe.” Barker’s 1630 edition uses “heece,” and his edition of only four years later uses “heed” again. His edition of 1639 changes “selfe” to “self,” but the spelling “thyself” (one word) was not standardized until the mid-eighteenth century. Spelling in the KJV began changing
as early as in the second impression of 1611. It continued to evolve in
later printings—but inconsistently in the hands of various publishers,
who clearly had the intent to keep its spelling current with the times. It
was not until Blayney’s edition of 1769 that publishers considered the
spelling standard and finalized (although not entirely consistent), when
today’s King James spelling was set in place. Thus, our current Bible
has words and grammar from before 1611 but spelling from 1769.

The English spellings of biblical names evolved over the centuries
until the 1611 King James translation, when the spellings of most names
were fixed. The 1611 printing had some inconsistencies (including the
spelling of *Mary* as *Marie* in several places in Luke 1), but most variants
were standardized by the 1629 Cambridge edition. The spelling of
names in the KJV is heavily influenced by the Latin Vulgate; and, in many
cases, the spellings are far removed from how the ancient people actually
pronounced their own names. Some examples include Isaac, pronounced
anciently “Yitz-haq” (Geneva, *Izhák*; Bishops’, *Isahac*); Isaiah, “Ye-sha-
ya-hu”; John, “Yo-ha-nan”; James, “Ya-a-qov”; and Jesus, “Ye-shu-a.”

The spelling of the Lord’s name in the KJV Old Testament is a spe-
cial case. The divine name that is written “the Lord” in the King James
translation is spelled with four letters in Hebrew—"y h w h." It probably
was pronounced Yahweh in ancient times. The form of the name that
is familiar to us is Jehovah, with spelling and pronunciation brought
into English by Tyndale in the early 1500s. After the end of the Old
Testament period, the Jews adopted a custom, based perhaps on an exag-
gerated reading of Exodus 20:7, that it was blasphemous to pronounce
God’s name, so in the place of Yahweh, they used substitute words. As
they read their Hebrew texts, when they came upon God’s name, they
would not pronounce it but substituted in its place the word ‘˘ađōn˘ay,
which means “my Lord(s).” Greek-speaking Jewish translators in the
third century BC replaced the divine name with the common Greek noun
*kyrios*, “lord.” Most modern translations have continued the custom. In
the King James translation, whenever God’s name Yahweh appears in the
Hebrew text, the translators have rendered it as “the L ORD.” Capital
and small capital letters are used to set the divine name apart from the
common English noun *lord*.

**Italics**

The use of italics in today’s King James Bible has an interesting
but complex history. The practice of using different type within a
text for various reasons seems to have begun in the early part of the
sixteenth century. During the years 1534–35, Sebastian Münster and
Pierre Robert Olivetan—who printed Latin and French translations of the Bible, respectively—were two of the earliest individuals to indicate, by means of a different type, words in the translation not represented precisely in the exemplar. The first English Bible to follow this practice was the Great Bible, which was printed in 1539 under the editorship of Miles Coverdale, who made use of both Münster’s Latin and Olivetan’s French translations. In this English translation, which was printed in black-letter type, Coverdale employed both brackets and a smaller font to indicate variant readings from the Latin Vulgate that were not in the Hebrew or Greek manuscripts.

William Whittingham’s 1557 edition of the New Testament was printed in roman type and was the first English translation to use italic type for words not in the manuscripts. In his preface, he noted that he inserted those words “in such letters as may easily be discerned from the common text.”

Three years later, Whittingham and other Protestant scholars at Geneva published the entire Bible in English—the Geneva Bible. Geneva’s preface stated the following: “[When] the necessity of the sentence required anything to be added (for such is the grace and propriety of the Hebrew and Greek tongues, that it cannot but either by circumlocution, or by adding the verb or some word be understand of them that are not well practiced therein) we have put it in the text with another kind of letter, that it may easily be discerned from the common letter.”

The 1560 Geneva Bible, printed in roman type, was the first edition of the entire Bible in English that used italics. In 1568, the Bishops’ Bible followed the Geneva Bible in this practice, but because it was printed in a black-letter type, the added words were printed in roman type.

Like the Bishops’ Bible, the 1611 King James Bible was printed in black-letter type and used a smaller roman font for words not represented in the original languages, as in this example from Genesis 1:12 in the 1611 KJV (left) and the current text (right).

In 1618, the Synod of Dort explained some of the rules used for translating the KJV: “Words which it was anywhere necessary to insert into the text to complete the meaning were to be distinguished by another type, small roman.” Later editions of the KJV printed in
roman type, including the LDS edition, have followed the lead of the Geneva Bible in using italics for those words not represented in the Hebrew or Greek manuscripts.

Some important observations should be made concerning italics in the King James translation. First, the primary use of italics is to identify words not explicitly found in the Hebrew or Greek manuscripts that are necessary in English to make the translation understandable. There are a number of examples of these elliptical constructions. Most instances of italics in the Bible are for the verb “to be” (for example, “I am the LORd thy God,” Isaiah 51:15). Italics were often used to supply unexpressed but implied nouns (for example, “the dry land,” Genesis 1:9, 10), possessive adjectives (for example, “his hand,” Matthew 8:3), and other verbs (for example, “his tongue loosed,” Luke 1:64). Sometimes in Greek conditional sentences, the subordinate clause (or protasis) is expressed, whereas the main clause (or apodosis) is implied. A noteworthy example is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.” In this case, the subordinate clause of the condition is “except there come a falling away first,” and the implied main clause, added in italics, is “for that day shall not come.”

Second, a closer look at italics in the KJV reveals other uses, besides supplying unexpressed but implied words. Some italics indicate that the words are poorly attested among the ancient manuscripts. An example of this is at John 8:7: “Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” The phrase “as though he heard them not” was not in a different type in the 1611 edition, but it was placed in italics in later editions, including the LDS edition. In this case, the Greek phrase is not in the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament, and subsequent editors of the KJV indicated their uncertainty about its authenticity by placing the words in italics.

Another interesting example of this usage is at 1 John 2:23: “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” Since the 1611 edition, the KJV has set apart the clause “but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also” in special type. The Greek clause is in the earliest manuscripts but is absent from many important later manuscripts. Because the words “hath the Father” precede and end the clause, it seems that a scribe’s eye inadvertently skipped from one instance of “hath the Father” to the other and accidentally omitted the clause. Thus, even though the clause is not in many later manuscripts, it does
seem to be original. Because the KJV translators did not have access to the early manuscripts that have this reading, the italics in 1 John 2:23 may be indicating that the clause comes from the Latin Vulgate, similar to the practice of the Great Bible.

Third, there are many inconsistencies in the use of italics in the King James translation. The original KJV translators seem to have been fairly conservative in their use of italics, but their 1611 edition contained numerous inconsistencies, many of which continue today. For example, Hebrews 3:3 states “this man,” whereas the same construction in Hebrews 8:3 is rendered “this man.” Over the years, editors greatly expanded the practice of using italics, a process that continued until Blayney in 1769, who added many to the text. For instance, John 11 in the 1611 edition contains no italicized words, but in a 1638 edition, it has fifteen italicized words, and in a 1756 edition, it has sixteen. The same chapter in the 1979 LDS edition has nineteen italicized words. Note the example from John 11:41, in 1611 (left) and the current text (right):

Concerning this increased use of italics in later editions, F. H. A. Scrivener concluded, “The effect was rather to add to than to diminish the manifest inconsistencies.” In today’s edition, types of words that are italicized in one location are not necessarily italicized in another. For example, Acts 13:6 has “whose name was Bar-jesus,” whereas the same construction in Luke 24:18 is rendered “whose name was Cleopas.” There is sometimes inconsistency within the same verse. Luke 1:27 contains both “a man whose name was Joseph” and “the virgin’s name was Mary.”

Although the translators and editors were not consistent in their use of italics, “it appears that generally, though not always, their judgment was justified in their choice of italicized words.” The question remains, however, whether italicized words in the Bible are really necessary at all. One scholar has proposed that “it is impossible to make any message in one language say exactly what a corresponding message says in any other,” and because the words rendered in italics are necessary to make the English understandable, “they are not extraneous additions but are a legitimate part of the translation and need not be singled out for special notice.” That is the case because the primary goal of any translator is “to
transmit the meaning of the message, not to reproduce the form of the words.” With that in mind, publishers of the Bible in modern languages have abandoned the custom of using italics, and the King James Version is now unique in employing them. For the same reason, when the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price are translated from English into other languages, no attempt is made to identify in italics the words in the translations that do not come from the original English.

Conclusion

In recent years, despite a general decrease in Bible reading in the Western world, there has been an increased interest in the fascinating history of the English Bible and the King James Version. Although it is no longer the most widely used or the most influential Bible translation in English, the KJV is still in print and still sells well.

In 2005, the venerable Cambridge University Press published a new edition of the KJV that may eventually become the most important edition since Benjamin Blayney’s of 1769. Cambridge University Press, the oldest printing establishment in the world, has been publishing the English Bible since 1591 and the King James Version since 1629. It is the press that prepared the text and set the type for the English Latter-day Saint edition that is still in use today. In the same spirit that led to the recent restorations of Michelangelo’s paintings in the Sistine Chapel and Leonardo da Vinci’s Last Supper, Cambridge’s editor cautiously removed most of the well-meaning but often misguided “repairs” of earlier editors (including Parris and Blayney) to restore the KJV more fully to the text and intent of its 1611 creators. Where justifiable, the grammatical changes and word choices of the post-1611 editors were peeled back to reveal the grammar and words of the original. The original intent of keeping the KJV’s spelling contemporary was applied, so the new edition is now standardized to modern spelling. The punctuation was taken back to the system of 1611 but simplified and made consistent, and quotation marks were added. All the italics were removed. Poetic sections were reformatted to reflect the poetic intent of the ancient prophets and psalmists, instead of prose, and the separate paragraphs for each verse were replaced with paragraphs based on the Bible’s content. Thus, despite the fact that the King James Bible is now four hundred years old, it is still very much alive.

Like the Prophet Joseph Smith, we Latter-day Saints “believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers.” Modern languages, like English, were not part of the Bible “as it read
when it came from the pen of the original writers,” nor were the chapters, verses, punctuation, spelling, and italics that we see in printings of the Bible today. But because very few Latter-day Saints can read the languages in which the Bible was first written or have access to the earliest manuscripts, we need those medieval and modern tools that translators, scholars, editors, and printers have provided over the centuries that deliver the word of God to us on the printed page. Together, they were all designed to help us better read and understand the scriptures—to help us seek, that we may find (see Matthew 7:7).

Notes

1. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with a few chapters in the related language Aramaic. The New Testament was written in what is called koine Greek, the common Greek used throughout the biblical world in the days of Jesus and the Apostles.

2. See Robert D. Hales, “Preparations for the Restoration and the Second Coming: ‘My Hand Shall Be over Thee,’” Ensign, November 2005, 88–92. Calling Tyndale the “father of the English Bible” does not overlook the importance of the work of John Wycliffe and his collaborators, who produced an English Bible in the late fourteenth century, translated from the Latin Vulgate. Later English Bibles, however, did not descend from Wycliffe’s translation but from Tyndale’s.


4. The Latin Vulgate was, in large part, the work of Jerome (ca. 342–420). The word *vulgate* in the title means that it was translated into the common tongue of Western Christians in Jerome’s time. But by the fifteenth century, Latin had ceased to be a spoken language of the common people, and few could read it. Even many priests could not read it adequately.


9. They were given a copy of the 1602 edition of the Bishops’ Bible; see David Norton, A Textual History of the King James Bible (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 35–36.

10. Spelling modernized in both examples. The Tyndale text is from his 1536 edition.

11. See Herbert, Historical Catalogue, 192.

12. See the discussion in Daniell, Bible in English, 451–60.

13. For information about the process of canonization, see “Canon” in the LDS Bible Dictionary. For a broad overview, see F. F. Bruce, The Canon of Scripture (Downer’s Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988).


16. The Mishnah (ca. AD 200), in Megillah 4.4, already speaks of verses and specifies how many verses the reader may read in Hebrew before the interpreter translates into Aramaic.


20. Langton was famous in English history for his role in encouraging King John to agree to the terms of the Magna Carta in 1215.

21. In this they followed the precedent of the Geneva and Bishops’ Bibles.


24. The 1830 Book of Mormon had very large paragraphs, presumably created by compositor John H. Gilbert.

edition has six.


30. Modern quotation marks would render the passage as follows:
And the LORD said unto Abraham, “Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD?”


33. Neither Hebrew nor Greek has a “J” sound.


36. In four exceptions, it is rendered “JEHOVAH” because of special emphasis given to the name in the text (see Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; 26:4).


40. Some editions followed the Great Bible in printing added words in small black-letter type and with brackets.


46. The famous Johannine Comma of 1 John 5:7–8 (“in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth”) is not in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century nor in any Latin manuscript before the fourth century (see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 647–49). Yet this phrase appears neither in special type in the 1611 edition nor in italics in the 1979 LDS edition. The phrase was placed in italics in the Cambridge 1873 edition edited by F. H. A. Scrivener and subsequent editions based upon it (see Scrivener, *Authorized Edition*, 69).

47. The 1611 edition rendered the phrase in small roman type but did not place the word “but” in brackets. The brackets in the 1979 LDS edition seem to be a way that later editions of the KJV drew attention to the fact that among those manuscripts that have the phrase, the word *but* is absent in the Latin and the Greek but is supplied in the English to connect the phrase to the first clause in John 2:23.


49. See also Eadie, *English Bible*, 280.

50. Specht concluded: “In 1769, the Oxford edition by Benjamin Blayney made more corrections and further extended the use of italics, probably beyond the limits that the original famous 47 revisers would have approved” (Specht, “Use of Italics,” 92).


53. LDS Bible Dictionary, 708.


56. See the references in note 3. From time to time, modern facsimiles of the 1611 edition have been made available, including *The Holy Bible 1611* (Columbus, OH: Vintage Archives, 2000), and *The Holy Bible 1611 Edition King James Version* (Nashville: Nelson, [1982]). Unfortunately this latter edition replaces the black letter type with roman type.


The Radical Reformation and the Restoration of the Gospel

Stephen J. Fleming

Stephen J. Fleming is a PhD student in religious studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

The Reformation is not only a major event in world history but also one of the most important events leading up to the Restoration. Elder M. Russell Ballard declared, “I believe these reformers were inspired to create a religious climate in which God could restore lost truths and priesthood authority.” We commonly hear such Reformers as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Huss, and Wycliffe praised by the Brethren and lay members alike. However, the way many members of the Church often view the Reformation is commonly influenced by the larger American society with its historically Protestant worldview. Protestants naturally see their predecessors as heroes who resisted Catholic tyranny, but this Protestant view is a somewhat simplistic and even warped construction of the actual events. More importantly, the Protestant version often leaves out important parts of the story that I believe were essential to the creation of “a religious climate in which God could restore lost truths and priesthood authority.” This article summarizes the major events of the Reformation but focuses on the often-overlooked Radical Reformers, who I believe anticipated the Restoration to a greater extent than the Protestant Reformers.

Catholicism had always struggled with corruption, but by the time of the Renaissance, the church’s problems seemed particularly acute. Renaissance Catholicism had corruption at all levels, but the Renaissance popes became the embodiment of Catholicism’s problems. At this time, the papacy had become very wealthy; and, in many ways, the Renaissance popes acted more like ruling princes than ecclesiastical leaders.
Pope Leo X’s famous statement “God has given us the papacy—let us enjoy it” embodies the attitude. The Renaissance popes became preoccupied with running their papal states and funding extravagant projects. Some of these popes were also patrons of Renaissance artists, including Michelangelo and Raphael. To finance projects, the church became more and more dependent on fund-raising procedures, such as the sale of indulgences (buying out of purgatory) and simony (buying church offices). Furthermore, neglect of spirituality for worldly pursuits was rampant throughout Catholicism. Pluralism, or the practice of simultaneously holding several ecclesiastical offices, was common. In pluralism, the clergyman received compensation for various offices without having to attend to the related duties. Many felt that spirituality in the church had been overshadowed by worldly ambition.

In addition to increased corruption, the Renaissance also bred the new learning of humanism. The humanist desire was to learn wisdom from the classics. Many humanists were devout Christians—called Christian humanists—who focused their learning in a religious direction. Chief among the Christian humanists was Desiderius Erasmus, who made great efforts to translate early Christian writings, particularly the Bible. Erasmus wanted to get away from the philosophies of the day and return to those of the Gospels. Erasmus wrote, “I could wish that those frigid sophistries could either be quite cut out or at least were not the theologians’ only concern, and that Christ pure and simple might be planted deep into the minds of men; and this I think could best be brought about if . . . we drew our philosophy from the true sources.” Erasmus and many of his colleagues hurled criticism at the contemporary church with hope of reform. It has frequently been said that “Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.”

The Magisterial Reformation

It was Martin Luther who made the bold move of breaking with Catholicism. Luther began his protest by nailing his ninety-five theses to the door of the Wittenberg Chapel in 1517, and the Reformation was under way. Luther criticized the abuses in the Catholic Church, particularly indulgences, simony, and pluralism. The recent invention of the printing press enabled Luther’s ideas to be disseminated throughout Germany. Soon, the pope excommunicated Luther, but Luther’s ideas continued to gain ground. Many German princes flocked to his cause. Luther began reforming the church in Wittenburg, doing away with the mass, cutting the sacraments from seven to two (baptism and the Lord’s Supper), and doing away with celibacy in the clergy.
But for Luther, it was the doctrines of Catholicism even more than its abuses that he opposed. Luther opposed Catholicism’s go-betweens of saints, sacraments, priests, and popes and sought a direct relationship with God and Christ. Luther taught that faith in Christ was ultimately important and that man was, therefore, saved by grace and not by works. Furthermore, God was absolute and sovereign in the saving relationship. Luther soon denied man’s free will and advocated predestination.3

Close to the same time, Ulrich Zwingli advocated reform of the Catholic Church in Zurich, Switzerland. Working closely with the Zurich city council, Zwingli introduced a number of changes similar to those of Luther. Attempts were made to unite the Zwinglian and Lutheran movements, but the two clashed over their interpretation of the Lord’s Supper. Both rejected the mass and the notion of the reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ’s body, but Luther maintained that the bread and wine still contained Christ’s real presence, whereas Zwingli argued that the presence was symbolic. The two denominations found their differences irreconcilable, and thus two Protestant traditions were formed. Zwingli was killed in battle in 1531; however, he started what became known as the Reformed tradition, which was furthered by the theologians Martin Bucer, Heinrich Bulinger, and, most well known, John Calvin.

With the Anglicans, the Lutheran and Reformed traditions are collectively known as the Magisterial Reformation. The common link between them is that all the denominations were strongly linked to the state. Luther received support from a number of German princes and Scandinavian kings. Zwingli always worked through the civil authorities in Zurich, and Calvin did the same in Geneva. The English Reformation was initiated by Henry VIII, who broke away from the Catholic Church and had Parliament declare him the head of the church in England. Thus, the Magisterial Reformation continued the practice of the state church and denied religious freedom to religious dissenters.

The Catholic Reformation

What is often left out of the conventional narrative is that the Magisterial Reformation was just one of many reformations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Protestants were not the only ones who wanted to see the Catholic Church reformed. Many leading Catholics, particularly Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, worked hard to eradicate the abuses in the church. However, many popes resisted calling a council on the issue because the popes had often lost power to cardinals and bishops when councils were held. Pope Paul III, however, was determined to see reform and became a major force
behind what is called the Catholic Reformation. Paul began by calling an investigation into the state of the church and found that abuses were common. With this information, Paul called the Council of Trent in 1545, which lasted several sessions until 1563. At Trent, Catholic leaders instituted a system for improving the clergy through better education, monitoring, and eliminating pluralism and simony. At the same time, Trent reaffirmed basic Catholic doctrines, including the authority of the pope and the legitimacy of the sacraments.

With the Catholics at Trent addressing clerical corruption but reasserting their doctrines, what ultimately divided the Catholic Reformation from the Magisterial Reformation were doctrines, not abuses. The divide concerned the nature of man’s role in his salvation. The Catholics adopted St. Thomas Aquinas’s view that salvation was a lifelong process, which came through righteous living and the church’s sacraments, and that man was not totally depraved but had the ability to choose good and affect his own salvation thereby. The Protestants, Luther and Calvin, adopted the Augustinian view that salvation came by faith through grace alone and that man, who was totally depraved and lacking in free will, played no part in his salvation.

I argue that the Magisterial Reformation made few improvements over Catholicism on essential doctrines, as the Catholic Thomist view appears closer to Mormonism than the Protestant Augustinian view. For example, here is Luther’s attempt to explain predestination: “This is the acme of faith, to believe that God who saves so few and condemns so many is merciful; that He is just who at His own pleasure has made us necessarily doomed to damnation, so that . . . He seems to delight in the tortures of the wretched and to be more deserving of hatred than of love. If by any effort of reason I could conceive how God, who shows so much anger and harshness, could be merciful and just, there would be no need of faith.” Calvin was an even stronger advocate of predestination and thus created a more complex and arcane theology. Although the Magisterial Reformers may have been sincere in their efforts to produce correct doctrine, in reality, much of that doctrine deviates markedly from the restored gospel.

It is important to note that Erasmus and many of the humanists did not join the Reformers who parted with the Catholic Church. Erasmus found Luther’s denial of free will and advocacy of predestination doctrinally intolerable. Because of these differences, Erasmus told Luther, “Therefore I will put up with this church until I see a better one.” Many Reformers refused to join the Protestants, and I believe that Latter-day Saints can sympathize with their reluctance.
The Radical Reformation

However, Erasmus and the humanists did have other choices besides Catholicism and the Magisterial Reformation. There were many contemporary alternatives to the Magisterial Reformation, and one that is often overlooked is the Radical Reformation, which rejected both Catholicism and the Magisterial Reformation. The Magisterial Reformation gained more power and adherents than the Radical Reformation; therefore, the sixteenth-century Reformation is often thought to be synonymous with the Magisterial Reformation. Yet the Radicals frequently taught doctrines closer to that of the restored gospel and made valiant sacrifices for their beliefs that, over time, greatly expanded religious freedom—all of which greatly facilitated the restoration of the Church.

Generally, the Radicals felt the Magisterial Reformers went only part way in reforming Christianity. In fact, many of the leaders of the Radical Reformation started out as followers of either Luther or Zwingli but split with the Magisterial Reformers when they felt that true reform had been compromised. The Radicals did not simply want to reform contemporary Christianity; they wanted a restitution of Christ’s Church as it was modeled in the New Testament. The Radical Reformers also generally rejected infant baptism, but the Radicals differed on the issue of how exactly to reform the church and what the church should do instead of infant baptism.

One major branch of the Radical Reformation was the Spiritualists. The Spiritualists taught that people needed to rely on the “inner word” of the Spirit to know God’s will rather than rely solely on the Bible. Spiritualists were often individual preachers who seldom formed denominations. One exception was Caspar Schwenckfeld, the Silesian nobleman. Schwenckfeld taught the importance of relying on the inner word. He also taught that the true Church was not on the earth at that time and that people should wait piously until Christ once again called Apostles to lead His Church. He gathered a small following called the Schwenckfelders. In the Netherlands, Henry Nicaels formed a secretive and close-knit body based on Spiritualist principles called the “family of love.”

Anabaptists

The primary branch of the Radical Reformation was the Anabaptists, or rebaptizers. Anabaptists, as they were called by their detractors, referred to themselves as Brethren, Christians, or Saints. There were several Anabaptist groups, but what the various forms of Anabaptists
had in common was the belief that infant baptism was null because only believers could be baptized.

The first Anabaptists were part of Zwingli’s followers in Zurich. Under the leadership of such figures as Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and George Blaurock, some of Zwingli’s followers began calling themselves the Brethren in Christ. They challenged Zwingli on the issue of infant baptism. Zwingli himself had reservations about infant baptism before deciding that the practice was legitimate. Zwingli always worked through the Zurich Council to implement his reforms, and soon the Brethren in Christ, or Swiss Brethren, became intolerant of Zwingli’s compromises. As time passed, the Brethren became more convinced of the necessity of believers’ baptism and continued to debate Zwingli on the matter; but the town council decided in favor of Zwingli and denounced the Brethren. Still convinced, on January 21, 1525, a group of the Brethren gathered at Felix Manz’s house, where George Blaurock requested Conrad Grebel to baptize him. All present at the meeting were then baptized, and the first Anabaptist movement was officially under way.9

Persecution

Zwingli and the Zurich Council moved quickly against the Anabaptists, exiling many and imprisoning Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock. Yet the Anabaptists heeded Christ’s great commission to teach all nations and baptize believers, and so the movement spread. With the spread of the movement came increased ire from the various authorities. The first Anabaptist to be executed was Eberli Bolt, who was burned at the stake by Catholic authorities in Schwyz, Switzerland. Soon rebaptism became a capital crime throughout most of Europe. Grebel and his friends were given life sentences but managed to escape. Grebel continued to preach in various towns in Switzerland until he died of the plague in the summer of 1526. Felix Manz was executed by drowning in 1527 by Protestants in Zurich.10

The Brethren struggled because of the constant execution of their leaders, but the movement continued to grow. Soon, Michael Sattler took over the movement and defined the Brethren’s religious practice. In 1527, Sattler was arrested and brought to trial by Catholic authorities in Rottenburg, where he ably defended himself against charges of heresy. Furious, the court tried to get him to recant through all manner of threats, including the sentence of execution, which read, “Michael Sattler shall be delivered to the executioner, who shall lead him to the place of execution, and cut out his tongue; then throw him upon a wagon,
and there tear his body twice with red hot tongs; and after he has been brought without the gate, he shall be pinched five times in the same manner.\textsuperscript{11} After undergoing this sentence, Sattler was burned at the stake. Sattler bore this execution with such patience and resolution that many in the area were deeply moved, and Anabaptism continued to grow.

Soon, Anabaptism emerged in the Netherlands under the millennialist preaching of Melchior Hoffman. Hoffman died in prison, and after a tumultuous existence, the leadership of the Dutch Anabaptists fell to Menno Simmons. Simmons became the leading theologian of the Anabaptists in western Europe, and although there were several Anabaptist groups in the region, his group, the Mennonites, became the dominate one. Because of the continual loss of leadership among the Swiss Brethren, the Swiss Anabaptists soon merged with the Mennonites.

Anabaptism was also successful in the southeastern German province of Moravia under the preaching of Balthazar Hubmaier. The Moravian barons were some of the most tolerant in Europe, and persecuted Radicals of all varieties poured in. Hubmaier was executed in Vienna in 1528, and the Anabaptist leadership in the area fell to Jacob Hutter, who was burned at the stake in 1536. His heroic conduct under torture inspired the movement to adopt his name as its own. The Hutterites practiced a community of goods, organizing themselves into what they called \textit{Bruderhofs}, and they became known for their excellent conduct, their schools, and their physicians. Nevertheless, the Hutterites were continually driven between Moravia and Hungary and were often forced to live as vagabonds.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{A New Testament Foundation}

There were many varieties of Anabaptists, but their belief in the necessity of believers’ baptism caused them to have many doctrinal similarities. The centerpiece of Anabaptist belief was the need for the restitution of the true Church as it existed in New Testament times. Thus, the Anabaptists’ intent was to follow the New Testament model of the Church and not to compromise, as they felt the Magisterial Reformers had. The most important practice was that of believers’ baptism, which meant that only believers joined the true Church instead of the entire population, as in Catholicism and the Magisterial Reformation. This practice separated the Anabaptists’ churches from the state. Likewise the Anabaptists advocated freedom of religion for all beliefs, claiming that the state ought not to play any role in such matters.

The Anabaptists had a different view of history than the other reformers. Catholics and Protestants both saw the official status granted
to Christianity by Constantine as ushering in a new Christian age, but Protestants felt Christianity fell into apostasy one thousand years later because popes took too much power unto themselves and became, in the Protestant view, the anti-Christ. The Anabaptists had a much different view of Constantine. The Anabaptists denounced Constantine for uniting church and state, which led to mandatory infant baptism and forced conversions of pagans. With this mass influx of unbelievers, the church became corrupted. The Anabaptists saw themselves as the restitution of Christ’s true Church that anticipated the Lord’s imminent return.¹³

To be the true Church, the Anabaptists attempted to follow the pattern in the New Testament. Communalism was practiced by many, though it was only successfully maintained by the Hutterites. Anabaptists also refused to swear oaths, and many advocated withdrawal from society. Almost all were strictly pacifistic and refused to pay taxes to support the military. The Anabaptists also believed that the true Church must be strictly devout. A high level of piety was demanded, and those whose conduct was less than adequate were banned from the church so the true Church could maintain its purity.

**Martyrdom**

Persecution and martyrdom became the hallmark of the Radical Reformation, particularly for the Anabaptists. Anabaptists were persecuted by both Catholics and Protestants. Zwingli and Luther alike despised the movements. Scholars do not know the number of Anabaptists that were killed during the sixteenth century, but it is likely that quite a number from the various movements were killed. It is estimated that 80 percent of Hutterite missionaries died as martyrs.¹⁴ In the words of Brad Gregory, “For the Anabaptists, executions were part of life—and confirmation of the very meaning of being Christian.”¹⁵ Anabaptist martyrs continually said that they were privileged to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ and considered persecution to be the cross that Christ had called His followers to bear. Catholics often subjected the Anabaptists to brutal treatment to force a recantation so they might save the “heretics’” souls, but it seldom worked. Here is how one Catholic authority described the behavior of Anabaptist martyrs:

> They dance and jump in the fire, view the glistening sword with fearless hearts, speak and preach to the people with smiles on their faces; they sing psalms and other songs until their souls have departed, they die with joy, as if they were in happy company, they remain strong, assured, and steadfast... to the point of death. And if with all possible diligence the Catholics dare and endeavor to make them turn away from
their errors . . . begging and desiring that they acknowledge their errors and recant, all this warning, begging, and imploring they regard as a fairy tale, laughing and ridiculing, and sooner than recant one article they would suffer another hundred deaths, [and] thus they remain so obstinate in their resolve that they also defy all pain and torment.\textsuperscript{16}

The Anabaptists claimed that God supported them during such torment. After undergoing torture, the Anabaptist Adriaen Jans wrote his wife, “Men hung me up by my hands so that I couldn’t touch the ground. Yes, my dear, I was very afraid, so that I could hardly stand it, when they made demands of me for the third time, and so I thought of the words of the Apostle when he says ‘The Lord will not let you be tempted above your ability,’ and they supported me.”\textsuperscript{17} Thus, the Anabaptists often went to their deaths with remarkable resolve. When the ropes burned off Michael Sattler’s wrists while he was being burned at the stake, he held up his hand to signal to his followers that the pain was tolerable. He did this after having his tongue cut out and flesh ripped from his body.\textsuperscript{18}

It is difficult for those living in our time to understand why the Anabaptists were persecuted with such malice. It helps to understand that Europe during the Reformation was a brutal era when punishments were severe. Also, the concept of religious toleration was foreign to almost everybody at that time. The general idea was that God expected magistrates to enforce proper worship; therefore, heresy was to be rooted out. Furthermore, those opposed to Anabaptism felt that the denial of infant baptism undermined the relationship between church and state that both Catholics and Magisterial Reformers advocated. With infant baptism, everyone was a member of the state church whether or not they chose to be. Many worried that the denial of infant baptism would undermine the entire social order. Zwingli wrote to a friend about the Anabaptists, saying, “The issue is not baptism but revolt, faction, and heresy.”\textsuperscript{19} Thus, Anabaptists were often accused of being subversive. The Anabaptist practices of refusing to swear oaths and of withdrawing from society to various degrees added to this the idea of subversion.

Furthermore, there were a number of movements connected to Anabaptists that were essentially subversive. In 1524, a peasants’ revolt broke out in Germany against the abuses of the local lords. The revolt was generally crushed, but several preachers who denied infant baptism were involved in the revolt. Most noteworthy was the fiery Thomas Müntzer, who in addition to denying infant baptism preached a militant apocalypticism that he felt the revolt would help usher in. Thus, many began to worry that the Anabaptists secretly wanted to overthrow the state despite their professed and practiced nonviolence.
Münster

Many felt these fears were confirmed when a group of particularly radical Anabaptists took over the city of Münster in 1534. Believing that Münster was to be the site of Christ’s Second Coming, a group of Anabaptists under the lead of the visionary John Matthijsz gained control of the Münster city council and deposed the local Catholic bishop. Anabaptism spread throughout the city. Soon, all those who had not accepted rebaptism were ordered out of the city in preparation for the Second Coming. Community of goods was instituted and, because rebaptized women outnumbered rebaptized men in Münster by about three to one, polygamy was introduced.

Soon, the deposed bishop raised a siege against Münster to try to get the city back. Matthijsz was killed in a sortie against the besiegers and was replaced by the even more fiery John of Leiden. After a year, the siege was closed, and conditions in Münster became severe. Finally, the city was betrayed, and the besieging army massacred most of the inhabitants. Three of the leaders were spared to be paraded throughout the area and in the hope of getting them to recant. Though the Münsterite leaders were disillusioned that things had not gone according to plan, they insisted that they had committed no crime against God. Finally, the leaders were executed in Münster but were first tortured for an hour with hot pokers; the stench was so bad that it drove people away for miles. Then, their tongues were ripped out with hot pincers before they were mercifully stabbed in the heart. Their bodies were gibbeted in the town square, and replicas of the gibbets remain in Münster to this day.

The “Münster debacle” is a highly controversial event, with Catholics and Protestants seeing the Münsterites as hysterical fanatics. Anabaptists despise the event even more, feeling that the Münsterites brought persecution on all Anabaptists. I feel that Latter-day Saints can sympathize with the Münsterites’ desires for continuing revelation, for establishing the kingdom of God on earth, and for the Lord’s coming. Either way, the story of the Anabaptists of Münster, who had some striking similarities to the Latter-day Saints, demonstrates that the sixteenth century was not a good time for the Lord to restore His Church.

Münster was used as a reason to persecute all Anabaptists, and the various groups lived a difficult existence for centuries. As mentioned, most Anabaptist groups in northwestern Europe merged with the Mennonites, who slowly gained greater toleration and large groups of Mennonites migrated to Pennsylvania. The Hutterites continued to live a harried existence; they were brutalized by all sides during the Thirty
Years’ War, and then they were driven to Hungary and Transylvania and from there into Russia in 1770. One hundred years later, the Hutterites began migrating to the Americas and settled in Canada, South America, and the northwestern United States.

A Lasting Heritage

Throughout their difficult existence, the Anabaptists continued to stubbornly worship separate from the state according to what they believed was the New Testament model. It is important to note that by 1830, these principles were not nearly as radical as they had been three hundred years earlier. By 1830, there was no state church in America, believers’ baptism was common (the Baptists were one of the nation’s largest religions), and primitivism became a major impulse behind many of America’s religions. The Anabaptist insistence on such principles and the willingness to die for them had slowly infused their ideas into the larger society.

Perhaps the Radicals’ greatest influence was in a number of religious groups that came after them and advocated similar principles. In Germany, the Dunkers, or German Baptists, arose in the early eighteenth century and followed many of the same practices the Anabaptists did. In the seventeenth century, England saw the rise of several groups that had many of the same beliefs as earlier Radicals. First, the Baptists under the lead of John Smyth began rebaptizing in the early seventeenth century. Half a century later, John Fox formed the Quakers on spiritualist principles of following the “inner light.” Importantly, both the Baptists and Quakers pushed hard for religious freedom and were severely persecuted. In America, both groups fought against religious intolerance. Roger Williams was banished to Rhode Island, and three Quakers were executed for preaching in Boston. Importantly, it was the Baptists of Rhode Island and the Quakers in Pennsylvania that began practicing religious tolerance. Pennsylvania, in particular, became a refuge of Radicals throughout Europe as Mennonites, Dunkers, and Schwenckfelders poured in. Thus, those of the Radical Reformation advocated and put into practice the principle of religious freedom long before the Enlightenment, the movement that often gets credit for the practice.22

Thus, the Radicals did much to prepare the world for the Restoration by working for religious freedom and advocating true principles. Furthermore, Val Rust has recently argued that early Mormon converts descended disproportionately from religious Radicals in Colonial America.23 Rust’s sample of early Mormon converts did not include the
early converts from the Delaware Valley (the Philadelphia area), where numerous individuals with Quaker and, to some degree, Mennonite heritage, joined the Mormons, including Mormonism’s longest-serving Presiding Bishop, Edward Hunter (whose father was a lapsed Quaker); the mothers of Heber J. Grant and his cousin Anthony W. Ivins (Rachel and Anna Ivins, lapsed Quakers); the grandfather of Spencer W. Kimball and J. Reuben Clark Jr. (Edwin Woolley, a lapsed Quaker; Clark’s paternal grandfather was a Dunker preacher, a later Anabaptist movement); and Gordon B. Hinckley’s Mennonite great-grandmother Anna Barr. As the early Anabaptist Anneken Jans declared to her son just prior to her execution in 1539, “When you hear of a poor, simple, cast off little flock which is despised and rejected by the world, join them; for where you hear of the cross there is Christ.”

The Radicals laid the groundwork for the Restoration in several significant ways. They refused to compromise with civil authorities in their quest for the restitution of the true Church, even to the point of death. Furthermore, they advocated and died for religious freedom at a time when such an idea was practically unheard of. Although Luther’s Reformation was truly a major event in creating “a religious climate in which God could restore lost truths and priesthood authority,” the Radical Reformation also played a major part. Thus, names such as Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, Michael Sattler, and Jacob Hutter, to name a few, ought to be included when the leading figures of the Reformation are praised.

Notes

4. Quoted in Rufus M. Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries (Boston: Beacon, 1959), 10; emphasis in original.
5. Erasmus, Erasmus’s Works, 76:117.
8. Williams, Radical Reformation, 478–81.
10. Estep, Anabaptist Story, 43, 47.
22. Many of the leaders of the Enlightenment looked to the Radicals, particularly the Quakers, for inspiration (see Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1988], 7–9). For instance, Thomas Jefferson was quite impressed with the Quakers, both for the persecution they willingly suffered and the principles that practiced (see Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson [New York: Viking, 1984], 34, 283, 1090, 1259).
By our actions, our neighbors will know our commitment to Christ.

Courtesy of Visual Resources Library
While on my mission, I spent a week with another elder in his area of Greenville, South Carolina. He and his companion had been working with a couple who were taking the discussions and who were progressing rather well. We went to visit them late one afternoon. When we got there, the husband had just arrived home ahead of us and was about to enter the house. We had just gotten out of our car when he called down to us from the back porch that he appreciated the missionaries’ interest and teachings but that he and his wife were no longer interested and did not want to continue the discussions. The man and my companion exchanged friendly commentary for a few moments and, when it became clear that we were not going to talk our way inside to pursue our teaching, we started to get back into the car. In the process, my companion invited, “Come and visit us at church sometime”—to which the man thoughtfully responded, “Thank you. You come and visit us at our church sometime.” My companion, I suppose wanting to reinforce what had been taught concerning the restoration of the Lord’s one true Church, rejoined with, “There’s no need!” That man stood on his back porch for a moment looking down at us and, after some consideration, replied, “I’m ashamed of you.”

So was I.

But I did not really understand why until recently. I am persuaded that there were some things about the gospel of Jesus Christ we did not yet grasp, and there may have been much that we could have learned from that man.
Avoid Self-Righteousness

President Hinckley has spoken out in a manner that suggests he may have a similar concern. He observed in a regional conference in January of 1998, “It isn’t the big things, the big doctrinal things that we fail in so much as the little things in our manner toward one another. . . . I hope there will be nothing of self-righteousness among us. I hope there will be nothing of arrogance among us. I hope there will be nothing of egotism among us. I hope, rather, that we will be looked upon as a good and a kind and a generous and wonderful people because that is what we must be if we are true Latter-day Saints.”

Further, he believes that we can be good neighbors and friends even in those circumstances in which we must, by reason of principle, stand independent of the pressures of popular thinking and trends. He says:

Let us not forget that we believe in being benevolent and in doing good to all men. . . . Let us reach out to those in our community who are not of our faith. Let us be good neighbors, kind and generous and gracious. . . . There may be situations where, with serious moral issues involved, we cannot bend on matters of principle. But in such instances we can politely disagree without being disagreeable. We can acknowledge the sincerity of those whose positions we cannot accept. We can speak of principles rather than personalities. . . . An attitude of self-righteousness is unbecoming a Latter-day Saint.

In fact, President Hinckley may be giving us some of the “how-to” of a concern the Savior seems to be addressing in the Sermon on the Mount. Most of us are familiar with the Savior’s charge to be perfect found in Matthew 5:48. But if we consider the context within which He made that declaration, some specific applications become evident. In the preceding two verses, He asks: “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?” (vv. 46–47).

The Savior chastens us for extending kindness and warmth only to those with whom we are already on good terms and who are going to be receptive to such an overture. In our case, these may be our friends and neighbors who are fellow Latter-day Saints and who share many of our perspectives and feelings on important issues. He suggests, to emphasize His point, that even publicans can do that. The implication is that anybody can be nice to those who are nice in return and that we must be aware, thoughtful, and considerate of all people under all circumstances, particularly those with whom we may have differences. Having emphatically established the concept, He then adds the ensuing
charge in Matthew 5:48: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (emphasis added).

In other words, we ought to seek to be absolute in our ability to interact with and treat kindly and thoughtfully those who may not share our values and perspectives and who may not return the kindness. That particular perfection ought to be a primary pursuit.

**A New Level**

In the thirteenth chapter of John, when the Savior ate with the Apostles for the last time and began His final counsel just prior to His departure for Gethsemane, He stated that He had a new commandment to give to them: “That ye love one another” (v. 34). At this point, the Apostles may have wondered what He intended, as this commandment was not new to them. Earlier, the Savior had said to the conspiring lawyer that the second of the two great summary commandments was “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39). The centrality of the concept of loving others is unquestionable. That the Apostles knew of it is beyond discussion. Yet here is the Savior saying He has a “new” commandment for them. The new part of the commandment is revealed in John 13:34 as the Savior adds a qualification: “As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Suddenly, we have a whole new level of behavior. Previously, the charge was to love others as they would love themselves; there is nothing insignificant about that level of commitment to the task. But now He says they need to love others as the Master Himself loves them. The Apostles must love as He loves. They must love with all the perspective, wisdom, and patient kindness that Jesus Himself did. That made it a new commandment.

And then He added a fascinating identifier: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). The word *this* refers to loving—as He loved. So we have, as established by the Savior Himself, a barometer by which we can identify ourselves as genuine disciples of Jesus Christ. President Hinckley seems to be suggesting that Latter-day Saints ought to reflect, in an observable way, genuine discipleship to Jesus Christ, as He Himself identified it.

**Latter-day Saints Uniquely Positioned**

And there *we* stood, representatives of the Savior—charged and sent forth by His prophet to be such—being gently schooled in Christianity by one who did not understand the Apostasy or the Restoration but who understood the Restorer. I have wondered if there may have been Another who was ashamed of us that day.
Elder Carl B. Pratt has pointed out that as members of the Lord’s true Church, “we have the richest blessings that God can give to His children. We have the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We ought to be the most open, friendly, happy, kind, considerate, thoughtful, loving people in the whole world.” Elder Pratt encourages self-examination, saying, “Now, we do pretty well at fulfilling callings, at going to meetings, at paying our tithing; but have we learned to truly live the second great commandment: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?’ (Matthew 22:39).” He then adds, “This is not something that can be assigned to the elders quorum or to the visiting teachers; this has to spring from the heart of every true disciple of Christ, a person who will look automatically and without being asked for opportunities to serve, to uplift, and to strengthen his fellowman.”

Having now gotten our attention, he alludes to the Savior’s measure of discipleship in John 13:35 and then goes straight to the heart of the matter: “We are reminded of the Savior’s words, ‘By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another’ (John 13:35). Will nonmembers, new converts, and visitors to our chapels recognize us as His disciples by the warmth of our greeting, by the ease of our smiles, by the kindness and genuine concern that shine in our eyes?”

Now I certainly recognize that we are “developing disciples,” as Elder Maxwell might put it, but sometimes I fear that we may mistake Church “busyness” and doctrinal awareness for gospel progress. I wonder if, when we speak of the restored gospel, we might not be better served as individuals to emphasize a restored concern for others as well as the restoration of sacred truths and divine authority. Bishop Richard C. Edgley says that we may be doing most of the standard things that Latter-day Saints do, but he then asks, “Are we becoming a friend? . . . We must live of Christ, for it is by our own personal, everyday living that the Savior will determine whether we are one of His true disciples, a friend.”

**True Conversion**

Further, Elder Marvin J. Ashton observes, “The way we treat each other is the foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” He then makes the following request of us: “Would you consider this idea for a moment—that the way we treat the members of our families, our friends, those with whom we work each day is as important as are some of the more noticeable gospel principles we sometimes emphasize. . . . Once again may I emphasize the principle that when we truly become converted to Jesus Christ, committed to Him, an interesting thing happens: our attention turns to the welfare of our fellowman, and the way we treat others
becomes increasingly filled with patience, kindness, a gentle acceptance, and a desire to play a positive role in their lives. This is the beginning of true conversion."

Why is this the beginning of true conversion? I believe that it is because “conversion” means conversion to Jesus Christ, which implies a desire to assimilate the principles He taught and personified. That means being converted necessitates living life as He lived it. It means becoming like Him. As He treated others with patience, kindness, and gentle acceptance, being truly converted to Him means we do the same—anything else is a facade.

We find this response clearly demonstrated by Enos, who, having prayed for hours and having his sins forgiven, declares, “When I had heard these words I began to feel a desire for the welfare of my brethren, the Nephites; wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them” (Enos 1:9). His focus shifts from himself to his fellow Nephites. Several verses later, we find that he is so overcome with Christlike tendencies that he “prays with many long strugglings” (Enos 1:11) for his Lamanite brethren, who considered him to be their sworn enemy. Did Enos believe in Jesus Christ when he began his prayers at the beginning of that long day? Of course he did, or he wouldn’t have prayed to Him. At the end of the day, was he converted? I am persuaded, and Elder Ashton would agree, that he was beginning to be. Are we converted? We will each have to make that judgment for ourselves, but there seems to be a measure by which we can calculate our progress: we simply need to apply it.

Symbol of Our Worship

Another way of putting it is to suggest that our lives, as members of the Lord’s true Church, ought to mirror Him. President Hinckley related an experience he had in 1975 that illustrates this. Following the renovation of the Arizona Temple, he was asked to host a special session for visiting clergymen during the open house that preceded its rededication. At one point, he was asked by a Protestant minister why there were no crosses in the temple or on any Latter-day Saint chapels. He answered, “For us, the cross is the symbol of the dying Christ, while our message is a declaration of the living Christ.” The minister then asked, “If you do not use the cross, what is the symbol of your religion?” President Hinckley responded, “The lives of our people must become the only meaningful expression of our faith and, in fact, therefore, the symbol of our worship.” The lives of our people are the symbol of our worship! What could be more definitive? The lives we
live, our everyday conduct, our moment-to-moment treating of each other—that is how we demonstrate that we are members of Christ’s true Church. That is the encapsulated, observable indicator of who we are, what we believe, and what we aspire to become.

A Reason for Our Hope

But, we may ask, what of our charge to be a missionary Church? After all, that was the motive, and I believe it was pure, of my companion as we stood in that man’s driveway in South Carolina. Don’t we need to declare, with boldness, the Restoration of the gospel? The question is clearly rhetorical. But let us reword it. What if our task were redefined as providing, through our actions, a reason for our belief and the hope within us and doing so “with meekness and fear” as Peter suggested? (1 Peter 3:15). Or, it is the manner in which we respond that defines the message—not the words with which we choose to outline the concept. Indeed, two other translations of the passage seem to direct us even more pointedly toward that idea. The New International Version uses “gentleness and respect” as the operative behavior, and the New Revised Standard Version uses “gentleness and reverence” to define the approach. I suggest that Peter, the chief Apostle, intended us to understand that the way we treat the inquirer is the message—that emulating Jesus Christ causes us to have hope in His intervention in our behalf. That is the basis, indeed the very essence, of what we believe and of who we are. That is Christianity. And if we are truly His, that is who we will be.

To a great extent, this entire discussion has been a consideration of theory versus application. Germane to that perspective, I offer the thinking of a respected modern Christian scholar not of our faith, Professor John G. Stackhouse of Regent College, who has observed, “God cares about people more than he cares about ‘truth’ in the abstract. Jesus didn’t die on the cross to make a point. He died on the cross to save people whom he loves. We, too, must represent our Lord with love to God and our neighbor always foremost in our concerns.”

If Professor Stackhouse is correct, and I am persuaded that he is, his counsel surely applies to Latter-day Saints, for, due to the impact of the Restoration, we ought to be Christ’s truest representatives.

Therefore, relative to our responsibility to do missionary work, I pose a question. What if, as is hoped for by President Hinckley, the world’s perceptions of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are always of a people who are actively fostering a return to kindness in a world that is becoming significantly more self-centered? What if that conclusion were the key attribute associated with the world’s awareness
of “the Mormons”—and not simply that we don’t drink coffee or that we used to have lots of wives? And what if the way we communicated our profoundly good news always reflected “gentleness and respect”? Wouldn’t those behaviors, if energetically, enthusiastically, and boldly declared through our interactions with and responses to our associates, attract the attention of others to the point of inquiry? And would we not, therefore, often find ourselves responding, “Well, since you’ve asked, let me tell you a little more about the origins of what you are observing and some of the reasons for our beliefs,” much as Peter specified? I believe that as our lives mirror Christ’s, people will seek the message of the Restoration that lies behind those lives.

**The Lower Light**

Let us look at it from another angle. In 1971, while traveling on assignment as a young General Authority, Elder Boyd K. Packer had to go by boat between two small South Pacific islands at night in a severe storm. The harbor of their destination was very narrow, and Elder Packer was to identify it by two lights. Elder Packer describes the circumstances in this manner: “At Mulisanua, there is one narrow passage through the reef. A light on the hill above the beach marked that narrow passage. There was a second lower light on the beach. When a boat was maneuvered so that the two lights were one above the other, it was lined up properly to pass through the reef.” However, he was unable to identify the harbor entrance and had to travel twenty additional miles around the island in the continuing storm before he reached safety. Elder Packer says, “But that night, there was only one light. Someone was on the landing waiting to meet us but the crossing took much longer than usual. After waiting for hours, watching for signs of our boat, they tired and fell asleep in the car, neglecting to turn on the lower light.” He then concludes, “I do not know who had been waiting for us at Mulisanua. I refused to let them tell me. Nor do I care now. But, it is true that without that lower light—the light that failed, we all might have been lost.”

Elder Packer observes that from that time forth, the words to the hymn had a new depth of meaning for him:

Brightly beams our Father’s mercy
From his lighthouse evermore,
But to **us** he gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore.
Let the lower lights be burning;
Send a gleam across the wave;
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman
You may rescue, you may save.\textsuperscript{9}

I suggest that perhaps the ultimate “lower light” may be our kindness to our associates. There are millions of people in the world who have a general concept of Christ’s mercy and of His love for them. They see the upper light—the one on the hill, but their comprehension is as yet too abstract for them to do much about it. When they see another such light in the life of another person (something far more concrete to them)—a life of Christlike kindness and genuine concern for others—then that second light tends to help them align themselves with the original, higher light. They are thereby able to define a course into the safety of the harbor of His ultimate atoning kindness.

I believe President Hinckley said it all when he taught, “Our kindness may become our most persuasive argument for that which we believe.”\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Notes}

For me and my younger brother, religious education came early. It was provided by our wonderful parents and partly by our great-grandmother, a small woman with a big name: Margaret Elizabeth “Pansy” Gordon (formerly Schutt). Her life was long and exciting (1866–1966). She was sent from England with her parents and sister by the Church of England to convert the Native Americans of British Columbia. She survived a shipwreck, traveled by canoe with only Native American men for companions, crossed and recrossed the continent by rail, drove a team of horses from Meadowville, Utah, to Calgary with her babies and parents, and had many other adventures. To us, boys of eight and ten years old, these stories were interesting but so remote and distant that they seemed unreal. Reality was playing backyard softball and building forts. But reality also included our externally imposed religious education.

My brother and I called our great-grandmother “G-G” when she lived with our family in the foothills of Monrovia, California, in the 1950s and 1960s. No one could know her without sensing her passion for the Book of Mormon. But Eric and I knew it by direct and repeated observation. G-G, aided and abetted by our parents, insisted that we report to her small bedroom several times a week to be instructed from the Book of Mormon. She was entirely unmoved by the compelling fact that there were dirt-clod wars to be fought, though perhaps the lemon drops she dispensed as a reward for good behavior betrayed some compassion for our plight. We took turns reading, and she explained as we went along.
G-G’s love for the Book of Mormon dates back to the 1885 arrival of a package in the tiny Indian village of Henvey’s Inlet along the northern shores of Lake Ontario. Her father had been transferred there to teach school to Indian children, and G-G and her sister Fanny, then eighteen and sixteen, were the only white children in the village. The package had been carried by rail, ship, horseback, and hand from Salt Lake City. It contained a copy of the Book of Mormon and a Latter-day Saint tract called “Spencer’s Letters,” a discussion between Orson Spencer and a minister. As an outcome of an extended visit with Mormon relatives in Salt Lake City the year before, G-G had been exposed to the Church but not attracted to it. Indeed, she reports that she felt “quite sorry for my Mormon cousins in Salt Lake” and expressed that sentiment in a letter to her cousin Joseph. (Joseph tartly replied that he was a deacon in his church and that no one need feel sorry for him.)

However, she began to feel “a strange desire . . . to learn something of Mormonism,” proving that the Lord who found Jonah can find anyone anywhere. She resisted, recalling that she “didn’t like the idea at all,” having been taught that Brigham Young was a “wicked, immoral man.” Nevertheless, because there was no one else with whom she could discuss this “strange and insistent urge,” she corresponded with another Salt Lake City cousin, asking for something to read about the Church. The cousin sent the package of material. Accompanying it was a letter from her cousin: “If you read this to scorn as you did here, I’ll send you no more. If you are interested and want more, I’ll send it.” What happened next is best told in G-G’s own words:

I decided to read the Book of Mormon first. So taking it in hand, I went into my little bedroom and still holding it, knelt down and asked my Father if Mormonism was really true and Joseph Smith a true prophet, to reveal it to me as I read. I sat down and started to read and immediately strange burning thrills went all over my body. At first I was afraid and then a peace came over me and all the while I read those burning electric thrills stayed with me until I laid the book down. The next afternoon, when ready to start reading, I again took the book to my room and again prayed that if it was true, I could be shown clearly. For three weeks I read each day asking the same blessing, not realizing that I had the greatest converter of all to teach me. And every time I picked it up after praying would come those electric burning thrills, which I soon recognized must be part of my teaching. I never mentioned them to the folks. They never knew of the wonderful experiences I was having all to myself or how my Father was teaching me the true gospel. As I neared the end of the book, filled with the wonderful spirit it possesses, I came to the 10th chapter of Moroni, verses 4 & 5:
“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things.”

As I read these words, my eyes were fully opened. I gave a shout. I knew then what had been thrilling and burning my whole body. It was the promised spirit which had testified to my soul. Without being told I had done just as Moroni said. I had asked my Father in the name of His son to reveal unto me the truth and he did just that, and I fully knew it. I cannot describe the joy I felt. It was beyond expression. I knew then and have never doubted since that the gospel is true and Joseph Smith a prophet of the Lord.

G-G never wavered from that moment. In later years, she became a sought-after speaker at firesides and sacrament meetings. When in her old age she saw an opportunity to teach her great-grandsons about the Book of Mormon, she did not hesitate. Eric and I, her captive students, can still picture her bent over her scriptures with a magnifying glass that, to our endless amusement, made her nose look huge. Not deterred in her purpose by our teasing nor even by our uncontrollable fit of laughter when first we heard the name “Zeezrom,” G-G persevered. Bit by bit, the Book of Mormon stories made an impression on us.

The impact the book had on us became apparent during sacrament meeting when Eric and I were invited to the pulpit to talk about the Book of Mormon. We cannot remember why we were called up, but some say the scheduled speakers had failed to appear. Others say that G-G herself was the assigned speaker and that she stunned the bishopric by deferring to us. Dad was the bishop, and our uncle, Wayne Barker, was his counselor, which may have had something to do with it as well. What no one disputes is that entirely to our surprise and with no small embarrassment, we were called upon to report what G-G had been teaching us. In a day when Book of Mormon study was neither part of the regular Sunday School curriculum nor required reading at BYU, it was apparently quite a phenomenon that a couple of boys knew it well enough to tell a little about it.

As the older brother, I went first and plowed into the material, telling about the departure from Jerusalem, the retrieval of the brass plates and of Ishmael’s family, the building of the ship, the ocean voyage, and so on. At what I estimated to be the midpoint, I turned the burden over to Eric, who proceeded to tell the rest of the story. G-G
was glowing with pride. So was I, until Uncle Wayne went to the pulpit, acknowledged the talent of our teacher, and then observed that it appeared Eric had read “a little further than Steve.” It wasn’t true! But Eric has never let me forget it. In any event, we always thought we had an inside track on Book of Mormon scholarship.

I have since forgiven my uncle, but I am not yet over the feeling that the Book of Mormon belonged mostly to G-G and, by right of inheritance, to Eric and me. It is difficult to say whether the Book of Mormon found G-G or whether G-G found the Book of Mormon, but it was the start of a lifetime of teaching for a very small woman with a very big name and a testimony to match it.

G-G’s burning testimony of the Book of Mormon is a legacy within our family. I have not yet done justice to the details of her conversion experience, but my children know that this volume of scripture is special to me and that I love reading and teaching it. One of my daughters attributes the rescue of her testimony in a time of deep despair to her reading of the Book of Mormon. It is an anchor in our family.

If I were to identify the principles we learned from our experiences with G-G, something that would help parents who desire to pass their own testimonies on to later generations, the results would be evident. First, parents cannot teach what they don’t know. G-G knew the Book of Mormon was true, but she also knew the content of the Book of Mormon. She could explain the sometimes complicated stories in simple terms. So parents should master the content of the Book of Mormon. Second, children sometimes object to studying the scriptures. When this happens, the best response from parents is, “Nevertheless, we insist.” More will rub off than is anticipated. And lemon drops can help. Third, parents should start early. Supple young minds are able to get a handle on the scriptures, and learning later in life requires more effort.

I cannot promise that anyone’s children will experience the “electric, burning thrills” described by G-G in her journal or that they will become ward celebrities by giving spur-of-the-moment talks in church. But can I promise that a sincere and prayerful study of the Book of Mormon will lead to a testimony? I do not have to; Moroni already did that.
A Tribute to Gospel Teachers

Rebecca McConkie

My ambitious father tried to teach us ancient Greek the summer I turned seven. Every morning we complained our way down to the kitchen table, with a piece of butcher paper stretched across its length, and delved into a language that, as one of my older siblings never failed to remind him, was dead. Only now does it occur to me that my dad didn’t know Greek at the time. He was going to learn it with us. On those early summer mornings while my mother prepared breakfast and most of us fell back asleep, my dad let us watch him learn. And although I cannot now recall what Greek letter follows alpha, I tremble with excitement when I think about how much we learned that summer.

The outcome of those experiences is a lesson I have tried to apply in my first year as a middle-school teacher. I teach in what the politically correct call a low-income area and what the culturally insensitive call the ghetto. My students are generally four years behind average, and despite my best efforts to change their worlds, every day at three o’clock they must go home to the same situation they left that morning. I ask myself if they are processing anything—some particle of a day’s lessons.

The evidence is discouraging. All sixty of my students still say, “The book is mines.” Jerry still can’t write a complete sentence. And even though this is Aslim’s second time in the seventh grade, he can’t finish an easy-reader book about Dick and Jane and Spot. In an especially frustrating time this past year, a more experienced teacher reminded me that far more than teaching literacy, I was teaching these students
how to learn. In retrospect, that is what every great gospel teacher has taught me: how to learn.

In that respect, my father is my favorite example. It seems like there were always opportunities to hear him teach. Of course there were church meetings, firesides, and family hour. But there were also dinner-table conversations, rides in the car, letters, and phone calls home the night before I had to teach Sunday School. But I saw him learning far more than I saw him teaching—and that seems important.

I don’t remember exactly what he taught us in family scripture study, but I know what the margins of his scriptures look like, and his copy of *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* is likewise sufficiently worn. I can picture him lying on his back with a highlighter in his mouth and a book on his chest. I hear him asking questions in casual conversation. “Dennis, you’re a doctor. How much has the human body decomposed three days after death?”

I am unapologetically biased when I think of my father as my great gospel teacher. Although twenty years down the road I have forgotten the specific things he spent time teaching me, I will always know how to learn the gospel because I saw my father doing it. He demonstrated that, like Peter with the lame man, effective gospel teachers take students and command them, “Rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6).

Such was the case on the first day in my Pearl of Great Price class. The teacher was methodically giving us an overview of the book’s contents. Chapter by chapter, theme by theme, he took fifteen minutes to show that those sixty pages of scripture covered the entire history of the earth. On finishing the summary, he triumphantly promised that in his class, we would be as “Moses upon the High Mount, with a panoramic view of the earth and its purposes.”

Here I was on the heels of a man who was willing to share the benefits of his preparation and take me up the mountain. “This isn’t a class you can take at Berkeley,” he stated. “You can’t get this class at *Harvard*” (he emphasized the word with an accent that crossed South Boston street life and intellectual piety). “You can get this class only in the school of the prophets.” True to his word, it was unlike any class I had ever taken. With only the scriptures for a text, we began in the premortal councils, and by the final exam we were discussing the Second Coming.

I frequently left his class thinking, “I’ve got to go home and reread that.” Simply put, we saw that he had climbed the heights because he had put in the effort; and by repeatedly pointing us to the scriptures, he invited us to do the same. The outcome makes me think of the
lame man: “His feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked” (Acts 3:7–8). This teacher covered all the important points of the syllabus, but his class was valuable because he effectively showed us how to truly ascend in gospel understanding.

When I interviewed for my first teaching job, I told the principal that good teachers shape systems capable of working without them. I still believe that. My uncle says of my grandfather, “Dad taught us how to get answers for ourselves instead of having us develop a dependency relationship on him. Had he done that, the well of our understanding would have dried up when he passed away. Perhaps the most important thing he taught us was how to keep the waters of everlasting life continuously flowing into that well.”

I am grateful for the many teachers who have demonstrated that the goal of gospel teaching is to enable all men and women to have prophetic insights—not merely to lead us up the mountain so we can see the things that Moses saw but to show us how to walk up the mountain so we ourselves can see, understand, and apply the outcomes.

Note

Prince of Peace
Painting by Simon Dewey

Courtesy of Altus Fine Art © 2000 by Simon Dewey
“The Way of an Eagle”:
Birds in the Scriptures

Dale Z. Kirby

Dale Z. Kirby is the director of the Salem Oregon Institute.

The book of Proverbs speaks of “things which are too wonderful for me,” the first of which is “the way of an eagle in the air” (Proverbs 30:18–19). In this article, I will explore the ways of eagles and explain the symbolism of the behaviors, flights, and colors of birds in the scriptures and in the teachings of modern prophets and apostles. My goal is to testify of the handiwork of the Creator in forming these beautiful creations.

Moses, who wrote the first books of the Bible, recorded that all things testify of Christ (see Moses 1:63). Truly, birds, with their broad, beautiful colors in nearly endless patterns and combinations, reflect the joy the Lord has in such colors and designs. Likewise, the varieties of notes, melodies, songs, and calls of birds tell of the Creator’s joy in music.

Multiple references to birds are found in the standard works and doctrines of the prophets. Like the flight of birds, these verses come and go throughout the text. A deeper study of them reveals that the Old Testament use of birds by the prophets often testified of Jehovah. Jesus Christ Himself frequently referred to various birds and their behaviors as symbols representing Himself, His Atonement for mankind, and the deeper truths of His gospel.

The Old Testament

The first mention of birds in the Old Testament occurs in the fourth creative period of the earth as recorded in Genesis 1:21. At that time, God created “every winged fowl” and told them to multiply after their own kind. God created a very large number of species of birds. A
partial list in the book of Leviticus includes the eagle, ossifrage, osprey, vulture, kite, raven, owl, little owl, great owl, night hawk, cuckow, hawk, cormorant, swan (probably an ibis), pelican, gier eagle, stork, heron, and lapwing. Under the provisions of the Mosaic law, these were considered to be the unclean birds that were not to be eaten (see Leviticus 11:13–19). In Deuteronomy 14:20, Moses explained that members of the house of Israel were allowed to eat clean birds, but a biblical list of them is not available. Judging from the thousands of existing birds, the list would have been lengthy.

Birds played a part in the drama of real life at the time of the Flood. Noah must have taken hundreds of pairs of birds onto the ark. What a powerful sound they would have made! However, their morning singing may have been subdued because there was no visual sunrise during the first forty days they were on the ark. After forty days and nights of rain, plus nearly one year of additional time on the ark waiting for the waters to subside, Noah first sent out a raven (see Genesis 8:7). Soon thereafter, he released a dove “to see if the waters were abated . . . but the dove found no rest . . . and she returned” (vv. 8–9). After seven days, Noah again freed the dove, and she returned in the evening with an olive leaf, symbolizing that God was again at peace with the earth. Noah then knew that the cleansing of the earth was completed and that “the waters were abated from off the earth” (v. 11). Seven days later, the dove again flew away, never to return. These final seven days may have symbolized that the earth was completely clean.

The Father likewise sent the Son to the earth. His Atonement cleansed the inhabitants of the world from sin. Just as the dove that Noah sent forth found no rest and returned to Noah, Christ also found no mortal rest and returned to the Father.

Approximately 1,140 years after Noah left the ark and about 180 years after the brother of Jared left for the land of promise, Moses led the children of Israel through the wilderness of Sinai. At times they were near starvation; Jehovah twice sent quail to preserve Israel and to give variety to the diet of the group, who had been living on manna for years (see Exodus 16:13; Numbers 11:31–35). The greedy who gathered more than the prescribed number of quail were smitten with a plague. Since then, man’s greed has caused the death of untold numbers of birds and made some species extinct. In contrast to the fate of the gluttonous who made quail their downfall, those who were obedient not only allowed the quail to save them but also looked forward to the spiritual saving powers of Christ. He would come and save the obedient both temporally and spiritually.
Just as the sent quail had saved Moses’s people, another species of bird would later become Elijah’s temporal savior. Ravens are large birds, and ornithologists consider them one of the most intelligent of all birds. In about 900 BC, the country in which the prophet Elijah lived experienced a drought. God directed him to the brook Cherith, where God commanded ravens to feed him. This they did each morning and evening, saving Elijah from starvation (see 1 Kings 17:5–7). Thus, God chose these large, intelligent birds to supply food to preserve His prophet. The bread and flesh they brought were symbols of the Savior, who taught that He had “meat to eat that [men] know not of” and that He was the true bread of life (John 4:32; 10:48).

In the law of Moses, birds were sacrificed as an offering to Jehovah to cause Israel to look forward to the Savior for redemption. Because of their peaceful nature, the sacrifice of turtledoves or young pigeons symbolized the future offering made by Christ. Birds were also used under the law of Moses in the ritual of cleansing lepers and their houses. A priest took two birds, “alive and clean,” from the person to be cleansed. One bird was “killed in an earthen vessel over running water” (Leviticus 14:4–5). Then, the priest dipped the living bird, which was wrapped in a scarlet cloth soaked in hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed. Next, he sprinkled the blood of the dead bird upon the leper and his house seven times. Thus, he symbolically cleansed both the house and the leper. Finally, the priest pronounced the leper clean and released the bird “out of the city into the open fields” (Leviticus 14:53). Thus, an atonement was made for the house, and it was made clean. The blood of the bird represented the cleansing power of the blood of Christ that would come into the home and heart of fallen, natural man, as symbolized by leprosy. Cleansing seven times symbolized a complete or total cleansing of body and spirit. The flight of the living bird into the open field typified the unclean man leaving society as well as the separation of man from sin.

It is interesting to note that although birds were often sacrificed, the angel of the Lord who saved Abraham from being sacrificed by the priest of Pharaoh was depicted as a bird, as shown in facsimile 1 in the book of Abraham.

In addition to their symbolical use as cleansing sacrifices, the behavior of birds symbolizes the escape of one’s soul from sin and error. The Psalmist wrote that through the Lord, “our soul is escaped as a bird out of a snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped” (Psalm 124:7). Solomon advised the reader to flee from six of the behaviors the Lord hates when he wrote, “Deliver thyself . . . as a bird from the hand of the fowler” (Proverbs 6:5).
Solomon further warned against placing too much emphasis on riches when he stated that “riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” (Proverbs 23:5). Eagles were the largest birds of prey in the biblical region of Palestine. Both golden and imperial eagles were common in that area.

Isaiah, the great Old Testament prophet and poet who testified of the coming of Christ, wrote of swallows and owls. In Isaiah 38:14, he taught that swallows portray human chatter, most likely since swallows are social birds who flock together and chatter constantly. In reference to the final destruction of the latter-day spiritual wickedness called Babylon, Isaiah prophesied that the “houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there” (Isaiah 13:21). This image seems appropriate, as owls often perch in the rafters of deserted buildings, looking somber and doleful as they quietly watch within their dim surroundings.

The New Testament

As recorded in the New Testament, the sign of a dove at Christ’s baptism became a symbol that was employed frequently throughout the Savior’s ministry. After coming forth out of the Jordan River, John the Baptist “saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him” (Matthew 3:16). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost. . . . The Holy Ghost cannot be transformed into a dove; but the sign of a dove was given to John to signify the truth of the deed, as the dove is an emblem or token of truth and innocence.” The Prophet additionally taught that just as a dove is beautiful, the Holy Ghost beautifies men and women as its influence sanctifies them. As a dove is peaceful, the Holy Ghost is a continuing source of peace, giving charity (see Galatians 5:22–23). Further, a dove’s mournful call reminds us of the Holy Ghost’s influence on our conscience, causing us to mourn for our sins.

The classification “dove” in biblical texts is applied to several types of pigeons as well as doves. Biblical writers must have been close to nature to have carefully observed doves, noting their peaceful, innocent behavior. The Bible Dictionary notes that doves are symbols of truth, innocence, affection, and timidity (see Bible Dictionary, “Dove, Sign of,” 658). Doves illustrated swiftness (see Psalm 55:6), beauty (see Psalm 68:13), harmlessness (see Matthew 10:10), simplicity (see Hosea 7:11), a loving nature (see Song of Solomon 1:15), and mournfulness (see Isaiah 38:14).

Jesus Christ, the master teacher of truth, used birds in His instructions to the people of Palestine. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ instructed
those called to the ministry and stated, “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matthew 6:26). Thus, Christ called upon His servants to trust Him for sustenance as they labored in His behalf. Telling them to notice the unencumbered life of birds, He questioned their faith in Him and encouraged them to make their first priority the building up of the kingdom of God.

In two of His parables, the Savior uses birds as symbols. In the parable of the sower, after seeds were sown, unnamed “fowls of the air devoured” them. When His disciples asked the meaning of the parable and its symbolic details, the Master said that the birds are “the devil that taketh away the word” out of men’s hearts if the soil of their souls is shallow and full of stones (see Luke 8:5–12). Anyone who has watched birds quickly eat seeds planted in shallow, rocky soil understands this allegory. However, when gospel seeds are planted deep in the hearts of the Lord’s disciples, Satan cannot devour them.

Later, Matthew recorded Christ’s parable of the kingdom of Heaven, which He likened unto a mustard seed. In this parable, the Lord taught that when the seed grows and becomes great, or when the kingdom matures and becomes great, the “birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matthew 13:32). Joseph Smith taught that these birds represent the angels, gifts, and powers that God is sending down from heaven to lodge in the branches. These branches symbolize congregations of the Church. The Prophet later added that these angels would come down and combine together to gather their children and save their kindred.

Matthew also recorded the Son of God’s sermon on the signs or events preceding the Second Coming of the Lord. In Matthew 24:28, the Savior taught, “For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” Respecting this parable, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, “In the parable, as here given, the carcass is the body of the Church, to which the eagles, who are Israel, shall fly to find nourishment.” At times, the world regards The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a religion void of spiritual life, when, in fact, spiritual nourishment awaits those who flock to it.

Matthew further noted that Christ’s teachings always placed the souls of men on a high level of importance. When speaking to His Twelve Apostles, He told them not to worry about those who were able to kill them physically. He taught them to be more concerned about those who would destroy their souls. Then, He asked, “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the
ground without your Father knoweth it” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 10:26). Christ then said, “Fear ye not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows” (10:27). Sparrows, like the human race, are widely spread over the earth. They are common birds; their brown, gray, and white colors are not sources of awe. Christ’s concern is for all of God’s children, not just for those with public lives or for those whose appearance or achievements draw the world’s attention. He gave His life and continues to give His forgiveness and love to even the most common and plain of the human race. Christ clearly values those who labor with Him, not only for the message they carry but for their individual personal worth as children of God.

John the Revelator saw “every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth . . . and such as are in the sea, . . . saying, Blessings, and honour, and glory, and power, be . . . unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Revelation 5:13). Of this vision, Joseph Smith said, “[John] saw every creature that was in heaven—all the beasts, fowls and fish in heaven—actually there, giving glory to God.” These creatures, the Prophet continued, were of a thousand forms that had been saved for ten thousand times ten thousand earths, creations of which we have no conception. The Prophet further said that “John learned that God glorified Himself by saving all that His hands had made, whether beasts, fowls, fishes or men.” Truly, in the creation of the beautiful and colorful birds of the earth, the Lord shows us a part of His great power and glory.

Jesus Christ, who inspired John His beloved Apostle to write the book of Revelation, warned the wicked nations of the earth that in the last days before the Savior’s Second Coming, an angel would cry with a loud voice, “saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, . . . captains, . . . mighty men, . . . both small and great” (Revelation 19:17–18). John, in the unfolding vision of the downfall of Babylon, wrote that fallen Babylon “is become . . . the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (18:2). He also prophesied that “the remnant were slain with the word of him that sat upon the horse . . . and all the fowls were filled with their flesh” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 19:21). This scene was later shown to Joseph Smith, who recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 29:20 that vengeance and death would come upon the unrepentant wicked who would be devoured by the beast of the field and the fowls of the air. These fowls will act as cleansing agents, devouring the slain bodies of the wicked and thus helping cleanse the earth of all wickedness in preparation for the return of its Creator.
The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times

In the first years of this dispensation, Joseph Smith exhorted the marching members of Zion’s Camp “not to kill . . . the birds . . . unless it became necessary in order to preserve ourselves from hunger.” The Prophet Joseph Smith and other latter-day prophets have discouraged Church members from killing birds for fun or sport. Birds have rescued the Saints several times. In 1846, following the Battle of Nauvoo, five to six hundred Latter-day Saints known as “the poor camp” were struggling for survival in Iowa along the banks of the Mississippi River. They were poorly clothed and had little protection from the elements, meager accommodations, and little food. As in the times of ancient Israel, the Lord sent large flocks of quail that arrived in the camp on October 9. The birds apparently were weary from a long flight. When they landed in the camp, the destitute Saints caught and killed them. This “miracle of the quail” saved the lives of many members of the poor camp. To these faithful followers of Christ, this was a sign of His great mercy to them. Thus, quail became the saviors of modern Israel, the same as their ancient counterparts.

Most of us are acquainted with the coming of the seagulls to save the crops of the Mormon pioneers in the Great Basin in 1848. Following many months of poor diets, the crops of the year looked promising until that May, when thousands of crop-devouring crickets entered the valley. For weeks, they destroyed crops planted for food and likewise destroyed the hopes of the Saints. By mid-June, thousands of seagulls were coming to eat the crickets. Settlers saw their coming as a miracle and looked upon the birds as their temporal saviors.

President Joseph F. Smith taught, “I do not believe any man should kill animals or birds unless he needs them for food, and then he should not kill innocent little birds that are not intended for food for man.” President Spencer W. Kimball in the general priesthood meeting of April conference in 1978 recalled the older Primary hymn, “Don’t Kill the Little Birds,” as follows:

Don’t kill the little birds,
That sing on bush and tree,
All thro’ the summer days,
Their sweetest melody.
Don’t shoot the little birds!
The earth is God’s estate,
And he provideth food
For small as well as great.

“The Way of an Eagle”: Birds in the Scriptures
President Kimball then told of his youthful skill with his slingshot and said it was “quite a temptation to shoot the little birds ‘That sing on bush and tree,’ . . . but . . . because I sang nearly every Sunday, ‘Don’t Kill the Little Birds,’ I was restrained.” He further quoted the next verse of the song:

Don’t kill the little birds,
Their plumage wings the air,
Their trill at early morn
Makes music ev’ry-where.
What tho’ the cherries fall
Half eaten from the stem?
And berries disappear,
In garden, field, and glen?

Then President Kimball said, “I could see no great fun in having a beautiful little bird fall at my feet.” These prophetic doctrines reflect the Lord’s will. They signify the great change from the use of birds under the law of Moses for sacrifice and the use of birds as we follow the gospel of Jesus Christ as taught in this dispensation. These doctrines also demonstrate the high respect the prophet of the Church had for birds.

Bird behavior also symbolizes good and evil in the lifestyles of individuals. We must look beyond the beautiful and sometimes harsh behaviors of some birds to discover the great realities that these scriptural symbols teach about God and Christ and man’s relationship to them. Birds are very alert creatures. They are constantly on the move and watch for their enemies, such as larger birds, animals, and man. We, too, must be alert and continually on the lookout for those who would destroy us spiritually and morally.

In a revelation given to Joseph Smith, the Lord promised that those who observed the laws of the Sabbath with cheerful hearts and countenances would be blessed with the fulness of the earth, including the fowls of the air. Then, he said that all these good things of the earth were “made . . . for the benefit of man, . . . both to please the eye and gladden the heart . . . and to enliven the soul” (D&C 59:18–19). During worship services, Latter-day Saints sing the hymn “How Great Thou Art,” which reads:

When thru the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees, . . .
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
How great thou art!

Those who enjoy reverently watching birds or delight in their singing, who express amazement at their many colors and sounds, and who
likewise understand the sacred word of God can testify of the greatness of our Savior. Along with birds, they can raise a joyful song to the Lord of creation.

Notes

The Don and Ann Pearson family

Photo courtesy of the authors
Helping Children to Be Lifelong Learners

Don and Ann Pearson

Don and Ann Pearson are the parents of six children and live in Glendale, California. Both graduated from BYU, and Don then received his law degree from Harvard University.

When our oldest son, Eric, was four, I was reading him a picture book, *Paddy Pork and His Ballooning Adventures*. I told the story from the pictures: “Paddy Pork is in a hot air balloon. He is landing on that island. He is dropping a line over the side of the balloon.”

Eric stopped me. “That’s not a line; it’s a rope.”

I looked at Eric and then back at the book and continued. “He is getting out of the balloon and trying to climb down the tree. Oh no, his coat is caught on a limb.”

Eric said, “That’s not a coat; it’s a jacket.”

I was somewhat annoyed and said, “Eric, there are no words in this book—only pictures. How can you tell that that is a rope and not a line and a jacket and not a coat? I am a lawyer and went to law school and now get paid a lot of money to make careful distinctions, and I can’t tell, so how do you know?”

He thought for a long time and then said, “Mother told me.” Of course, she had read the book to him probably a hundred times by then.

“Do you think your mother is the final authority in this house?” I asked.

His little lip quivered, and he carefully thought before answering, “No, you are.”

My chest expanded with this exceptional answer, but then, like the lawyer on cross-examination who asked one question too many, I asked, “How did you know that?”

He responded, “Mother told me.”
Although somewhat humbling, this experience caused me to reflect on “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” which states “fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”

At the request of the Religious Educator, we have attempted to share some of what we have learned as parents and to outline some of our thoughts about education. The stories, experiences, and insights in this essay are our stories and experiences with our six children and are put together in an effort to give ideas that have worked for us. Most of the ideas are not earthshaking, but they illustrate “that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

Each of our six children has served a full-time mission, and each has graduated from college and has completed an advanced degree, except our youngest, Steven, who has returned from a mission in Taiwan and who we anticipate will graduate from BYU in April of 2007. Sometimes people ask us, “How did you get your kids to do well in school?” The short answer is that we have been blessed with remarkable children. The long answer is (1) we loved learning and tried to be examples to our children of that love, (2) we read with our children and encouraged them in their reading, (3) we found opportunities for teaching and learning in day-to-day activities, (4) we were actively involved in discussions and decisions about education at every level of their schooling, and (5) we had dinner together as a family.

General Principles

We have found many ways to make learning fun for our family, including the following:

1. *Share your love of learning.* We like to tell our children the story about how we met as college students. Ann and I met in a New Testament class at Brigham Young University. Before the semester ended, we were studying together the great themes of the four Gospels. At the end of the semester, in preparation for the final exam, we enjoyed reviewing class notes together and creating outlines and memorizing key scriptures on baptism, service, and discipleship, among other themes. There was something fun about the intensity of the learning process and in preparing for the final examination. Learning was exhilarating, and studying together made it more enjoyable.

Over the years, we hoped that our interest in books and words and ideas would be so much a part of us that it would bubble out spontaneously. Our interest in world, national, Church, and local news is a part of who we are.
2. **Spend time together.** One of the greatest joys of being a parent is doing things with your children. We felt that time should be spent in a variety of different activities as well as in various combinations with family members:

- parents and all the children together
- mother one-on-one with each child
- father one-on-one with each child
- mother and father together with each child

In the last category, we planned one major vacation with each child during his or her growing-up years. What a wonderful interpersonal and educational experience for parents and child alike!

3. **Take advantage of learning opportunities.** Although there is no substitute for school, there is also no substitute for learning when school is out. Just as Alma taught that we should pray always in our fields and in our hearts, so we should be always learning from the daily activities of which we are a part. All of life is a learning process, and there are thousands of golden moments to teach and to learn. We used dinner time, driving time, and early morning time as bonus learning times by talking about subjects of interest and importance in our children’s schoolwork or scripture study.

Marianne recalls the time on the freeway when an understanding of fractions came to her. She was five or six at the time. The freeway sign said “Los Feliz—1/2 mile.” We talked about what the “1” stood for, what the “2” stood for, and that for a mile with two parts, only one part was left until we came to the exit. I don’t know why she learned it on the freeway; it would have been easier at the dinner table to talk about half of an orange because it would have been so much more visible than half of a mile.

When driving alone to or from work, Church, or business meetings, I listen to educational tapes or CDs, especially history and literature, or I listen to the scriptures. I recently listened to the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. We have encouraged our children to use blocks of free time each week in meaningful ways.

**Preschool and Elementary**

Although there are preschool years, there are no prelearning years. It is obvious that babies and toddlers have dramatic learning curves. In advance of walking and talking, they see everything and they hear everything, and most, or at least much, of what they see and hear is retained.

The preschool and elementary years are an immense block of time. Even assuming a mission and graduate school, they represent half or
almost half of all of the learning years that comprise a formal education. They are vastly undervalued and vastly underutilized.

A child under the age of twelve should have the opportunity to explore many interests and begin to develop many skills; however, we tried to be selective so that what was done could be enjoyed and done well. We tried to see that those early years were used to the maximum advantage, bearing in mind that we wanted balanced, happy children who had time to play, work at home, be involved in Church and sports, and still have time for themselves. For us, these activities didn’t include helping them find TV time or computer and electronic game time. When our older children were young, we kept our TV in a closet and brought it out only for special times.

1. **Show love.** It is easy to love a child, especially your own child, and learning is helped by love. As a mother shows or tells a child the way to do something, her love is felt by her child, and that love reinforces learning. It also affects the quality of teaching; without love, the teacher’s interest in the learning process is not the same, and without love, the toddler’s interest in the learning process is not the same.

2. **Encourage independence.** Each of our children learned very early how to say, “I will do it myself.” Learning is doing and then doing it again—not just watching and then watching again. No child or adult ever learned to play the piano by watching. Let them do it—whatever “it” is—as soon as they can. Find opportunities for them to serve others and meet challenges successfully through their own efforts.

3. **Celebrate achievements.** The ultimate reward of learning is to have learned. But recognition from parents and others is a great motivator. Sometimes we would have a child repeat an Article of Faith or a scripture at family home evening and then present the child with a certificate for the accomplishment. “To Laura Pearson for learning the 10th Article of Faith.” “To Thomas Mack Pearson for counting to 100.” Presenting the certificate in a formal way at a formal meeting (family home evening) was fun. We often had the child receiving the certificate come forward and be lifted up on the table. He or she would be presented the certificate and congratulated. The award presentation would be formal and serious with shaking hands and a hug and sometimes a picture. The certificate and picture, if a picture had been taken, would then be placed on the refrigerator door.

4. **Make reading fun.** The ability to read is the foundation of all learning. The key is practice, and practice should be fun. We tried to be sure the child was practicing at the right level so that it could be fun.
We did not set out to teach our children to read before formally learning to read in school because we wanted their school experience to hold some excitement. But we did want them to be prepared to learn to read when that time came. As they asked about letters and words, we found it natural to help them learn the alphabet and the sound each letter makes. The first word a child wants to learn to recognize and write is his or her own name. As we read to our children and as they looked at cereal boxes, toys, and games, they discovered letters and then words. Group scripture reading was a time when our beginning readers took great joy in finding and marking words they recognized in their own copy of the Book of Mormon.

As we drove in the car, we would point to a sign and ask, “What is that letter?” or “What sound does that letter make?” Sometimes we played the alphabet game (finding the alphabet letters in order from A to Z on road signs). Older siblings love being on a team with a younger brother or sister who can’t read but can recognize letters. Thus, words were presented as a natural part of daily living (and it helped to pass those long minutes driving older siblings to baseball practice or piano lessons).

The very most significant tool for parents in helping young children develop reading skills, prior to their being able to read themselves, is reading aloud together. Reading books is interesting and fun. Good stories are imaginative and informative. Bedtime was the most regular time for reading aloud in our family.

One night when Karen had just turned two, her older brother and sister had been permitted to spend the night at cousins, and I was helping her get ready for bed. I turned out the light and gave her a bottle. She refused the bottle and said, “Prayer, brush teeth, story!” Each child felt entitled to his or her bedtime story, and after it was read, they asked to “please read it again.” And that is what we wanted them to say—we wanted them to fall in love with books. We cherished this time, free from distractions, when we could nestle together and share the wide world of life’s experiences through books and the discussion they inspired.

Even well into the elementary years, each child chose a book every evening. Sometimes an older child would do the reading to a younger one, but the child always wanted a parent nearby to appreciate the reading and to be a part of that bedtime ritual.

We enjoyed reading to our children. We enjoyed listening to them read out loud to us. We enjoyed reading together by taking turns in the same chapter of scriptures or a book or short story. We read Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer* after dinner over a period of weeks. It was fun. Karen remembers that she could hardly wait for dinner to end so we
could read the next part of *Tom Sawyer*. Reading should be fun. It should be informative. It should be exciting. Every child should have the experience of reading a book that he or she cannot put down. We tried to help our children find that book.

Before leaving elementary school, a child should be able to read well. It doesn’t make any difference what else is covered in the curriculum at this level if a child comes away with inadequate reading skills. When one of our children was struggling with a skill, we made it a goal to work on it at home with charts and prizes and extra coaching. One daughter decided in the sixth grade to relearn the way she held her pencil to improve her penmanship. We rewarded her efforts, and after several months of practice, she was pleased with her new style and was comfortable in writing.

Our children enjoyed a formalized learning time at home in their preschool years and during the summer in later years. To them, it was fun. To their mother, it was easier to keep the children happy. I went by the philosophy that little children are happiest when their hands are busy and their tummies are full (the philosophy works well for teenagers and fathers too).

We were blessed to have other families nearby who felt the way we did, and the children had many group activity times in each other’s homes, which made it more fun for them and alternately freed up the mothers. One summer our family and another family combined to study transportation. We read, created, wrote, and then rode as many things as we could arrange to ride.

Laura remembers spending one summer putting together her alphabet book. There was a section of the book for each letter, and in that section there were pictures and objects cut out from magazines and newspapers whose name or description started with that letter.

5. *Help children to be precise in their thinking and use of words.* We tried to help our children learn at early ages to be precise in their use of words, and to distinguish between words and meanings. When Eric was three or four, I asked him one Sunday after church, “What did you talk about in class today?” He responded, “I didn’t talk about anything.” When I asked him what his teacher talked about, he responded with some detail that she had talked about the blind man to whom Jesus gave a blessing and healed.

Later, our hamster died. We dug a grave out in the canyon and as we walked back to the house we discussed how the spirit leaves the body when a person or animal dies. I said, “Now, that the grave is ready, let’s go get the hamster.” Eric responded, “You mean the hamster’s body.”
Laura liked to talk on the telephone when she was four years old. So Ann had to explain that you could not just talk on the telephone at any time, but only when you had something really important to say. Moments later Laura was back on the phone. Ann explained that she had just been told not to talk on the phone unless she had something important to say. Laura said, “Mother, I was telling my friend Rena to keep the commandments!”

Learning to make careful distinctions is an important skill and can be understood by young children.

6. Teach numbers and math concepts. Counting is a great activity wherever you are. We counted the number of motorcycles or the number of red cars or big trucks or, as the children got older, out-of-state license plates. This activity also taught the important skill of making distinctions: What is a red car or a big truck? Where is Wyoming? These are wonderful discussions for a child about to enter school or already in school.

Concepts of addition and subtraction are also easy to develop within almost any daily situation. How many friends can you invite to our house? How many plates do we need to put on the table for dinner if everyone in our family is here? How many more if Grandmother and Grandfather come for dinner?

Following a recipe, measuring and cutting, using money, playing board games, timing a jog around the park, reading music, and participating in many more activities of daily life provided some of the meaningful and fun learning experiences in our home. And so, as with reading, understanding of math can be developed naturally. Practice can become a game, and deficiencies in ability should be met with extra help, practice, and rewards for persistence.

7. Allow children to teach. Our children enjoyed playing school. When school ended after Marianne’s fourth-grade year, she started a summer school for neighborhood children. This school included her two younger brothers, Tom and Steven, who were ages five and three at that time. However, her students were generally ages four to six. She had a two-hour school three mornings a week for six weeks and continued this for five summers. What a powerful experience for her—not just in teaching but in organizing, disciplining, and keeping the attention of a roomful of little boys. She also had to collect what she was owed from the parents of the students attending. Ann was always in the house to oversee things, but it was Marianne’s school.

Every child needs a turn to be a teacher. It opens a different vision of both teaching and learning. The direct benefits of learning what you are required to teach is obvious to all parents.
8. **Use summertime to advantage.** The summers were a wonderful time for our children to advance at their own pace and interest. But summer charts kept them focused on their responsibilities at home (chores and household tasks) as well as on fun activities (parties, playing with friends, and sports) and learning opportunities (reading books and scriptures and engaging in school-like study). Items on the charts were checked off for the day, week, month, or summer, and the children were rewarded for having completed them.

Our children liked this system so well that they requested summer charts well into high school, and they continue to create them for their own children today. We discovered that a significant key to their success was having them ready to go the first week school was out while the children were still used to an early-morning routine.

**Junior High and High School**

As the children grew older, they could tackle more difficult tasks. During grades seven through twelve, formal education became more demanding of a child’s time and focus.

1. **Develop writing skills.** Eric came home in tears one day from junior high school. He had an assignment to write two pages about himself. “I don’t know how to do this, and I can’t do this, and that stupid teacher shouldn’t ask us to write two pages about ourselves.” The more he thought about it, the more miserable he became. He was unwilling to make notes or an outline of what he wanted to write.

   Finally, I took out of my briefcase the dictating equipment that I use at my law office. The equipment is small and can be held in one hand. I showed Eric how to work it. Then, I said, “Now, just tell me about yourself with the ‘record’ button on.” When he was finished, we typed it. Then, we discussed how it should be changed to say what he wanted to say. He learned that he could write something meaningful.

   I don’t think he (or anyone) finds writing easy, but I can’t recall him saying again about a written assignment, “I just can’t do that.”

   Some parents and students say, “Don’t take that class because the teacher is so demanding. You have to write a lot of papers.” Ann and I would say to our children, “That sounds like a great class. You will learn a lot.” And if you have to write, you do learn a lot. There is no other way. Good writing is good thinking on paper.

   We hoped that each of our children would have one or more teachers in high school who were truly fastidious about papers being grammatically correct. Spelling must be correct. Subjects and verbs must agree. Pronouns must have an antecedent. Punctuation must be
correct. Poor quality in English presentation is as bad as poor analysis and makes good analysis almost impossible to see. The very best of ideas sandwiched in between poor grammar and misspelled words will likely be lost on the reader (and grader).

2. Have high expectations. Marianne related an experience that she had in the seventh grade. She received a C on the first test in her English class that fall. She was afraid to tell us but did so. She said that we reacted calmly (not what she was expecting), saying, “Marianne, we think you can do better than that, and we will help you.” In this literature class, the assignment was to read one short story each day. Ann or I would also read the story and discuss it with Marianne. She remembers that we showed her how to make notes about each story’s characters and plot. We reviewed her notes with her in preparation for the next test. She received an A on it. This experience increased her confidence and taught her a study strategy that she has used often since. We somewhat dropped out of seventh-grade English for the rest of the year, except when something was just too interesting not to read and discuss with her.

Children almost never perform above the expectation. If a son or daughter believes a B is his or her best, it usually will be. Balancing expectation and approval of the performance given is sometimes a challenge. We have always said to a child: “If that is your very best, that is all we ask of you. We are proud of you and your hard work.”

3. Encourage wise class choices. The question, “What classes should I take?” is asked by students every year. A high-school student who is serious about college preparation should take classes each semester in English, mathematics (including computer science classes), history, science, and foreign language. Such a schedule will prepare him or her well. Such classes help develop critical thinking skills, which ultimately is what good education is about.

There is no substitute for good English grammar and usage. History and other subjects, as well as English literature, all require careful reading, analysis, and writing in English.

There is no substitute for math. Ideally, a student will have completed in high school at least precalculus and one calculus course. For many college graduates today, the last math class they ever took was in high school. To complete high school with calculus requires a math class every semester.

In today’s world, computer skills are critical and are a foundation on which communication in all disciplines is built. History is fun and essential to a good humanities background. Sciences should include biology, chemistry, and physics. Language has many purposes, not
the least of which is to strengthen and improve English. Latin especially helps students to understand English language structure and to improve vocabulary significantly.

4. Encourage personal discipline and study skills. Participation in music, athletics, and early-morning seminary requires that a student learn personal discipline. High school becomes a crucial time of decision as children need to focus their time to a greater degree on the things they want to do the most. Choosing those things should be a matter of discussion and prayer.

Our daughter Karen participated in sports in high school and was active in student government and seminary. How did she do it and maintain a high level in her academic studies? She says that athletics and school and Church activities did not cause her to underperform academically. The challenge required her to focus and use her study time wisely. Athletics, music, seminary, student government, and other similar time demands need to be balanced.

It was important to be sure their schedules were not too full. Overscheduling is as bad as or perhaps even worse than underscheduling. High performance in four or five classes is better than mediocre performance in six. A high GPA is essential for good college opportunities, but it is more critical for a student’s self-assessment. If a student is getting A grades and has that expectation, then that is the level to which the student performs. If a student is getting B grades but there is an A level of expectation, neither the student nor the student’s parents are happy.

Sometimes in high school (as contrasted with college), taking fewer classes is not a choice. The school may require a certain number of classes and may allow one study hall but not an option of two. Then, reducing the number of honors or AP classes may be the only way of balancing the intensity.

Occasionally, other students in our stake will discuss their schedules with me, and I often find them to be intense and wonderful schedules. But when I ask if they will have sufficient study time to prepare for their classes, I find they are working fifteen hours a week and have sports or other significant extracurricular activities. It sometimes seems to me that it will be impossible for them to perform well in all of the classes they are planning to take. I do not think it is possible to perform at a high level in difficult classes with inadequate study time. It would be better to drop one or more classes and have time to prepare well for those remaining.

We are not much on study-skills classes, but we are high on study skills. It is mostly discipline, and it is a lot about getting started in a good location. That is why we like a free period in the library at the school.
5. **Schedule free periods of time.** Sometimes study at home is more difficult to start and more difficult to maintain. If it is late in the day after athletics, the body and mind are tired and have less focus and energy. If the school permits or requires a free period or periods during the day, that is wonderful (in college, you can design your schedule with free periods in between difficult classes). Free periods are a great opportunity to prepare for the next class or classes and to prepare for tests later in the schedule that day, as well as for a desired change of pace for the body. When well used, they permit a burst of academic energy during that hour. Students should be certain to select a study spot in the library where they can concentrate and be effective. This is not a social hour and should be one of the best study hours of the day. It can be used as preparation time or for a final test review, and it will reduce late-night studying. When advising my children, I preferred to see that free period in middle of the day’s schedule where it can be truly valuable. Neither the first nor last period of the day is nearly as valuable.

6. **Prepare for the SAT/ACT.** The SAT and ACT are extremely important because they are critical to college admission decisions. They are important for a student’s academic stature in high school, too. They are critical for scholarships and high-school graduation awards.

   Practice is most helpful. The argument that these tests are so broad that there is nothing anyone can do to prepare is simply false. First, taking practice exams is absolutely essential to understand how the test works, what counts and does not count, or when a guess hurts or does not hurt in the overall score. Second, a good math review is substantive and can refresh skills in areas that will be tested. Practice review will not make up for algebra or geometry classes that have never been taken, but it will sharpen the knowledge of those and related subjects for the test. Practice tests will not likely strengthen vocabulary significantly, but the practice tests will help students know the format and be familiar with the types of questions and analysis to be expected. Practice applies to the PSAT too; the better the PSAT, the better the SAT will be.

   We have found short one-on-one paid SAT review courses expensive but worthwhile. It helps to have someone other than the parent working with the student and moving the SAT review forward. Having a scheduled preparation time is an important benefit, as is having someone working with the subject material and with other students in preparation for the exam on a regular basis.

7. **Take advanced placement classes and exams.** It gives great freedom to a college schedule to have a number of credits from advanced placement. Students should not hesitate to challenge exams for which they
think they are qualified but haven’t taken the advanced-placement class. Sample questions from past tests and study books are available to help with challenge decisions. Laura studied music theory as a part of her ten years of piano lessons and state certification program. With some additional review prepared by her piano teacher, she was able to pass the music theory exam. Steven chose to prepare for an advanced-placement exam as a part of an independent study class during his senior year.

8. *Use materials outside of high school.* Steven was required to have credit in art to graduate but didn’t want to give up an academic period to take the class. Instead, during the summer before starting twelfth grade, he took Art History 101 online for credit from BYU. He received college credit, and the class was accepted for his high-school graduation requirement. BYU has many outstanding online classes, both at the high-school and college levels. They are worth considering, especially in the summer.

Students should be able to get an A in an online class, as they can retake the quizzes and sometimes the exams for a fee. Our only rule for the children was that they must have completed the online class they were taking before starting another online class.

9. *Use summers meaningfully.* During their high-school years, we hoped our children would have a unique educational or work experience during the summers. Fortunately, we didn’t find it necessary to use summers to catch up on core academic subjects. After seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, they occasionally used summer classes to accelerate in math or language. Good work opportunities in our community are limited for their age. Tom and Steven both took Algebra II in summer school, which permitted them to start precalculus a year earlier and take additional math and computer classes before they graduated. Because of earlier language background, Steven took Spanish 2 one summer, which permitted him to start Spanish 3 in the ninth grade. He spent the summer after ninth grade living and going to school in Chile. This experience made a huge difference in his Spanish conversation skills.

Laura and Marianne were exchange students with American Field Service, Laura in Turkey and Marianne in Argentina. These were interesting and very broadening experiences. Perhaps we are too protective, but there were aspects of their experiences that were a little frightening. Steven’s experience in Chile, where he lived in two different Latter-day Saint homes, was much more comfortable for us. Karen did a “People to People” exchange tour program in Russia and Scandinavia. Living in a foreign country was a great experience for each of our children, and created a wonderful, powerful appreciation of the United States of America.
10. **Teach children to make good choices.** Great scholastic training without good common sense still leaves us short in life’s journey. We tried to involve our children, when appropriate, in helping us exercise good judgment as parents and also to trust in their judgment. One of a high-school student’s most significant decisions is which college to attend. We encouraged our children to consider applying to several schools. We discussed with them questions concerning these choices, such as “Where will you receive the best educational training?” “Where will you meet the most friends and form lasting, lifelong friendships?” “Where will you enjoy college the most?”

One of our trips was a BYU Travel Study tour of Mexico and Guatemala with our middle daughter, Karen. One evening we went out to eat at a restaurant in Guatemala City. We had been seated, and we ordered. Immediately after ordering, Karen said she was impressed that we should not stay at that restaurant. We called the waiter and apologized that we were canceling our order and would need to leave. Neither of us remembered this incident in detail, and when Karen told this story recently, we asked her what happened. She responded, “I don’t know what happened at the restaurant or what would have happened to us had we stayed, but I will forever remember that my parents would act on my impression alone. You said, ‘Karen, we don’t have those same impressions, but if you have an impression that we should leave, then we should leave.’”

**Conclusion**

We can summarize our strategies very succinctly: Love learning. Do things together and use learning opportunities in day-to-day activities. Focus on basic reading skills. Finally, be involved in the classroom content with your son or daughter, not just the extracurricular activities. By getting involved in everyday learning activities, parents will have some great experiences with their children and will set them on the course to becoming lifelong learners.

---

**Note**

Blessed by Seminary

Robert A. Hasara

Robert A. Hasara is a branch president at the Cove Point Branch in Provo, Utah.

I was born in Virden, a small farm town on the flat cornfields of central Illinois. Virden is 150 miles from Nauvoo, but I would not understand the significance of that place until I was a teenager. My father, Andy Hasara, was a math teacher and track coach at the high school in our town, where he had been a star athlete when he went to school there as a boy.

When Pearl Harbor was attacked, Dad immediately took a job with the DuPont Chemical Company in Joliet, which is near Chicago. During World War II, Dad supervised a department in a TNT explosives manufacturing facility for DuPont, where he had several thrilling and dangerous moments.

A month after World War II ended, in September 1945, when I was ten years old, we packed everything that would fit into a 1940 Ford sedan and moved to California. My parents had lost two infant children after I was born, so the three of us, with our meager possessions, headed down old Route 66 for Los Angeles, California. My father planned to go into the construction business with his brother. Among the tightly packed goods, I had a tiny space that I could call my own in the back seat of the old car for the five-day ride across the country.

I had never been in a city the size of Los Angeles before. Going from a small country town school to the huge Raymond Avenue Elementary School in the center of Los Angeles was a tremendous adjustment for me.
My father started working in the construction business and purchased a building lot in Inglewood, California, with money saved from U.S. Savings Bonds he bought during the war. For several months while Dad built the house at night, we lived in an attic, sharing the kitchen with a cranky landlady at odd times of the day. I remember he did everything but the plumbing and the electrical wiring, with Mom and me helping many evenings and on weekends. The house was less than a mile from the old Inglewood Ward building on Centinela Avenue, which came to play such an important part in my life just a few years hence.

Looking back, I can easily see how the Lord was guiding my parents’ steps from the day we got into that old Ford sedan in Illinois until we finally moved into the house my dad had built. His construction jobs, my schooling in Inglewood, and the completion of the new house were steppingstones to great future blessings the Lord had in store for our small family. We were sort of modern-day pioneers. Our covered wagon was the old Ford sedan on Route 66.

It was necessary for the garage part of the house to be finished first because we moved out of the rented attic when we couldn’t stand it any longer. I remember the two-burner hot plate on the workbench in the garage and meals cooked in the fireplace of the still-unfinished house.

Finally, the house was completed, and I had a real room of my own. I remember the airplanes flying over all the time because we were only four miles from what would become Los Angeles International Airport.

As I grew up, my parents did not go to church meetings together. Dad came from a staunch Slovak Catholic family, and Mom was a Protestant. I was raised with the understanding that when I was old enough, I could choose what church I wanted to affiliate with. That was the way they kept religious peace between them. Most of the time I went to church with my dad. When I was about thirteen years old, Dad arranged for me to take some catechism lessons for confirmation into the Catholic faith because I felt that was the right decision for me at that time. I had to take the bus or walk three miles every Saturday morning to meet with an old priest at the parish downtown at 8:00 a.m. He would give me scriptures and prayers to memorize for twenty or thirty minutes each Saturday and send me home expecting me to recite them perfectly the next Saturday morning. For reasons I didn’t understand until later, the old priest and I, a young boy of thirteen, had a real personality clash. He didn’t seem to like my being there that early, and I didn’t like all the memorization. I told my Dad I wasn’t going to continue the Saturday-morning meetings.

I finished elementary school, went on to junior high school, and then attended Inglewood High School, which was very large, with sev-
eral hundred students. Most days I walked two miles each way to school by myself. I got involved in student government and social activities. I always had an interest in making new friends, maybe because I had no siblings at home.

During my junior year of high school, Gary Smith and Kent Thompson became my close friends. We worked on school committees, went to athletic and social events together, and visited each other’s homes. I didn’t know until later that Gary’s dad was bishop of the Inglewood Ward and Kent Thompson’s dad was his first counselor.

After a few weeks, Kent asked me if I would like to go to a religious class with him. I was on the track team at the time. Several of the team members and I would walk from school uptown to the same Catholic parish I had gone to earlier to pray together before a big track meet. So religious activity was not a strange thing to me. I still had not felt it important to join a church after the Saturday morning experience I had had before. I told Kent I would love to go and asked where they met. He said, “Every school day morning at 6:00 a.m.” I said, “What? You mean you go to church every weekday morning—at 6:00 a.m.?” I was never an early-morning person as a teenager. In fact, when I finally agreed to go with Kent, I told my mother about my plans, and she laughed right out loud. “You—getting up to go to church at 5:30 a.m.? Whom are you going with? What church is it?”

“I don’t know, Mom. It’s just a group of kids at school that go to a church class before school every morning.”

“Well, I’ll have to see it to believe it—you, up at 5:30 a.m.” She told me I could go “as long as it didn’t interfere with my schoolwork.” A couple of days later I set the alarm and packed my own lunch for the first time, and Kent Thompson picked me up for what became a very important event in my life.

It was only a mile to the old Inglewood Ward church building. There was a parking lot across the street where we all parked our cars for quick getaways after seminary to nab the best parking places at the high school. When I walked into the seminary class for the first time, I was amazed to be greeted by the peer group of my high school. Several varsity athletes, a couple of the prettiest varsity cheerleaders, and several other “big people on campus” were in the room. There were, as I remember, about twenty in the class whom I had seen on campus but was not acquainted with, much less have any idea about their church affiliation. The class opened with singing a hymn, and one of the varsity football players gave an opening prayer that astonished me because it was as sincere and thoughtful as anything I had heard before—and without any notes!
The seminary teacher was a telephone company executive who really connected in a special way with the class. He was immediately very friendly to me, completely different from my early Saturday-morning experience a couple of years before. This fellow had a captivating, almost constant, smile on his face, and all the kids thought he was really special. His name was Robert L. Simpson. A few years later, in 1961, he was called to serve as a counselor in the Presiding Bishopric of the Church and was a General Authority for twenty-four years.

Brother Simpson told us many stories about his missionary experiences among the Maori people in New Zealand. They were always accompanied by a Maori war chant or dance step that made them so memorable I can still see him doing it in my mind after more than fifty years. I became really interested in the scriptures for the first time in my life because of the way he made them come alive for us kids. Needless to say, I began going to seminary every morning, enjoying my new friends. I particularly began to watch them at school because of the way they acted on campus. Their example, plus a great seminary teacher who took an interest in me, got me going to church with them almost every Sunday. Because of the positive influence that seminary had on me, my parents kept their word and never offered any resistance to my becoming a member of the Church.

In the spring of 1952, just before school was out, I had a very memorable experience that has stuck with me throughout the years. Early one morning, we all arrived at the chapel and settled into the usual routine of singing a hymn and having an opening prayer. But this day was different. Sitting in the corner of the room, to one side of Brother Simpson, was a kindly looking, neatly dressed, elderly gentleman—I remember he had on a brown suit and conservative tie. He sat there making eye contact with us and offering a friendly glance as we sang and prayed together. He looked attentively at Brother Simpson as he conducted regular announcements and really seemed to enjoy being with us. I remember thinking, “Who is this little fellow?” I noticed he was kind of short. A couple of the kids whispered, “Who is he?”

We were all about to have one of the greatest experiences of our lives. Brother Simpson told us that we had a special visitor that morning and that we would not be having a regular lesson. He motioned the man in the brown suit to come up beside him and said, “I want to introduce you to one of my New Zealand missionary companions.” We then got to spend the next two hours with Elder Matthew Cowley of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

He first bore his testimony and then told us stories about him and Brother Simpson serving together in New Zealand. Brother Simpson
had been one of his assistants when Elder Cowley was president of the New Zealand mission just before World War II. We were all riveted on him in rapt attention as he told stories, with a lot of humor, even asking Brother Simpson to demonstrate a certain Maori war whoop that made us all laugh. I remember he talked a lot about Jesus Christ, referring to special scriptures as he did so.

At the end of two hours—we were all an hour late to school—we each got to shake his hand, and Brother Simpson introduced me as the only investigator in the class. Elder Cowley told me, “It is the truth,” and testified that he was an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. I remember I was very impressed with his whole demeanor. I came to find out that every time Elder Cowley came to Los Angeles on Church business, he liked to stay in the home of his missionary assistant, so we were able to have this marvelous experience one spring morning in 1952, which, looking back, secured my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel.

That summer, on July 5, 1952, I was baptized in the old Inglewood Ward font and confirmed the next day by the future General Authority, Robert L. Simpson.

I had a good job that summer but looked forward to school starting again so I could get back into seminary. Little did I realize what a special year my senior year would be. A new student from a neighboring ward started coming to class. She had graduated from high school in the spring of 1952 and was baptized a few months after me. Her name is Vickie Jeffrey. She wanted to learn more about the Church and got Brother Simpson’s permission to attend seminary before going to work each morning. We began dating when I came home from BYU for the summer.

We were married in the Salt Lake Temple in 1954. Being the only members of the Church in our families, we had to make the trip without family members but with Kent Thompson and his new wife as our chaperones.

We will have been married for fifty-one years this August. When we started having children, my parents took the missionary lessons several times and finally joined the Church. A few years later, I baptized Vickie’s mother and brother.

A trip in the old Ford got the family to California, where we wound up just a mile from the Inglewood Ward chapel. An invitation by friends, a special seminary teacher, meeting an Apostle of the Lord for the first time, and especially meeting my wife have brought great joy and happiness into my life. Anyone can see why seminary has such a special place in my heart.
The original Lord's Suburban

Courtesy of Jeanne Boren
Years ago I attended a BYU Education Week class in the Wilkinson Center ballroom. I do not remember the presenter, but the room was packed. During his presentation, he asked how many of us owned a Suburban. A thousand hands must have gone up. He then presented a concept that absolutely freed my mind and spirit. He talked about how “our” Suburban was really the Lord’s and that if we truly embraced that concept and let our Suburban haul kids on Scout trips, temple trips, and the myriad of other needs that a ward experiences, we could let the Lord worry about new tires, transmissions, and other repairs. I loved it.

I went home to present the idea to my husband, Nelson. At the time, we drove an old yellow Suburban that was always in need of a repair, whether big or small. My dad would have called it a rattletrap. Our cars had always been available to the ward, but this took our thinking to another level. Miles, tires, and wear and tear were not my concern alone; the Lord also had a vested interest. After all, it was His Suburban; I was just the steward. I would have to handle the physical end, keeping the Lord’s Suburban clean and maintained, but the bigger worries were no longer mine. From then on, when the bishop or someone else would ask to use our car, we loved giving the answer simply, “Of course; it’s the Lord’s Suburban.” Soon, the bishop would call and ask, “Is the Lord’s Suburban available?”

Eventually, the old Suburban needed to retire, so we bought a new one. I was serving as the Young Women’s president in our ward at that time. We drove to the dealership one evening to pick up the new
green Suburban, and I drove it straight to Mutual. As I walked into the building, my Beehive adviser asked me if she could take my car for an activity. “What? Stop right there!” my mind screamed. “This is my Suburban! Besides, it looks so new and nice and . . .”

It had been so easy to let the Lord worry about the yellow Suburban because it was old and in need of help, but this new one was—well, it did not need help! I had to decide all over again whose car this was. With a deep breath, I slowly handed her the keys.

At the end of the evening, she apologetically returned the keys. She said she never would have asked to use the brand-new car if she had known, so why hadn’t I said something? Even though I had forgotten for a brief moment that the Suburban wasn’t mine, I was grateful that the Spirit reminded me that it was the Lord’s and was needed for His service even if it was brand-new. As I took the keys, I reminded her that this was not my vehicle but the Lord’s.

Of course, the brand-new green Suburban didn’t stay new. Eventually, it too needed new tires and repairs. What a blessing to know that if it was the Lord’s while it was new, it was also His when it needed help. With full confidence, I could hand the repairs over to the Lord and let Him worry about His vehicle.

When we received our mission call, we sold the green Suburban to a member of our ward. A few weeks later, he was called as the Young Men president. The calling seemed appropriate; after all, he was the new owner of the Lord’s Suburban.
Roger K. Terry is an editor at Church magazines.

As Latter-day Saints, we believe in an omniscient, or all-knowing, God. We also believe that Jesus Christ has attained a similarly exalted degree of glory and intelligence. The Lord Himself and His prophets and apostles declare this doctrine unequivocally: “Thus saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, . . . the same which knoweth all things, for all things are present before mine eyes” (D&C 38:1–2). President Spencer W. Kimball says, “God is omniscient. There are no corners so dark, no deserts so uninhabited, no canyons so remote, no automobiles so hidden, no homes so tight and shut in but that the all-seeing One can penetrate and observe.”¹ Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote, “Few doctrines, save those pertaining to the reality of the existence of God, are more basic than the truth that God is omniscient.”²

These statements of fact inevitably lead to two fundamental questions: What exactly does omniscience mean? Why should we concern ourselves with it? Let us look at these two questions in reverse order.

Why Should We Concern Ourselves with God’s Omniscience?

Isn’t it enough to merely accept the fact that God knows everything? Isn’t questioning it just a waste of time, an intellectual game, the needless pursuit of a tangent? No, it isn’t. “And this is life eternal,” said the Savior in His great Intercessory Prayer, “that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Knowing God and His Beloved Son certainly includes knowing as much as possible about Their attributes, Their perfections, and the kind of life They live.
In *Lectures on Faith*, the contents of which were approved by and presented under the direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith, we read the following: “Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. First, the idea that he actually exists. Second, a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes. Third, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will.”

Why is a correct idea of God’s character, perfections, and attributes necessary? “Without the idea of the existence of these attributes in the Deity, men could not exercise faith in him for life and salvation, seeing that without the knowledge of all things God would not be able to save any portion of his creatures. For it is the knowledge which he has of all things from the beginning to the end that enables him to give that understanding to his creatures by which they are made partakers of eternal life. And if it were not for the idea existing in the minds of men that God has all knowledge, it would be impossible for them to exercise faith in him.”

In short, if we misunderstand what is meant by omniscience, our faith in God will be incomplete, and our understanding of our own eternal potential will perhaps be incorrect.

What Does Omniscience Mean?

Some Church members harbor erroneous beliefs about God’s omniscience. I hear evidence of these false ideas from time to time in talks, lessons, and comments. Basically, all of these beliefs proclaim in one way or another that God does not actually know “all things,” that He is somehow limited. Some people, for instance, believe that He gathers some information from angels who go out ministering and then report back to Him. Others believe God knows “all that is now known” in the universe, and that there is knowledge yet to be discovered that God does not yet know. Still others believe that God knows only the larger picture or the main events in our lives but does not concern Himself with the tiny, insignificant details.

One rather subtle misconception has to do with God’s knowledge of the future. For instance, I once thought God’s grasp of the future was a predictive sort of knowledge. In other words, God knows what I will do next Wednesday at 4:23 p.m. because through our lengthy pre-mortal association and His observation of me in mortality, He knows me perfectly, He knows everyone else perfectly, and He knows how the elements will respond to the various forces that act upon them. Because of this vast reservoir of knowledge, He can account for all variability and randomness and can predict perfectly what I will do. This theory
has obvious limitations, the most significant being that it is not true. God does not predict the future. In some way we cannot fathom, He actually sees it. He even tells us so. As quoted above, “All things are present before [His] eyes.”

I also believe we sometimes underestimate God’s knowledge simply because we do not take Him at His word. We do not really think seriously about what “all things” means. We somehow assume His view of the universe is sort of like ours—only a bit more expansive. Perhaps we cannot really begin to understand His omniscience until we take a closer look at our own limited perspective and realize He is not limited at all.

Past, Present, and Future

In Doctrine and Covenants 93:24, we read, “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come”—that is, knowledge of past, present, and future. God possesses a fulness of truth, so we may say to ourselves, “He’s one up on us because we know only past and present.” But such thinking is rather presumptuous and self-congratulatory. I think I can make a good argument for the fact that God is more than “one up on us” and that, indeed, we do not really know the past or the present, let alone the future.

We do not know the past? Yes, we have memory, but memory is quite different from knowing the past. Memory is limited by two facts. First, it is incredibly unreliable. I believe I have a better-than-average memory, although it tends to be a bit selective; but when I look now and then in one of my old journals, I find that what I wrote at the time does not always correspond with the way I remember certain events. Something has happened in the intervening years, and my mind has altered its perception of what actually happened. The second limiting factor is that we do not know the present, and if we do not know the present, then our memory is filled with bits and pieces of something other than reality.

We do not know the present? No, we do not. Anyone who has ever talked with another human being should know that no two people see the world in just the same way. That is why we have disagreements. We see things differently. Each person has a unique perspective on what goes on around him or her, and that perspective is limited by one of the constraints placed on all mortals: we can focus on only one thing at a time. Our view of the present is colored by what we choose to bring to the foreground of thought, and our perception can be shaded by anything from what we ate for breakfast to whether we are in love. Beyond this, our perception of life is filtered by our most cherished beliefs and prejudices, some of which we do not even recognize.
When we consider that our view of the present includes only a minuscule slice of infinite space and that our view of that tiny slice is far from comprehensive, perhaps we can gain some appreciation of how truly insignificant our perspective is compared with God’s. I think we can safely say that God experiences life far differently than we do. In fact, we cannot even imagine what reality must look like to Him. He sees the sparrow fall, numbers the hairs of our heads, and knows all our thoughts and feelings—at every instant. We do not really understand the meaning of the word omniscient. How could we without having experienced it? We find it incredible that God can know the future, but even more incredible is the notion that He can know everything at the present moment—everything. There is no limit to His awareness of the universe. At any given instant, God knows not only everything that is happening but also everything that has ever happened and everything that will happen, for eternities without end. That is eternal life—the fact that God experiences and comprehends an eternity in any given instant. Eternal life, then, is not merely a life of endless duration; it is a particular quality of life that is eternal or infinite in its very nature.

Speaking of God’s omniscience, Elder Bruce R. McConkie explains: “He has all wisdom, all knowledge, and all understanding; he is the All-Wise One, the All-Knowing One. There is no truth he does not know, no wisdom hidden from his view, no laws or powers or facts for him to discover in some distant eternity. His wisdom and knowledge are absolute and have neither bounds nor limitations. He knows all things now; he is not progressing in knowledge; he is not discovering new truths; there are no higher spheres than the one in which he now walks. His mind is infinite; his knowledge comprehends all things, and he is in fact the source and author of all truth.”

The Mortal Test

Time, as we know it, is strictly a mortal phenomenon and is necessary for the test we came here to experience. For us, time is one-dimensional, and it runs unimpeded from past to future. The fact that time is one-dimensional for us explains our inability to know past, present, and future. This restriction limits us to focusing on only one thing at a time; and, as mentioned above, this condition severely restricts our perspective of what is going on around us in mortality.

God is obviously not so limited. His mind is able to grasp an infinite amount of information at any instant. He can watch a million sparrows fall simultaneously on a million worlds, number the hairs on all the heads in the universe, count the stars in the sky, hear and answer
the prayers of all His children, and still have an infinite awareness of everything else yesterday, today, and forever. Does He know what the blood pressure of the president of the United States will be at exactly five minutes after midnight on October 1, 2020? Does He know where a grain of sand that is now blowing across the Sahara Desert will be in exactly ten hours, fifty minutes, and fourteen seconds? Does He know at this instant what my grandchild who is not yet born will be praying for on her sixteenth birthday? If we take Him at His word, the answer can only be yes. God experiences no surprises. This is what it means to be omniscient, and it is far beyond our limited mortal comprehension. But because He is omniscient, we can have perfect faith in Him.

We might well ask, given what we do know about God’s awareness of His creations, why we, His children, are so limited. Hugh Nibley suggests an answer: “But why this crippling limitation on our thoughts if we are God’s children? It is precisely this limitation which is the essence of our mortal existence. If every choice I make expresses a preference; if the world I build up is the world I really love and want, then with every choice I am judging myself, proclaiming all the day long to God, angels and my fellowmen where my real values lie, where my treasure is, the things to which I give supreme importance. Hence, in this life every moment provides a perfect and foolproof test of your real character, making this life a time of testing and probation.”

It is our one-dimensional experience with time that provides our test. We must constantly choose what we will think about. Sometimes we do not choose at all, or so we suppose. We let our minds wander, but this is a choice also. If we had complete comprehension of reality, as God has, it would negate the purpose of our mortal probation. In fact, a mind that encompasses and comprehends all things at all times is simply incapable of wandering. Where could it go? Apparently, to prove we can be trusted with such an infinite and all-encompassing view, we must demonstrate that we can learn to be focused and consecrated and strictly obedient in an environment where our choice of what to think about is complicated by a multitude of enticing alternatives and made truly meaningful by the necessity we often face of choosing not just between good and evil but also between good and good.

In spite of these mortal limitations, now and then God gives certain mortals a partial glimpse of His perspective, and their accounts are both enlightening and inviting, enticing us on toward an eternal perspective, an existence not trammeled by the necessary restrictions of mortality. These views are glorious and give us hope that we may one day partake of that same glory. Moses, for instance, was shown the earth, “even all
of it, and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the spirit of God. And he beheld also the inhabitants thereof, and there was not a soul which he beheld not; . . . and their numbers were great, even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore” (Moses 1:27–28). This view teaches us not only that God is able to reveal to us such unlimited visions but also that within us we already have the potential, when the mortal veil is lifted, to enjoy such exalted views. We truly do have within us the seeds of eternal life.

All Possible Futures

One fascinating aspect of God’s omniscience can been seen in President Wilford Woodruff’s remarks concerning the 1890 manifesto ending the practice of plural marriage. “The Lord showed me by vision and revelation,” said President Woodruff, “exactly what would take place if we did not stop this practice.” He then described some of the consequences the Saints would have faced had they not ceased practicing plural marriage. From this experience, we can conclude that God knows not only what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen but also what would happen if we were to make different choices than the ones we actually make. And apparently He knows this in more than a theoretical manner. He can show others in vision what we might call an alternate future, one that never will exist, except as a possibility that is prevented by our use of agency.

And if God knows the alternate future that would occur because of one choice that is never made, He certainly knows all the possible futures based on all possible choices His children might make. Yes, this, too, is part of God’s omniscience. It must be, for it is indeed knowledge, and an omniscient God must possess all knowledge. Besides, if He did not know these possible futures that will never come to pass, how could He warn us of the consequences of our choices, as He warned President Woodruff? If the stories that appear in the Ensign are an accurate reflection of what Church members experience, the Lord has undoubtedly prevented numerous automobile accidents by having the Spirit prompt drivers to stop or slow down or change lanes—all because He knew what would have happened.

All Wisdom

Thus far we have talked about God’s omniscience primarily in the sense that He sees everything and has all information present before Him. But all the knowledge in the universe would not make our Heav-
enly Father a perfect or even helpful God without His other attributes, such as love, justice, mercy, goodness, patience, and kindness. One attribute in particular that enables Him to use His infinite knowledge to bless His children is His wisdom. Wisdom is actually an important aspect, or product, of God’s knowledge. Wisdom, we might say, is knowing how to apply knowledge correctly. Thus, because He has perfect wisdom, God always knows which choice will create the greatest eternal good for His children. His wisdom prevents Him from ever misapplying His knowledge, as we imperfect mortals often do.

President Marion G. Romney, First Counselor in the First Presidency, wrote:

Since knowledge is an “acquaintance with, or clear perception of, facts”; and “wisdom is the capacity of judging soundly and dealing broadly with facts; especially in their practical” application “to life and conduct,” it follows that wisdom, although more than, is nevertheless a product of, and is dependent upon knowledge.

The Book of Mormon specifically relates God’s wisdom to his knowledge. Speaking of God’s plan for the salvation of men, Lehi says, “All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things” (2 Nephi 2:24). Thus, . . . God’s perfect wisdom is a product of His knowledge of all things.9

Certainly, His wisdom is a product of His knowledge, but it is also a product of His goodness, for knowledge alone does not automatically produce wisdom. Lucifer had great knowledge, but that knowledge did not lead to wisdom. Indeed, Lucifer’s unwise choices prevented him from attaining greater knowledge. It is God’s perfect knowledge combined with His perfect goodness that makes His perfect wisdom a reality. And because God has perfect wisdom to apply His perfect knowledge, He is able to perform His work and enjoy the associated glory in bringing “to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

He Is Our Judge

Not only does God see and know everything in the physical universe but also He knows everything in the private inner universes of all His children. In some way that we cannot understand, He knows us. He sees through our eyes, feels our emotions, understands our motives, and comprehends our imperfect perception of our own circumstances. If it were not so, He would be unable, even unfit, to judge us. If He were merely an outside observer, He would not qualify. But He is not limited to merely viewing our actions. God knows our thoughts and attitudes and the intents of our hearts—as if they were His own. It is
because He does know us better than we know ourselves that He can judge us. And He judges us with wisdom and love.

Our Eternal Father is not a vindictive, cynical being who laughs at what He sees. He is a merciful, loving Father, whose infinite powers are focused on saving our souls without encroaching on our agency. And someday, if we choose well in this life and seek both goodness and wisdom, we will be able to be the same kind of loving, understanding parents to our spirit children.

Conclusion

Returning to the question addressed at the beginning of this article, why should we concern ourselves about our Eternal Father’s omniscience? His goal for us—and our objective in coming to earth—is that we learn to become more like Him. But how can we do this if we do not know Him or understand His perfections and attributes?

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). “Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48). “Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily, I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). Certainly, the more we know about our Savior and His Father, whose life and character Jesus perfectly reflected, the greater will be our reverence and love for Them and the more able and eager we will be to emulate Their character and follow Their teachings.

Notes

7. “Excerpts from Three Addresses by President Wilford Woodruff regarding the Manifesto,” following Declaration 1 in the Doctrine and Covenants.
8. I am the editor of “Latter-day Saint Voices,” the department of the Ensign that features these stories. The Ensign receives many such stories that are never published. The Lord is very active in warning people about disasters that never
happen because these individuals listen to and follow the promptings they receive and thus prevent the very event the Lord is warning them about.

Wilford Woodruff, about 1894

Courtesy of Church Archives
Profiles of the Prophets: Wilford Woodruff

Lawrence R. Flake

Lawrence R. Flake is a teaching professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU.

Wilford Woodruff was born March 1, 1807, in the tiny Connecticut town of Avon (Farmington). His earthly sojourn ended September 2, 1898, three thousand miles to the west in San Francisco, California. Wilford was the son of Aphek and Bulah Thompson Woodruff and the third of nine children born to Aphek. His mother died at age twenty-six when he was just fifteen months old. His father’s second wife, Azubah Hart, lovingly raised Wilford and his two older brothers. Aphek and Azubah had six children born to them, four of which died before adulthood.¹

From an early age, Wilford labored long hours in the family flour mill beside his father and brothers, many times putting in eighteen-hour days.² He learned to enjoy physical labor and engaged in it throughout his long life. In his childhood, he acquired a passion for fishing. Of his early love for fishing and the outdoors, he wrote: “My mind was rather more taken up upon these subjects in my boyhood than it was in learning my books at school.”³ Highly accident prone, he later recorded in his journal twenty-seven life-threatening incidents from which he was miraculously spared. He noted, “There has seemed to be two powers constantly watching me and at work with me: one to kill me and the other to save me.”⁴

At age fourteen, while living with a neighboring farmer and attending school in the winter, Wilford read the scriptures and participated in Presbyterian prayer meetings, but Protestantism left him feeling empty. The preaching, he later wrote, “created darkness and not light, misery
and not happiness and their teachings did not seem to enlighten my mind or do me good, although I laboured hard to obtain benefit from it.” As he grew older, he continued to have very strong religious feelings.

**A Witness by the Spirit**

In 1832, while he was still working as a miller in Connecticut, Wilford first became acquainted with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by reading a newspaper article ridiculing the foundling movement. He had a strong desire at that time to meet some “Mormons.” About a year later, after Wilford and his brother Azmon had moved to Richland, New York, two missionaries, Zera Pulsipher and Elijah Cheney, came to the home of Azmon and his wife, where Wilford was also living. The two elders extended an invitation to the family to attend a public meeting at the schoolhouse in Richland. At that first meeting, Wilford received a powerful witness of the Spirit, and before the proceedings ended he was on his feet, testifying to the audience that what the missionaries were preaching was true. Shortly afterward, on December 31, 1833, at the age of twenty-six, he was baptized in an icy stream. He described his baptism in these words: “The snow was about three feet deep, the day was cold, and the water was mixed with ice and snow, yet I did not feel the cold.”

**Missionary Work**

Ten of Wilford Woodruff’s first fifteen years in the Church were spent almost exclusively serving missions. Following his baptism, he traveled to Kirtland, Ohio, where he met the Prophet Joseph Smith. Soon after his arrival there, he responded to the Prophet’s call for volunteers to join a military company called Zion’s Camp, its purpose being to make a nine-hundred-mile trek to Missouri to assist members of the Church who had been driven from their homes in Jackson County. The Prophet hoped to reinstate the refugees’ usurped property. While this mission was unsuccessful in its stated goal, it was very effective in demonstrating the character and leadership of the men who made the trip. The Prophet Joseph Smith, who led the expedition, recognized greatness in the new convert from Richland, New York, and five years later Joseph received a revelation from God calling Wilford Woodruff to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

But in 1835, prior to his call to the apostleship, Wilford accepted an assignment to fill his first extensive mission for the Church to the southern states, where he served mostly in Kentucky and Tennessee. Reflecting on this mission, he declared that he “had traveled more than
8,000 miles and had baptized seventy people.”9 When he returned to Kirtland, he met and married Phebe Carter, a convert to the Church and a native of Maine.

His next mission, in 1836, was to the eastern states. He labored mostly on the Fox Islands just off the coast of Maine near his wife’s family home. It was while serving as a missionary in the Fox Islands that he received a letter informing him of his call to fill one of the vacancies in the Quorum of the Twelve. He soon left the eastern states, bringing about fifty of his converts from the New England area to gather with the Saints.

In 1839, Elder Woodruff, along with several of his fellow Apostles and under very adverse circumstances, departed to fulfill a groundbreaking mission to Great Britain. In England, Elder Woodruff became the most productive missionary in this dispensation, baptizing or assisting to baptize over 1,800 converts in an eight-month period.10 A large number of these converts were members of a congregation of United Brethren, whom he baptized in a pond on the John Benbow farm in Herefordshire.

After nearly two years of remarkable service in England, Elder Woodruff returned to the United States. In Nauvoo, he worked diligently at his calling as an Apostle and also served as business manager.
for the Church’s newspaper, the *Times and Seasons*. His dedication prompted Joseph Smith to refer to him as “Wilford the Faithful,” a title that remained with him for the rest of his life.

In 1843 and then again in 1844, Wilford accepted two more mission calls to the eastern states. During the second of these missions, while serving in Scarboro, Maine, he received the staggering news that his beloved leader and friend, the Prophet Joseph Smith, had been murdered with his brother Hyrum in Carthage Jail near Nauvoo. This devastating information came as a shock even though Joseph had given many indications and prophecies that his life would be cut short. Indeed, this very mission to the East was an effort by the Prophet to get Elder Woodruff and other Apostles out of Nauvoo for their own safety.
Presiding over the European Mission

Following the death of the Prophet, Elder Woodruff returned to Nauvoo, but very soon his talents and leadership were sorely needed again in England. In August of that same year, only two months after the death of Joseph and Hyrum, Wilford and Phebe departed for the British Isles to preside over the European Mission headquartered in London. They took their one-year-old daughter with them but had to leave their other two children in the care of relatives and friends.
Salt Lake Valley

Upon his return from Great Britain nineteen months later, on April 13, 1846, Elder Woodruff worked closely and tirelessly with Joseph Smith’s successor, President Brigham Young, to accomplish the overwhelming task of moving thousands of Saints across the continent to the valley of the Great Salt Lake. In the spring of 1846, Elder Woodruff, along with many other refugees from Nauvoo, moved his family across the Mississippi River to Mount Pisgah, Iowa, and from there traveled to Winter Quarters, Nebraska, where they remained for the winter. In the spring, he traveled west with the advance pioneer company and was among the first Latter-day Saints to enter the Salt Lake Valley.

During the approximately forty years from his arrival in the Salt Lake Valley until he became President of the Church in 1889, Elder Woodruff engaged in a variety of pursuits. He was passionate about improving the level of education for himself and the Saints throughout the valley and participated in several organizations to advance learning. Among these were the Universal Scientific Society and the Polysophical Society, the latter designed to promote the theater and other fine arts. His real passion, however, seemed to lie in improving the quality of crops in the new territory. He tirelessly studied scientific farming methods, led the way in Utah in importing seeds, grafts, and superior strains of plants from places as far away as England, and established the Horticultural Society.  

In 1856, he became assistant Church historian and made extensive collections and revisions of historical Church documents, continuing almost single-handedly to keep the current Church records. During this same period, Elder Woodruff was a key figure in a movement known as the “Reformation” which called the general members of the Church to repentance and recommitment. He was often credited with lending a more “fatherly” edge to what some considered too harsh an approach.

In 1876 and 1877, Elder Woodruff’s life became focused on the completion of the first temple in the West in the southern Utah settlement of St. George. President Young asked him to offer the dedicatory prayer for the temple and to serve as its first president. He was an ardent promoter of temple work, officiating in hundreds of baptisms, endowments, and sealings, particularly on behalf of the dead, and urging his fellow Saints to do the same. It was in this temple that he had the glorious experience of performing vicarious ordinances on behalf of many deceased American patriots and “eminent men.”

Following the death of President Young in 1877, the Church entered a particularly turbulent era. For three years, John Taylor led the
Church as president of the Twelve until 1880, when the First Presidency was reorganized. In 1885, raids and arrests of Utah polygamists forced Elder Woodruff into hiding. He spent much of his time in St. George until President Taylor’s death in 1887. In spite of precedent, there was still some confusion over the procedure for succession to the presidency of the Church. An awkward period called an “interregnum,” where the Twelve governed the Church for a few years between Presidents, occurred following the deaths of the first three Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and John Taylor. While it did not seem to serve any real purpose in Wilford Woodruff’s case, this precedent was followed once again for two years, from 1887 to 1889, when the First Presidency was finally reorganized.
President of the Church

On April 7, 1889, after the two-year interregnum, Elder Woodruff assumed the role of prophet, seer, and revelator of the Church. He was eighty-two years old but still in vigorous health. His decade as President encompassed three remarkable developments in the kingdom. First, in 1890 he received the revelations that led to the issuing of the Manifesto, which ended the contracting of plural marriages. Second, in 1893 he oversaw the completion and dedication of the magnificent Salt Lake Temple. And third, in 1896, after nearly half a century of failed attempts, he helped to finally attain statehood for Utah.

Manifesto

When John Taylor died in 1887, the Saints were in the midst of severe persecutions as a result of congressional antipolygamy legislation. Fear of arrest kept Elder Woodruff from attending President Taylor’s funeral as it previously had prevented him attending the funeral of his first wife, Phebe Carter, who died two years earlier in 1885. The government continued its abuses against the Church, bombarding it with accusations, property confiscation, and imprisonment of its members.

For many agonizing months, President Woodruff petitioned the Lord for a solution to the plight of the Church. Finally, the Lord answered his prayers through a series of revelations, which opened up a sobering vision to him. He saw clearly how dire the future of the Church would be if the members continued to practice plural marriage. After receiving these pivotal revelations, President Woodruff made the wrenching decision to officially end the contracting of all plural marriages. Despite the intense unpopularity of this decision with many members of the Church and even with some members of the Twelve, the prophet fearlessly defended it and eventually convinced most Latter-day Saints of its validity. The official announcement of this monumental decision was called the Manifesto of 1890 and stated emphatically that no further plural marriages would be sanctioned or contracted by the Church.

Completion of the Salt Lake Temple

Although the 1890s opened with a great deal of political and social turmoil, President Woodruff felt inspired to make finishing the Salt Lake Temple a priority. In the 1891 October conference, he announced his determination to complete the temple and dedicate it on April 6, 1893, forty years to the day that the cornerstone was laid. He solicited the support of the Saints, both spiritually and financially. President Woodruff
became very involved personally in seeing that the work went forward. The physical advantages of finishing the temple were dwarfed in comparison to the spiritual dimensions President Woodruff hoped to achieve by dedicating it at that time. He saw in its completion the opportunity to promote unity in the Quorum of the Twelve where some dissention over the discontinuation of polygamy still lingered. Some members of the Church were also flagging in their commitment and unity. President Woodruff had faith that the temple dedication would bolster their spirituality and bring down upon all of them much-needed blessings from heaven. With the Saints putting forth a decidedly superhuman effort and with many blessings from the Lord, the temple was in fact finished and ready for dedication on April 6, 1893.

Forty-six years earlier, just two days after their arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, Wilford Woodruff stood with Brigham Young on the temple site, saw the prophet put his cane into the ground, and heard him declare, “I am going to build a temple here.” The prophecy was at last fulfilled, and the presence of the glorious temple blessed the Church with the strength they needed to endure the many trials that still lay ahead.

Statehood

In 1861, following the failure of repeated attempts to attain statehood, President Brigham Young and other General Authorities reconstituted a group of men, mostly Church leaders, and called it the “Council of Fifty,” the name by which a former governing body in Nauvoo was known. The First Presidency also reactivated the School of the Prophets, which was first held in Kirtland. These two organizations served as a means for Latter-day Saint leaders to maintain some influence over Church members in public matters. Wilford Woodruff played a prominent part in both of these groups.

For many years after President Young’s death in 1877, the problems with antipolygamy legislation completely dominated Utah politics and scuttled every attempt to achieve statehood. In 1872, Utahns attempted again to obtain statehood. This time, they drew upon the influence of non-Mormon friends of the Church, such as former territorial appointees who had lived in Utah, but again the effort was unsuccessful. During 1887, and in a desperate effort to make some progress toward their goal, Church leaders began to “court” political leaders, especially Democrats, who seemed sympathetic to the Latter-day Saint plight. They even urged missionaries to soften their proselytizing approach in order to lessen what Democratic supporters of the Church in Congress, especially southerners, considered insults to their churches.
Following the publication of the Manifesto of 1890, which signaled the official end of plural marriage, the goal of achieving statehood finally became realistic. At that time, nearly all members of the Church belonged to a political party called the People’s Party. Members of other persuasions were by and large marshaled against them in what was called the Liberal Party. It was apparent to President Woodruff and other Utah leaders, both ecclesiastical and political, that Utahns needed to align themselves with the two prevalent parties of the United States, Democrats and Republicans. President Woodruff urged members of the Church to disband the People’s Party and affiliate with either of the two established national parties. In fact, in some cases, Church leaders almost “assigned” Church members to one group or the other in order to form an equal division between the two. Accomplishing this revolutionary realignment was a major shift in Church policy and inevitably caused many points of contention over politics between members of the Church, which had not existed to this great an extent previously. But this radical change in Utah politics, along with the ending of plural marriage and what proved to be the invaluable influence of their friends from other faiths, turned the tide of popular opinion in Utah’s favor. Following the return to power of a Democratic congress in the election of 1892, Joseph L. Rawlins, the newly elected delegate from Utah
Territory, once again introduced the petition for Utah statehood to the House of Representatives. It passed on December 13, 1893, practically without opposition. Largely due to President Woodruff’s efforts in settling the plural marriage issue, the stormy, half-century struggle to be freed at least in part from the oppressive rule of the federal government finally met with success. Consequently, an incredibly far-reaching change was wrought in the future of Utah and the Church.

**Later Years**

During his later years, President Woodruff was afflicted with poor health. Though not incapacitated, he suffered many bouts of illness. It was following an attack that he sought rest in the favorable climate of California, a place he had grown to love. Arriving in San Francisco in August 1898, he underwent an extremely painful bladder operation. He appeared to be recuperating and participated in a number of civic activities with some of the many friends and acquaintances he had made in that state. One of his biographers wrote, “Then suddenly on September 1, he experienced complete kidney and bladder failure, and he rapidly lapsed into a coma. Doctors and those with him recognized that he could not survive such a crisis and he died at the Trumbo home at 6:40 a.m. on Friday, September 2.” He was ninety-one. This man whom the Lord had preserved through so many accidents of childhood and trials of adulthood lived nearly a century and served Him valiantly, distinguishing himself as one of the great Presidents of the Church.

**Notes**

9. Alexander, *Things in Heaven and Earth*, 42; see also Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, November 25, 1836, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
### Appendix: Life and Times of Wilford Woodruff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1807, March 1</td>
<td>Born in Farmington, Hartford County, Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Moved to Richland, New York, with his brother Azmon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1833, December 31</td>
<td>Baptized into the Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Met Joseph Smith and participated in Zion’s Camp march to Missouri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837, April 13</td>
<td>Married Phebe Carter in Kirtland, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Received a letter advising him of his call to be an Apostle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Raised his wife Phebe from the dead following a severe illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839, April 26</td>
<td>Ordained an Apostle in Far West, Missouri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839-41</td>
<td>Served a mission to Great Britain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844-46</td>
<td>Presided over the British Mission with his wife Phebe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847, July 24</td>
<td>Entered the Salt Lake Valley with Brigham Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>Appointed to the Utah Territorial Legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>Appointed Assistant Church Historian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Participated in the reestablishment of a School of the Prophets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Called as first president of the St. George Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>Provided temple ordinances for prominent American patriots and leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889, April 7</td>
<td>Sustained as President of the Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Issued the Manifesto concerning plural marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896, April 6</td>
<td>Dedicated the Salt Lake Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898, September 2</td>
<td>Died in San Francisco, California, at age ninety-one</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Utah Years, 1871–1886
Edited by Donald G. Godfrey and Kenneth W. Godfrey
Charles Ora Card’s diaries detail the pioneers’ attempts to make the desert blossom as a rose, including their work on the Logan Temple and Tabernacle. During this era, the Church faced increasing economic and federal legislative pressures. The records accent the everyday struggles of a people; their leadership, both local and Churchwide; and Card’s own capture by U.S. marshals.
$29.95, ISBN 0-8425-2609-9

Stewardship and the Creation: Latter-day Saint Perspectives
Edited by George B. Handley, Terry B. Ball, and Steven L. Peck
The essays in this book inspire members to consider carefully their own stewardships in caring for God’s creations as well as to create dialogue and find common ground with those of other persuasions. The book reaffirms and develops what previous examinations of our theology and history have repeatedly demonstrated: our religion offers a vital perspective on, and a foundation for, effective environmental stewardship that encompasses the best impulses of both liberal generosity and conservative restraint.
$24.95, ISBN 0-8425-2618-8
**Joseph Smith and the Doctrinal Restoration**

“Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3). This Sperry Symposium volume focuses on truths restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. It celebrates his 200th birthday and the 175th anniversary of the Church’s founding.

$24.95, ISBN 1-59038-489-X

**A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church, Vol. 2**

*Peter Crawley*

On July 21, 1847, Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow, with one horse between them, paused at the mouth of Emigration Canyon and then made their way into the Great Salt Lake Valley—the first Latter-day Saints to walk on the land that would become their home. This volume tells the story of Latter-day Saint publishing efforts as the Church settled Utah. It also features detailed descriptions of Orson Pratt’s missionary publications in England and the printed works of missionaries in France, Italy, Denmark, and the Pacific islands. Researchers, librarians, book collectors, and serious students of Mormonism will find this book a valuable reference guide to these early publications.

$65.00, ISBN 0-8425-2603-X

**Pioneers in the Pacific: Memory, History, and Cultural Identity among the Latter-day Saints**

*Edited by Grant Underwood*

In this volume, President Gordon B. Hinckley tells inspiring stories of missionaries and members in Australia, Hawaii, New Zealand, Samoa, Tahiti, and Tonga. Elder Glen L. Rudd recalls serving with Matthew Cowley, the “Apostle of the Polynesians,” a man loved for his faith and kindness. Chieko N. Okazaki discusses the need for harmony between gospel principles and human culture. Groundbreaking chapters tell the history of Saints in the islands.

$19.95, ISBN 0-8425-2616-1
Fire on Ice: The Story of Icelandic Latter-day Saints at Home and Abroad
Fred E. Woods

How did the message of the restored gospel come to Iceland, the land of fire and ice? What made its converts so adventurous to make this lengthy Utah journey by sail, rail, and trail? What challenges did they encounter trying to assimilate into a western American culture? This book provides the answers. Its publication marks a dual sesquicentennial commemoration: the arrival of the first Icelandic Latter-day Saints in Utah and the earliest settlement of Icelanders in the United States.

$15.95, ISBN 0-8425-2617-X

Sperry Symposium Classics: The Old Testament
Edited by Paul Y. Hoskisson

Explore the Old Testament as the original testament of the Savior’s dealings with humanity. Topics include the law of Moses, the Abrahamic covenant, and the teachings of Isaiah and Elijah. Elder Russell M. Nelson, Robert L. Millet, and others offer scriptural insights in these classic Sperry Symposium addresses.

$25.95, ISBN 1-59038-533-0
Religious Studies Center

Established in 1975 by BYU Religious Education Dean Jeffrey R. Holland, the Religious Studies Center (RSC) is the research arm of Religious Education at Brigham Young University. Since its inception, it has provided funding for numerous projects, including conferences, books, and articles relating to Latter-day Saint culture, history, scripture, and doctrine. The RSC endeavors to use its resources to, first, facilitate excellence in teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ; second, encourage research and publication that contribute to the mission of the university and its sponsoring institution, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and third, promote study and understanding of other cultures and religions.

Research and Publication

One of the primary aspects of the RSC’s mission is to enhance understanding of revealed truths. The ultimate interpretation of doctrinal matters rests with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles; therefore, we seek to discover historical background, provide cultural and linguistic details, and explore new avenues of understanding into our faith, history, and way of life. Thus, research into scripture, Church history, and religious matters in general is an important part of what the full-time Religious Education faculty do. Because BYU is primarily a teaching institution, we recognize as our major thrust the classroom experience. We seek, however, to expand our classroom through the writing and publication of our research.
The RSC helps fund several meaningful projects each year and publishes books, articles, a newsletter, and the *Religious Educator* in helping to promote and disseminate Latter-day Saint research and thought. These publications enhance the libraries of Latter-day Saint readers and others who take an interest in the history or culture of the Latter-day Saints. The yearly application deadline for research funding is June 1. Please send inquiries to RSC at 370 JSB, BYU, Provo, UT 84602.

**An Invitation to Join with Us**

RSC research and publication projects are sustained by university funding and by financial donations from friends who want to encourage the kind of quality work the RSC does. We are thankful for the generosity of those who support our efforts to bring the best scholarship to light. If you would like to become a donor to the RSC to help its mission, please contact the RSC at 370 JSB, BYU, Provo, UT 84602.

The RSC restricts its publications to items that fit within the scholarly range of the curriculum and mission of Religious Education. It produces materials that are well written, rigorous, and original and that reflect the doctrine, the history, the teachings of the living prophets, and the standard works of the Restoration. It seeks works that meet academic needs or fill a niche in the area of faithful scholarship. It welcomes all materials that fit within these parameters.
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Gospel Teaching and Writing: A Conversation with Elder Gerald N. Lund
Paul H. Peterson

The Bible—A Priceless Treasure
David M. Whitchurch

Chapters, Verses, Punctuation, Spelling, and Italics in the King James Version
Kent P. Jackson, Frank F. Judd Jr., and David R. Seely

The Radical Reformation and the Restoration of the Gospel
Stephen J. Fleming

Kindness: The Manifestation of True Conversion
Kendall Ayres

My Great-Grandmother and the Book of Mormon
M. Steven Andersen

A Tribute to Gospel Teachers
Rebecca McConkie

“The Way of an Eagle”: Birds in the Scriptures
Dale Z. Kirby

Helping Children to Be Lifelong Learners
Don and Ann Pearson

Blessed by Seminary
Robert Hasara

The Lord’s Suburban
Jeanne Boren

The Omniscience of God
Roger K. Terry

Profiles of the Prophets: Wilford Woodruff
Lawrence R. Flake

“There is great power in the story of the Restoration. It has all the elements of great drama—tragedy and triumph and courage and all the things that make a great novel.”