**Gifts of the Spirit**  
President Cecil O. Samuelson

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**Including God in History**  
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**Building Stronger Testimonies**  
Joseph Fielding McConkie

**Profiles of the Prophets: Brigham Young**  
Charles Swift
ON THE COVER:
The gifts of the Spirit are symbolized by this abundant wheat field.

“We may not fully value [these gifts] or recognize the significance of them in our lives and in our baskets of overflowing blessings.”

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“All who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost are entitled to receive revelation for the guidance of their own lives, for their family responsibilities, Church callings, and all other aspects of their existence.”

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Editor’s Note

In the spring of 2000, Religious Education at Brigham Young University issued the first volume of the Religious Educator (volume 1, number 1). Soon thereafter, Robert J. Millet, dean of Religious Education, asked me to become the editor-in-chief of this new venture. More than a year elapsed before we released volume 2, number 1 in late 2001.

The delay between volumes 1 and 2 happened while I was putting together a team to produce a new format, establishing procedures to ensure scholarly work of the highest quality, and identifying the unique service we intended to provide readers. Because outstanding periodicals dealing with scripture, doctrine, and Church history were then (and now) being published at Brigham Young University, such as Journal of Book of Mormon Studies and BYU Studies, we needed to identify a special niche for the Religious Educator. We decided our focus should be on serving the interests and needs of those who teach the gospel on a regular basis to high school and college students and adults. In each issue, we planned to select articles and essays that would be helpful and appealing to this diverse audience (early-morning seminary teachers; full-time CES teachers; professors at BYU campuses in Hawaii, Idaho, and Provo; and Gospel Doctrine, priesthood, and Relief Society teachers).

Hours turned into days, days into weeks, and weeks into months following my first conversation with Dean Millet. In the meantime, I was busy thinking, dreaming, and working on surrounding myself with people who could help. I asked my colleague, mentor, and friend, Ted D. Stoddard (of the BYU Marriott School), to help me produce several key documents, including a submission guide. Next, I asked several people from across the country to become members of an editorial advisory board—men and women who could help us keep our perspective and ensure that the Religious Educator would not become merely another publication by BYU faculty for BYU faculty. Finally, I recruited Stephen A. Hales (Stephen Hales Creative, Inc.) to provide suggestions for a new format.

Since those early days when we survived on a Spartan budget and when the work week typically involved sixty to seventy hours, we have been delighted with the response to this venture. We are grateful beyond measure that many people have supported our efforts to find a specific niche and to submit essays and articles that are thoughtful, well crafted, and informative.

When we released volume 2, number 1, the Religious Educator featured Elder D. Todd Christofferson’s article, “The Faith of a Prophet: Brigham Young’s Life and Service.” Since then, we have been blessed by wonderful contributions from Church leaders and many others beyond the BYU campus. Of course, we continue to publish articles and essays by BYU faculty—those men and women who spend their time researching, writing, and teaching about issues important to our audience.

As we begin our eighth year with this issue (volume 8, number 1), we are still fine-tuning our efforts. We appreciate our readers’ continued support and look forward to publishing helpful, useful, and spiritually uplifting articles and essays. We no longer face the necessity of working long overtime hours to meet deadlines, but the spirit of service and sacrifice we started with continues to prevail throughout all our efforts.

Please join us again on an adventure that will continue to provide surprises and insights as you turn the pages of this issue and become part of the dialogue between competent scholars and inspiring teachers who are, above everything else, committed disciples of Jesus Christ.

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel
Editor-in-Chief
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President Cecil O. Samuelson

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The following address was given at the Utah Valley Multistake Conference on September 10, 2006.

My dear brothers and sisters, I appreciate this opportunity to be with you and, under the direction of President Monson, address you. I anticipate that this will be a wonderful conference session, and I invite your faith and prayers in my behalf that my comments will not detract from the special spirit that will attend us.

Just three weeks ago, my wife, Sharon, and I had the opportunity of attending a fine sacrament meeting in Monterey, California. We had been invited by some special friends to be there as part of my responsibilities to advance the cause of Brigham Young University. All of the messages, testimonies, and music in that meeting were uplifting. I was particularly touched by a wonderful talk given by their youth speaker, a lovely young woman who was on her way to Provo for school. She spoke about the gifts of the Spirit, and as she spoke with maturity and understanding, the Spirit was present in abundance.

When I complimented her after the meeting, her bishop, a convert to the Church as an adult and a very effective priesthood leader, made the comment, “I asked her to speak on this subject because I have learned that even many of our lifelong and active members do not fully appreciate the gifts of the Spirit that we have.”

As I considered his comment, I concluded that he may well be correct. I did not ask what he meant by “appreciate,” but it does occur to me that he may have meant more than one thing. Initially, it seemed
plausible in his ward of generally great affluence, comfort, and beautiful surroundings that many of whom their bishop spoke did not fully value or feel gratitude for the blessings of the Spirit that were regularly theirs. As I considered further, it too seemed possible that he could also have been referring to another definition of the word “appreciate”—that is, that they might not have been fully aware of the blessings of the Spirit or that what they were experiencing or feeling was truly a manifestation of spiritual blessings.

I suspect for all of us, there is a risk that we may not understand or recognize that we are greatly blessed with several gifts of the Spirit. Even when we do, we may not fully value them or recognize the significance of them in our lives and in our baskets of overflowing blessings. Today, I will not take time to enumerate the many scripturally described blessings of the Spirit found in such places as in the writings of Paul, the book of Moroni, or the forty-sixth section of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is a wonderful personal exercise to think of them and find how many of these gifts are, or have been, operative in our lives.

You will recall in the troubled and difficult last years of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s mortal ministry, he and some of the brethren traveled to Washington DC to meet with the president of the United States, Martin Van Buren. While there was disappointment that the Church did not receive the relief or redress that the brethren had hoped for, they were able to bear testimony directly to the president of the United States. One of those present recorded the following: “In our interview with the President, he interrogated us wherein we differed in our religion from the other religions of the day. Brother Joseph said we differed in mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands. We considered that all other considerations were contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

On another occasion, the Prophet Joseph Smith said this:

We believe in the gift of the Holy Ghost being enjoyed now, as much as it was in the Apostles’ days; we believe that it [the gift of the Holy Ghost] is necessary to make and to organize the Priesthood, that no man [or woman] can be called to fill any office in the ministry without it. . . . We believe that the holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and that holy men in these days speak by the same principle; we believe in its being a comforter and a witness bearer, that it brings things past to our remembrance, leads us into all truth, and shows us of things to come; we believe that “no man can know that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost.” We believe in it [this gift of the Holy Ghost] in all its fullness, and power, and greatness, and glory; but whilst we do this, we believe in itrationally, consistently, and scripturally.
As we know, the Latter-day Saints are not unique in believing in the Holy Ghost. Where we differ is in our understanding made possible only by modern revelation. We know that the Holy Ghost, a member of the Godhead, indeed is one with the Father and the Son in purpose and spirit, but is clearly and necessarily a distinct, individual, and separate personage and spirit being.

As we read in the Doctrine and Covenants, “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us” (D&C 130:22). This clear distinction helps us understand the significance of His mission and calling. Often, when we bear testimony of the Father and the Son, as we should with power and great frequency, we may tend to take more lightly the third member of the Godhead and His essential role in our lives. Let me again return to the words of the Prophet Joseph: “There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him.”

This key point is emphasized in the concluding verse of the 130th section of the Doctrine and Covenants: “A man may receive the Holy Ghost, and it may descend upon him and not tarry with him” (D&C 130:23).

I suspect that we who have been blessed to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and to understand the basic doctrine which we have briefly reviewed can understand the truthfulness of this principle experientially in our own lives and in the lives of others we observe. Like so many other gifts of the Spirit and blessings, the companionship of the Holy Ghost is conditional and depends on our attitudes, worthiness, receptivity, and willingness to have the gift. Most of us know, through the gift of the Holy Ghost itself, when we are in tune and have the Spirit with us and when we don’t. It is not that we usually consciously try to drive the Spirit away but that we allow ourselves to become distracted or deflected and crowd out the Holy Ghost with thoughts, feelings, ambitions, or sins that are not compatible with the presence of this holy influence.

You know well the story of Lehi and his family and their long and arduous trip from Jerusalem to the promised land. Their lives were not tranquil all of the time. There were challenges of many sorts. There were frequent hunger, fatigue, thirst, and discouragement. There were
frequent family difficulty and disagreement. And there were remarkable and sublime moments when the blessing of the influence and presence of the Holy Spirit was clearly abundant. During all of this, the family was moving into the unknown.

The Lord in His great mercy provided for them the guidance they needed. As Lehi, under the direction of the Lord, prepared to take his family into the wilderness, he found the “round ball of curious workmanship” made of brass that had pointers directing them in the way that they should go (see 1 Nephi 16:10). Quickly he and his family learned that the pointers in the ball “work[ed] according to the faith and diligence and heed” that they gave to them (see 1 Nephi 16:28).

In this regard, the gift of the Holy Ghost is not unlike the Liahona. That is, it can be our constant companion and guide when we nurture it with faith, diligence, and heed. When we neglect these things, like the pointers in the brass ball, direction ceases and we are left to our own devices, which often are so woefully inadequate. There is a reason the scripture refers to a “still small voice” (1 Nephi 17:45), because the Holy Ghost does not force Himself upon us. We need to demonstrate our desire for the gift of the Holy Ghost to be manifest in our lives, and we do so by the way we live with faith, diligence, and heed.

It is in this sense that all who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost are entitled to receive revelation for the guidance of their own lives and for their family responsibilities, Church callings, and all other aspects of their existence. It is important to know that the Holy Ghost operates within the bounds of our own stewardships. Thus, a mother will not receive guidance for the rearing of her neighbor’s children, although she may see obvious things that could be done better. A bishop will not receive inspiration for the direction of a ward other than his own, although he might be tempted on occasion to share his insights. Of course, in these examples it is not inappropriate to share feelings and experiences when asked, but only when appropriately asked. Even when properly requested, however, the proffered insights do not come with the same authority as those given by the Holy Ghost to a specific individual or situation. This is fully consistent with the order of the kingdom and the stewardship of the recipient.

A sometimes tricky and occasionally confusing truth about the gift of the Holy Ghost and the inspiration received is that it will not violate another’s agency. Let me use as an example an occurrence not rare on the BYU campus.

As we encourage our young women and young men to date and after appropriate preparation and courtship to marry the partner of their
dreams, we occasionally meet someone a little confused about the process and what the feelings and inspiration he or she has received means. It is not unheard of for a fine young man to feel greatly attracted to a beautiful young woman who meets all of the essential characteristics on his list of what his ideal wife should be. He enjoys being with her and becomes convinced he would like to solidify a permanent relationship. Because he wishes to be sure, he makes it a matter of prayer and is convinced that heaven approves. The same basic experience may occur with a young woman as well. Fortunately, the feelings and inspiration are often reciprocal, and thus the kingdom continues to grow. Somewhat unfortunately, on other occasions, it may be that only one of the pair has the strong feeling and seemingly sure confirmation.

Herein lies the challenge. The other person in the proposed partnership may not feel exactly the same way nor has experienced the same inspiration. Is one wrong? Not necessarily and usually not. There are many matters of individual agency that can be approved by the guidance of the Holy Ghost that are not mandated. Thus, we all must be sure that we do not try to impose unduly our own will or choice on another, even when we feel strongly that it is heaven approved.

Not every acceptable choice, decision, or alternative is the only correct one. Of course, when we are confronted with serious binary questions (meaning only two available options) such as should we be morally clean or not, or should we be absolutely honest as we pay our taxes, take examinations in school, make and keep our temple covenants, or not, then there is only one correct choice and it is essential that we make the correct one.

On the other hand, the Lord leaves much in our hands and expects us to work out and consider carefully before deciding among several acceptable options. Years ago, I worked closely in attempting to advise and counsel a young man as he approached the conclusion of his medical school training. He was a very able and fine prospective physician. He was a faithful returned missionary, married to a beautiful and devoted young wife, and had much experience in receiving clear answers to his prayers. He came from a faithful family with a name many of you would recognize, where he had been taught to make all important decisions prayerfully and to delay acting until confirmation was received.

His problem was not a rare one, and he had forgotten, in his intense desire to avoid a serious mistake, the lesson Oliver Cowdery learned for himself and for all of us as he assisted the Prophet Joseph in the translation of the Book of Mormon. Oliver wanted to translate
and his desire was granted by the Lord but then soon revoked. Listen to these words of reproof and counsel: “Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me. But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. But if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong” (D&C 9:7–9).

After reading and discussing these verses, as well as the various merits of a career in surgery or internal medicine, my young friend quickly realized the need he had to make a decision himself and then take it to the Lord. He followed the revealed pattern and quickly got the answer he sought and needed. Now, twenty-five years later, he is an internationally recognized expert in his field.

Let me mention another potential mistake that you and I might make on occasion. I call it the prayer of faith when we already know the answer. Please forgive a personal example. Many years ago when I was finally near completion of my academic training at Duke University, which had gone on for a number years, I received a job offer to join the faculty and assume a position in the administration of my alma mater. I was flattered with the invitation, and Sharon and I both felt that eventually we wanted to return to the West and be closer to our families. The problem we encountered was that we did not feel the timing was quite right. My professional career was developing nicely in a very prestigious program, we held callings in a ward that was not blessed with excessive strength, we had developed close and special friendships, and we loved the beauty and the ambiance of the area. While we prayed over the matter, I at least was quite sure of the answer and therefore declined the offer from my own medical school with the hope that it might be tendered again in a few years.

Happily, the dean of the college making the offer was not only tenacious but a man of faith and, as a former bishop, understood the workings of the Spirit. When I rejected his offer the second time he called, he said simply, “If you can assure me that you have gone about this matter in exactly the right way, I’ll not bother you again. If you haven’t, please call me within a few days.”

You can imagine that I didn’t sleep too well that night. We determined to go about the matter “in exactly the right way” and listen to, rather than instruct, the Lord. For reasons that became much clearer over the years, the decision to return then was exactly the right one. Without
the inspired help of Dr. John A. Dixon, I likely would have made a seri-
ous mistake and perhaps never have known it. It would have not been
bad to stay in the East, and maybe it would have even been a wonderful
experience to do so. It would have meant that other special and perhaps
essential opportunities and blessings would not have been ours as they
have been as a result of the decision to leave Duke when we did.

We must remember that the gift of the Holy Ghost includes not only
receiving necessary and vital warning and instruction that many times we
have not requested and also answers to our prayers that have been pro-
perly expressed, but also the gift and requirement of careful listening that
cannot occur when we are already sure that we have the answer.

I am grateful for all of the gifts of the Spirit and particularly for
the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is usually the vehicle through which
the other gifts are made manifest. As one who has been “given by the
Holy Ghost [the gift] to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and
that he was crucified for the sins of the world” (D&C 46:13), I bear
testimony of Him that He lives. I also bear my witness of the reality of
the Father and of the Holy Ghost as well as of the Restoration of the
gospel in our day. I bear testimony of our living prophet, President
Gordon B. Hinckley, of his noble counselors, President Monson and
President Faust, and of those called to serve with them. That we may
all be able to appreciate fully in every sense of the word the gifts of the
Spirit, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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Notes

1. Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed.

   Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 242.

Including God in History

*Elder Alexander B. Morrison*

*Elder Alexander B. Morrison* is an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

This address was given October 31, 2005, at a luncheon at Brigham Young University for contributors to *Window of Faith: Latter-day Saint Perspectives on World History* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004).

More than two decades ago, President Boyd K. Packer gave a landmark address to Church religious educators at their annual symposium. The talk was entitled “The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect.” In it, President Packer noted that historians, if they are not very wise, leave out of their professional studies the things of the Spirit. The next step soon follows: they leave spiritual things out of their lives. He concluded that “there is no such thing as an accurate, objective history of the Church without consideration of the spiritual powers that attend this work.” He cautioned that “in an effort to be objective, impartial, and scholarly, a writer or a teacher may unwittingly be giving equal time to the adversary.”

President Packer quoted President Joseph F. Smith, who noted more than a century ago that though “there may be many who can not discern the working of God’s will in the progress and development of this great latter-day work, . . . there are those who see in every hour and in every moment of the existence of the Church, from its beginning until now, the overruling, almighty hand of Him who sent his Only Begotten Son to the world to become a sacrifice for the sin of the world.”

The application of these inspired words of counsel to all who teach Church history or do research on Church history is, of course,
obvious. The Lord—rather than humans, regardless of their intellect and training—directs this Church and its institutions. But do the same principles apply to those at Brigham Young University or other Latter-day Saint institutions who teach and do research in history, mechanical engineering, biochemistry, or philosophy? To me, the answer is simple: our citizenship, regardless of our profession or country of residence, lies in the kingdom of God—not in the secular world. So too does our home. We are people of God who are not of the world. If we fail to understand those simple truths, we will lose our way. Intellectual and scholarly credentials, regardless of how impressive they may be, will not protect us. In fact, they may actually harm us if they become substitutes for that which matters most in the long run.

Several reasons are obvious as to why Latter-day Saint scholars owe their primary responsibility to Him who directs this work. A verse comes to mind from 1 Samuel in which the Lord rejects the house of Eli the priest: “Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30). The meaning is clear: God will honor us if, and only if, we are faithful to Him. We show that faithfulness as we keep sacred the covenants we have made with God, including that of consecration. Those who break those covenants place themselves in great spiritual jeopardy and, as President Packer noted, “after all of the tomorrows of mortality have been finished, . . . will not stand where [they] might have stood.”

A powerful reason why all who teach and do research in a Latter-day Saint environment must avoid the pitfall of so-called academic objectivity relates to the welfare of the precious “snow-white birds”—your students—who are entrusted to your charge. All of you undoubtedly have heard the oft-told story of the snow-white birds—the BYU students whose faith was sorely tried, and sometimes broken, by a controversy on this campus nearly a century ago. They were seen and their fate recorded in a dream by George Brimhall, president of the university in 1910. President Packer spoke movingly about them at the 1995 Annual University Conference. We have a deep responsibility toward these “snow-white birds.” They need our help, these tender, impressionable fledglings “who now must fly in an atmosphere that grows ever darker with pollution.”

“It is harder now,” President Packer noted, “for them to keep their wings from being soiled or their flight feathers from being pulled out.” We will not be held faultless if we destroy their faith, especially if we do so on the specious pretext that we are being “objective” or “scholarly.” We cannot be neutral on this matter. Our responsibility is
both great and abundantly clear. And we must not think, even for a moment, that our responsibility starts and stops with religious training. President Brigham Young admonished Karl G. Maeser not to teach even the times tables without the Spirit of the Lord.  

I do not wish, in any way, to convey the impression that I am opposed to intellectual vigor and rigor at this or any other educational institution. We need much more of both on this campus and elsewhere. On the contrary, I have devoted much of my life to the acquisition and promulgation of learning. I love the world of the mind. I take great joy from instruction in “things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms” (D&C 88:79). But I think I know where my greatest joy and my deepest love lie. They are with God and His work. To me, as with the Psalmist, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psalm 19:1).

It seems clear to me that there are things we must not do—behaviors we must not practice—if we are to honorably fulfill our covenantal stewardships. But in what way will we actually be helped if we do so? To me, at least, the answer is given in a revelation received by the Prophet Joseph Smith in August 1833 (see D&C 97). Those who in humility seek diligently to learn wisdom and find truth will be blessed of God. I am of the firm belief that their minds will be clearer, their thoughts more lucid, their searching more fruitful, and their scholarship more profound than if they pursued their academic endeavors without appropriate humility. As Joseph Smith noted, they will feel “pure intelligence flowing into [them], it may give [them] sudden strokes of ideas . . . and thus . . . [they] may grow into the principle of revelation.”

It follows, therefore, that Latter-day Saint scholars who are faithful to their covenants should be counted among the leaders in their various professions. Building upon their secular knowledge and lifted and enlightened by the Spirit, they can have a different perspective on the world and all there is in it. They can see things “as they really are” (Jacob 4:13); and as they do so, they will discern the hand of God in all the affairs of men. Of that I testify, in Jesus’s name, amen. 

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Notes

The Fall of Kirtland: The Doctrine and Covenants’ Role in Reaffirming Joseph

Scott C. Esplin

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The Doctrine and Covenants portrays an abrupt end to the glorious days of Kirtland. Numerous sections record the seven-year period when Ohio served as the Church’s headquarters, a duration bested only by Salt Lake City. More canonized revelations preserved in the Doctrine and Covenants originate from the Kirtland area than any other place in Latter-day Saint history. As late as section 110, members were enjoying a Pentecostal season, complete with visions, prophecies, angelic ministries, and bestowal of greater priesthood keys (see D&C 109–10). Yet after these miraculous events are detailed, only one brief revelation was published from Joseph Smith’s final and most difficult year living in Kirtland (D&C 112). Early in 1838, Joseph was forced to flee for his life, never to see the temple or the town of Kirtland again. For the Prophet, all that remained of the place where he had experienced the most recorded visions, had received the most published revelations, and had spent the majority of his adult life were debts, discouragement, and broken dreams. After fleeing, Joseph could only prophesy, wait, and wonder regarding Kirtland. Safely settled in Nauvoo three years later, he was told, “I, the Lord, will build up Kirtland, but I, the Lord, have a scourge prepared for the inhabitants thereof” (D&C 124:83). For the rest of Joseph’s life, Kirtland remained on his mind. In fact, the morning of his final day on earth Joseph related his dream the night before of being “back in Kirtland.”

Though a trying time for all involved, the fall of Kirtland and the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants that followed may have
produced some of Joseph’s and the Church’s most important lessons. As with other difficult times in his history, Joseph learned through his experiences in Kirtland much about himself, his friends, and, most importantly, his relationship with Deity. Furthermore, lessons learned through God’s interaction with the Prophet following these challenging times may have not only shaped Joseph for the remainder of his life but also reaffirmed his prophetic role to the early Saints.

Prophecies of Apostasy and Fulfillment

An important lesson evident in the rise and fall of Kirtland is the omniscience of God. In a revelation given before the Church relocated to Ohio, the Lord foretold the glorious events that would happen in Kirtland:

For this cause I gave unto you the commandment that ye should go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high;

And from thence, whosoever I will shall go forth among all nations, and it shall be told them what they shall do; for I have a great work laid up in store, for Israel shall be saved. . . .

See that all things are preserved; and when men are endowed with power from on high and sent forth, all these things shall be gathered unto the bosom of the church. (D&C 38:32–33, 38)

Surely the Lord was outlining wonderful events in Kirtland’s near future, including the giving of the law (see D&C 42), the beginning of the endowment, and the sending forth of the first overseas missionaries of the Church. However, predictions in this revelation were followed by an equally prophetic warning: “And if ye seek the riches which it is the will of the Father to give unto you, ye shall be the richest of all people, for ye shall have the riches of eternity; and it must needs be that the riches of the earth are mine to give; but beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old” (D&C 38:39). This warning came with a time-frame, as the Lord later declared His will “to retain a strong hold in the land of Kirtland, for the space of five years” (D&C 64:21).

In 1836, five years after this declaration, Kirtland was at its spiritual apex. The Saints had dedicated the temple, converts flocked to the region, and prosperity loomed on the horizon. In the midst of the rejoicing, Joseph reminded the assembled Kirtland Saints of the Lord’s warning:

We are now nearly as happy as we can be on earth. We have accomplished more than we had any reason to expect when we began. Our beautiful house is finished, and the Lord has acknowledged it, by pouring out his Spirit upon us here, and revealing to us much of his will in regard to the work which he is about to perform. Furthermore, we have every-
thing that is necessary to our comfort and convenience, and, judging from appearances, one would not suppose that anything could occur which would break up our friendship for each other, or disturb our tranquility. But, brethren, beware; for I tell you in the name of the Lord, that there is an evil in this very congregation, which, if not repented of, will result in setting many of you, who are here this day, so much at enmity against me, that you will have a desire to take my life; and you even would do it, if God should permit the deed. But, brethren, I now call upon you to repent, and cease all your hardness of heart, and turn from those principles of death and dishonesty which you are harboring in your bosoms, before it is eternally too late, for there is yet room for repentance.²

A little more than a year later, Joseph experienced the effects of the hatred he warned would destroy the peace of Kirtland.

As the Lord warned, riches and pride doomed Kirtland. Benjamin F. Johnson, a young friend of the Prophet, summarized Kirtland’s fall:

At this time, town property and real estate went up to almost fabulous prices, and a general rush was made into business of all kinds. Members of the Quorum of the Twelve and Elders on missions hastened home, bringing merchandise and means for general trade, while the Kirtland Bank issued its paper apparently with full confidence in the future. Goods were sold upon credit with great hope of better times; and “Why be deprived of luxury and fashion today,” seemed to be the spirit of the hour. But when goods bought on credit were to be paid for, and notes became due for lands bought at great prices, then began a reaction. Disappointment engendered feelings which reacted upon fellowship, and men in high places began to complain of and reproach each other, and brotherly love was found smothered by the love of the world. The Bank having issued its currency in the same confidence now began to comprehend that its specie vaults were empty, with no possibility to realize upon collateral to replenish them. The spirit of charity was not invoked, and brethren who had borne the highest priesthood and who had for years labored, traveled, ministered and suffered together, and even placed their lives upon the same altar, now were governed by a feeling of hate and a spirit to accuse each other, and all for the love of Accursed Mammon. All their former companionship in the holy anointing in the Temple of the Lord, were filled with the Holy Ghost, the heavens were opened, and in view of the glories before them they had together shouted “Hosanna to God and the Lamb,” all was now forgotten by many, who were like Judas, ready to sell or destroy the Prophet Joseph and his followers. And it almost seemed to me that the brightest stars in our firmament had fallen. Many to whom I had in the past most loved to listen, their voices seemed now the most discordant and hateful to me. From the Quorum of the Twelve fell four of the brightest: [William] E. McLellin, Luke and Lyman Johnson and John [Boynton]; of the First Presidency, F. G. Williams; the three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and
Martin Harris. Of other very prominent elders were Sylvester Smith, Warren Cowdery, Warren Parrish, Joseph Coe and many others who apostatized or became enemies to the Prophet.  

Fortunately, while many of the Prophet’s former friends sought his demise, others rose to his defense. On one occasion, several of the Twelve, the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and other sympathetic authorities of the Church assembled in Joseph’s absence in the Kirtland Temple, determined to replace him with David Whitmer. Invited to the meeting, Brigham Young helped quell the uprising:

I rose up, and in a plain and forcible manner told them that Joseph was a Prophet, and I knew it, and that they might rail and slander him as much as they pleased, they could not destroy the appointment of the Prophet of God, they could only destroy their own authority, cut the thread that bound them to the Prophet and to God and sink themselves to hell. Many were highly enraged at my decided opposition to their measures, and Jacob Bump (an old pugilist) was so exasperated that he could not be still. Some of the brethren near him put their hands on him, and requested him to be quiet; but he writhed and twisted his arms and body saying, “How can I keep my hands off that man?” I told him if he thought it would give him any relief he might lay them on. This meeting was broken up without the apostates being able to unite on any decided measures of opposition. This was a crisis when earth and hell seemed leagued to overthrow the Prophet and Church of God. The knees of many of the strongest men in the Church faltered.

During this siege of darkness I stood close by Joseph, and, with all the wisdom and power God bestowed upon me, put forth my utmost energies to sustain the servant of God and unite the quorums of the Church.

Others, though faltering at times, turned to Joseph for aid. For example, Parley P. Pratt was tempted severely by the apostate spirit prevalent in Kirtland. Brought back to his senses by John Taylor, Elder Pratt responded, “I went to brother Joseph Smith in tears, and, with a broken heart and contrite spirit, confessed wherein I had erred in spirit, murmured, or done or said amiss. He frankly forgave me, prayed for me and blessed me.”

The Doctrine and Covenants remains silent regarding both the opposition Joseph experienced in 1837 and the support he received from friends. The reader is left to wonder about the emotional state of the Prophet while he was carrying such a heavy load. The burdens of financial difficulty caused by the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society were compounded by charges of being a false or fallen prophet and betrayal by many of his closest companions, including some who had labored with him from the beginning. Truly, the Kirtland apostasy
must have left a devastating imprint on the Prophet’s soul.

During one particularly trying time in Kirtland, Wilford Woodruff described the weighty burden borne by the Prophet Joseph:

He appeared much depressed; but soon the Spirit of God rested upon him, and he addressed the assembly in great plainness for about three hours, and put his enemies to silence. When he arose he said, “I am still the President, Prophet, Seer, Revelator and Leader of the Church of Jesus Christ. God, and not man, has appointed and placed me in this position, and no man or set of men have power to remove me, or appoint another in my stead; and those who undertake this, if they do not speedily repent, will burn their fingers and go to hell.” He reproved the people sharply for their sins, darkness and unbelief. The power of God rested upon him, and bore testimony that his sayings were true.\textsuperscript{6}

Daniel Tyler, a young witness to the events of Kirtland, preserved a similar glimpse into Joseph’s heart during these difficult times:

I attended a meeting “on the flats,” where “Joseph” presided. Entering the school-house a little before meeting opened, and gazing upon the man of God, I perceived sadness in his countenance and tears trickling down his cheeks. I naturally supposed the all-absorbing topic of the difficulty must be the cause. I was not mistaken. A few moments later a hymn was sung and he opened the meeting by prayer. Instead, however, of facing the audience, he turned his back and bowed upon his knees, facing the wall. This, I suppose, was done to hide his sorrow and tears.

I had heard men and women pray—especially the former—from the most ignorant, both as to letters and intellect, to the most learned and eloquent, but never until then had I heard a man address his Maker as though He was present listening as a kind father would listen to the sorrows of a dutiful child. Joseph was at that time unlearned, but that prayer, which was to a considerable extent in behalf of those who accused him of having gone astray and fallen into sin, that the Lord would forgive them and open their eyes that they might see aright—that prayer, I say, to my humble mind, partook of the learning and eloquence of heaven. There was no ostentation, no raising of the voice as by enthusiasm, but a plain conversational tone, as a man would address a present friend. It appeared to me as though, in case the vail were taken away, I could see the Lord standing facing His humblest of all servants I had ever seen. Whether this was really the case I cannot say; but one thing I can say, it was the crowning, so to speak, of all the prayers I ever heard.\textsuperscript{7}

In spite of his efforts, these trials continued until finally Joseph was forced to flee Kirtland early in 1838. Luke Johnson, himself disaffected from the Church at the time, aided in the escape. Learning “that
Sheriff Kimball was about to arrest Joseph Smith, on a charge of illegal banking, and knowing that it would cost him an expensive lawsuit," Johnson arrested the Prophet on a lesser charge, preventing the other arrest. That evening, Joseph settled the debt, thanked Luke for the intervention, and left for Missouri. Joseph described the escape: “On the evening of the 12th of January, about ten o’clock, we left Kirtland, on horseback, to escape mob violence, which was about to burst upon us under the color of legal process to cover the hellish designs of our enemies, and to save themselves from the just judgment of the law.”

Frustrated by the escape, Joseph’s enemies pursued him purposefully:

The weather was extremely cold, we were obliged to secrete ourselves in our wagons, sometimes, to elude the grasp of our pursuers, who continued their pursuit of us more than two hundred miles from Kirtland, armed with pistols and guns, seeking our lives. They frequently crossed our track, twice they were in the houses where we stopped, once we tarried all night in the same house with them, with only a partition between us and them; and heard their oaths and imprecations, and threats concerning us, if they could catch us; and late in the evening they came in to our room and examined us, but decided we were not the men. At other times we passed them in the streets, and gazed upon them, and they on us, but they knew us not.

After being so hounded, the Prophet and his family safely arrived among friends in Far West, Missouri, on March 14, 1838.

Reaffirming a Prophet’s Place: Revelations Following Kirtland

Though the Doctrine and Covenants records few of the historical details surrounding Joseph’s trials in Kirtland, the counsel offered in the sections received immediately upon his arrival in Far West reveals much concerning the Prophet and his relationship with God during this trying time. In fact, though given in Far West and dealing with questions and concerns of the Saints in that area, sections 113 through 116 may address Joseph’s recent past in Kirtland more than his future in Missouri.

Section 113, the first section received after Joseph’s flight from Kirtland, records questions concerning the writings of Isaiah. Removed from its historical context, this revelation may appear to be merely insight into an Old Testament prophecy. Viewed in the context of the Kirtland apostasy, however, the section offers a glimpse into the heart of the struggling Prophet. The opening six verses of section 113 deal with Joseph’s interpretation of Isaiah 11. Though little is known about why this chapter was selected, it was likely not a random selection from among the sixty-six chapters of Isaiah.
The eleventh chapter of Isaiah was, in fact, part of the earliest counsel received by the Prophet Joseph. Among the “many other passages of scripture” (Joseph Smith—History 1:41) repeated to him during his first visit with Moroni on the evening of September 21, 1823, the angel quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, stating that “it was about to be fulfilled” (v. 40). In the chapter, Isaiah initially describes a “rod” coming forth from the stem of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1) and later a “root of Jesse” (v. 10). In “the latter days” (v. 10a), Gentiles would seek this “root” when God “shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people” (vv. 10–11).

Doctrine and Covenants 113 contains questions and answers regarding the interpretation of these symbols. The rod is described as “a servant in the hands of Christ . . . on whom there is laid much power” (D&C 113:4). The root is interpreted as one “unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of [God’s] people in the last days” (D&C 113:6). A late Kirtland revelation, in fact, records Joseph receiving “much power” at the hands of Moses, Elias, and Elijah, including “the keys of the gathering of Israel” as well as “the keys of this dispensation” (D&C 110:11, 16). Based on these scriptures, Elder Bruce R. McConkie interpreted the identity of Isaiah’s rod and root: “Are we amiss in saying that the prophet here mentioned is Joseph Smith, to whom the priesthood came, who received the keys of the kingdom, and who raised the ensign for the gathering of the Lord’s people in our dispensation? And is he not also the ‘servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power?’ (D&C 113:4–6.) Those whose ears are attuned to the whisperings of the Infinite will know the meaning of these things.”

Thus, Doctrine and Covenants 113 is more than just an interpretation of Isaiah 11. It may also be a personal reaffirmation for Joseph that he and his mission were indeed known by ancient seers, including Isaiah. It also reveals that Joseph was not a fallen prophet, as his adversaries in Kirtland proclaimed. Perhaps God gave the interpretation of Isaiah 11 to the Prophet Joseph fifteen years after the angel Moroni first quoted it to him as a tender and timely reminder of his divine call.

Other phrases and themes in the early Far West revelations likewise tie to the recent challenges in Kirtland. Section 114 of the Doctrine and Covenants, revealed one month after Joseph and his family had arrived in Missouri, counsels Elder David W. Patten to settle his affairs and prepare for a mission. However, the final verse declares, “Verily thus saith the Lord, that inasmuch as there are those among you who
deny my name, others shall be planted in their stead and receive their bishopric” (D&C 114:2). Joseph and the Church undoubtedly wondered what to do with the estimated two to three hundred persons who had apostatized in Kirtland, a loss of 10 to 15 percent of the Kirtland membership and one-third of the Church leadership. Section 114 reminded Joseph that no one was irreplaceable in the kingdom, including apostate members of the First Presidency (Frederick G. Williams), members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (William E. McLellin, Luke S. Johnson, John F. Boynton, and Lyman E. Johnson), and the Three Witnesses (Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris). Later Far West revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants record that Hyrum Smith replaced Frederick G. Williams in the First Presidency (see D&C 112:17; 115:1); and John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and Willard Richards filled the vacancies in the Apostleship (see D&C 118:6). Joseph learned that the kingdom of God would move forward in spite of those who had fallen.

Another topic from the early revelations in Far West involves the naming of the Church. In Doctrine and Covenants 115, the Lord emphatically names and declares ownership over the organization, saying, “For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (v. 4). Like other revelations in Far West, this too may have been tied to the Kirtland apostasy.

The name of the Church on the day of its organization, as outlined in section 20, was “the Church of Christ” (D&C 20:1). During its first few years of existence, the Church assumed this official title or the similar “the Church of Jesus Christ.” By 1834, however, confusion had arisen. “Either out of contempt and ridicule, or to distinguish us from others,” the Church’s *Evening and Morning Star* reported, “the church has, particularly abroad, been called ‘Mormonite.’” Emphatically rejecting the appellation, the paper’s editor declared, “We do not accept the above title, nor shall we wear it as our name, though it may be lavished out upon us.” To further clarify misconceptions, a conference of elders was held in Kirtland on May 3, 1834, where the Church’s name was unanimously changed to “The Church of the Latter-day Saints.”

Changing the name from “the Church of Christ” to “the Church of the Latter-day Saints” did not sit well with some early members, especially David Whitmer. “’Reformers’ insisted that the regular authorities in Kirtland had departed from the true order of things by calling the church ‘The Church of the Latter-day Saints.’ They proceeded therefore to repudiate this title and adopt what they considered the proper one, ‘The Church of Christ,’ and held themselves forth as
the ‘old standard’; they rejected the Prophet, and denounced those who adhered to him as heretics." In light of these charges, stemming from the Kirtland apostasy, the Lord’s definitive declaration regarding the name of His Church in the last days, as found in D&C 115, is likewise a reaffirmation of His Prophet, so critically attacked for changing the name in Kirtland.

A final evidence that God supported Joseph during the trying days following Kirtland is evident in a subtle word choice prevalent in the revelations during this era. The phrase “my servant” is used frequently throughout the Doctrine and Covenants. In the last section given in Kirtland and the first three sections given in Far West, frequent and emphatic use of this phrase was made in relation to the Prophet Joseph. Four times in section 115, the Lord reminded the Church generally and His prophet specifically of “my servant Joseph” (vv. 1, 13, 16, 18). Doctrine and Covenants 113 prophesied to all involved about a latter-day servant “in the hands of Christ” (v. 4) who would do a great work. Section 112 warned Thomas B. Marsh and the rest of the Twelve to “rebel not” against God’s “servant Joseph” (v. 15). Finally, the Lord reassuringly declared of His servant Joseph, “I will be with him, and I will sanctify him before the people; for unto him have I given the keys of this kingdom and ministry” (D&C 115:19).

The recurring use of the phrase “my servant Joseph” must have been reassuring for the beleaguered Prophet. The year 1837 had been brutal, as Heber C. Kimball later described, “There were not twenty persons on the earth that would declare that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God.” “The turmoil in Joseph’s mind in 1837,” writes historian Richard L. Bushman, “seems to have matched the disruptions in the Church.” These disruptions went much deeper than the failed Kirtland Safety Society. “The economic emphasis is to some degree an oversimplification. . . . Certainly the banking failure was a precipitating factor in the open rebellion of many Mormons, but it may have been more a symbol of what seemed to be wrong.” Though many Saints blamed the bank failure, the real problem in Kirtland may have been disillusionment with the role of Joseph. The problem was compounded by what may have been Joseph’s personal struggles, both physical and emotional, in 1837. Bushman continues, “Where was God during these setbacks? Only one revelation during the year was deemed worthy of inclusion in the later Doctrine and Covenants. Only one letter in Joseph’s voice went into the record. His usual inspiration seemed closed, or at least he chose to keep silent about it.” When God did speak again in Far West, the frequent use of the term “my
servant,” coupled with the reminder that God was with the Prophet Joseph and that he held the keys of the kingdom on earth, must have been comforting.

“God Is My Friend”

The Kirtland era was an important training period for Joseph and the Church. Elder M. Russell Ballard observes:

It has been said that we may yet discover that Kirtland is our most significant Church history site. Let me describe to you how important Kirtland is to the Church. In Kirtland, were revealed basically all of the priesthood offices that we have in the Church today. This was the schooling period for the leaders of the Church. About one-half of the revelations recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants were revealed there, far more than any other location. There is where the School of the Prophets began. There is where Joseph made his Bible translation. There is where the Pearl of Great Price was largely translated. There is where the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was printed.

More heavenly manifestations and appearances occurred in Kirtland than any other place. For example, in Kirtland the Father and the Son appeared or were seen in vision four times, and the Savior was seen at least six more times by Joseph Smith. In Kirtland is where significant keys were given. The Church headquartered in Kirtland longer than anywhere else except Salt Lake City. We built our first temple and completed our first temple ordinances in Kirtland.

In addition to these experiences, Joseph and the Church gained great doctrinal insight during the Ohio period, including the law of the Lord (see D&C 42), information on the Savior’s Second Coming (see D&C 45; 133), knowledge of life after death (see D&C 76; 137), the Olive Leaf (see D&C 88), and the Lord’s law of health (see D&C 89).

Unfortunately, these lessons came with a price. During the Kirtland apostasy, Joseph learned about the personal pain of betrayal as friend and foe combined to drive him from his home with charges of having fallen from his prophetic office. However, during the final difficult days in Kirtland, Joseph learned whom he could count on: friends and family like Brigham Young and Hyrum Smith. More importantly, upon Joseph’s arrival in Far West, the revelations received from the Lord referring to “my servant Joseph” reaffirmed that the Prophet could also count on his omniscient Eternal Friend. This final lesson from Kirtland may have been the most important, for it kept him going in the face of trial. Years later, Joseph summarized one of the greatest lessons of the Kirtland apostasy, a lesson we all must learn: “I understand my mission and business. God Almighty is my shield; and what can man do
if God is my friend?” Gratefully, the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants portray and preserve this friendship.

Notes

10. Smith, History of the Church, 3:2–3.
14. Evening and Morning Star, May 1834, 158.
16. David Whitmer consistently held that Joseph and the Church acted inappropriately in changing the Church’s name. As late as 1887, in his “An Address to All Believers in Christ,” Whitmer charged that Joseph “drifted into many errors and gave many revelations to introduce doctrines, ordinances and offices in the church, which are in conflict with Christ’s teachings. They also changed the name of the church” (An Address to All Believers in Christ [Richmond, MO: 1887], 4).
20. Marvin S. Hill, “Cultural Crisis in the Mormon Kingdom: A Reconsideration

21. Marvin S. Hill argues: “The Mormon Church was undergoing a period of considerable growth and change during these years, characterized by a concentration of authority at the top and authority’s increasing control of every aspect of life. . . . A by-product of increased control over economic, political and social life was a growing feeling among many that the prophet and the church were becoming too worldly and too powerful, too much involved in regulating areas of life beyond their rightful domain” (“Cultural Crisis in the Mormon Kingdom,” 291).

22. Joseph was forced to endure a series of vexatious lawsuits as a result of the failed Kirtland Safety Society. At the same time, he was stricken with a near fatal illness, which Joseph said took him “to the borders of the grave” because his “sufferings were excruciating.” Joseph continued, “The enemy of all righteousness was suggesting, apostates reporting, and the doubtful believing that my afflictions were sent upon me, because I was in transgression, and had taught the Church things contrary to godliness” (*Smith, History of the Church*, 2:493).


In the scriptures and in Church history, the Lord has sometimes asked His Saints to do something by difficult means, even when an easier way has been available. One such instance is the directive about river travel found in Doctrine and Covenants 61.

Section 61 cautioned Joseph Smith and the Saints against using the waters (the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri rivers) for travel between Kirtland and Zion. As a result, Zion’s Camp and groups of the Saints traveled overland by foot and wagon train instead of using the much easier flatboats and steamboats. At least one positive result was that the Saints were prepared in advance for the arduous wagon journeys from Missouri to Nauvoo, then across Iowa to Winter Quarters, and finally to the Rocky Mountains.

Background

Joseph Smith arrived in Kirtland, Ohio, on about February 1, 1831, after directing all the members in New York to move there also. Less than six months later, as a result of revelations he received about Zion, Joseph took a party of brethren to Jackson County, Missouri. Concerning this trip, J. Christopher Conkling’s A Joseph Smith Chronology records the following:

June 19, 1831

Joseph, Sidney Rigdon, Martin Harris, Edward Partridge, W. W. Phelps, Joseph Coe, A. S. Gilbert, and Gilbert’s wife leave Kirtland for
Missouri. They travel by way of Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis, traveling by stage, \textit{canal boat}, and the last 250 miles on foot. . . .

Mid-July 1831

Joseph’s party arrives in Independence, Mo. There is a glorious reunion with missionaries there. . . .

August 9, 1831

Joseph leaves Independence in a canoe with ten elders. After several days of many dangers on the rivers, and after W. W. Phelps sees a daylight vision of the destroyer upon the waters, \textit{Joseph receives, on Aug. 12, D\&C 61}.\textsuperscript{1}

After William W. Phelps saw the destroyer on the waters, the Prophet Joseph Smith received the following revelation:

\begin{quote}
And now I give unto you a commandment that what I say unto one I say unto all, that you shall forewarn your brethren concerning these waters, that they come not in journeying upon them, lest their faith fail and they are caught in snares;

I, the Lord, have decreed, and the destroyer rideth upon the face thereof, and I revoke not the decree. . . .

And now, concerning my servants, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, let them come not again upon the waters, save it be upon the canal, while journeying unto their homes; or in other words they shall not come upon the waters to journey, save upon the canal.

Behold, I, the Lord, have appointed a way for the journeying of my saints; and behold, this is the way—that after they leave the canal they shall journey by land, inasmuch as they are commanded to journey and go up unto the land of Zion. (D\&C 61:18–19, 23–24; emphasis added)
\end{quote}

The Canal System

The Erie Canal, which passes through Palmyra, is well known in Church history and was the way Lucy Mack Smith, among others, brought her group of Saints to Kirtland. But Doctrine and Covenants section 61 was given after Joseph had left upstate New York. We find no record that he used the Erie Canal again after 1831. Certainly, it would not have been any help returning from Jackson County to Kirtland. Another canal must have been referred to in section 61.

Ohio also had an extensive canal-building program.\textsuperscript{2} New York’s Erie Canal showed so much promise to improve access to upstate New York and bolster its economy that other states quickly decided to follow suit,
even before the canal was completed. In Ohio, work on the Ohio and Erie Canal began on July 4, 1825, four months before the first boat went from Lake Erie to New York City via the Erie Canal and the Hudson River. The Ohio canals were built as economical transportation routes from the Great Lakes and northern Ohio to the Ohio River, basically running north and south. See map of the Ohio canal system.

The Ohio and Erie Canal from Cleveland to Portsmouth was not completed until 1832, although much of it was in use when Joseph and his party made the journey to Jackson County in June 1831. The portion from Akron to Cincinnati was in use by 1829, and many more sections were in use by 1831. The Miami and Erie Canal from Toledo to Cincinnati was not completed until 1845, even though it was begun only two weeks after the Ohio and Erie. Portions of it from Cleveland to Dayton were in use in 1830. Thus, the canals of Ohio were known and used by Joseph (see D&C 61:24).

Travel was much easier when travelers used canals and rivers. They did not have to face the dust encountered with wagons or stages. Horses pulled the canal boats. Boat travel was also less physically exhausting for the traveler. It was much easier to carry provisions and goods on canal boats and riverboats than on wagons. The Prophet Joseph Smith had already learned on the journey to Missouri just how pleasant using the Ohio canals and the Ohio-Mississippi-Missouri river system would be for moving the Saints to Zion. Section 61 changed all that.

Overland Travel

After the Lord’s warning in section 61, the Church journeyed overland to Jackson County from Kirtland and did not use the rivers or even the canals. Groups such as the Colesville Branch were early overland travelers from Kirtland to Missouri. Church history reveals that the Saints did not extensively use rivers again for travel until British and European Saints began coming to Nauvoo via New Orleans, where they would board steamboats for the journey up the Mississippi River.

One important reason for overland travel from Kirtland to Missouri was Zion’s Camp. Only after Zion’s Camp disbanded was the purpose for the journey apparent. It sorted out those who were willing to follow the Prophet without murmuring from those who had little faith and no patience, like Laman and Lemuel in the Book of Mormon. Some of the less-faithful members of Zion’s Camp died or left the Church because Jackson County (Zion) was not redeemed at that time, but most of the original members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were chosen from the faithful members of Zion’s Camp. If the
two Zion’s Camp groups had used the canals and rivers, likely no such sorting would have occurred.

Furthermore, because of Doctrine and Covenants 61, the Saints driven out of Caldwell and Davies counties were prepared to travel overland from Missouri east to Nauvoo in winter, when the rivers, including the Mississippi River, were frozen over. The same was true for the infamous winter journey across Iowa from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters in 1846. These overland journeys, mostly in very bad weather, further prepared the Saints for the thousand-mile trek westward to Utah that began the next year. We find no record that Brigham Young ever contemplated the use of flatboats on the Platte River to start the westward journey as Lewis and Clark had done on the Missouri River for their westward trek. Instead, he followed Joseph Smith’s plan and route for moving the Saints “to the Rocky Mountains,” knowing that wagons and teams would be required at some point. Building flatboats to transport wagons and teams partway would have taken more time than it would have saved.

Thus, from the vantage of the present, we see that the counsel in Doctrine and Covenants 61—that the Saints should not seek the easiest path—prepared them in many ways for the westward trek that lay ahead.

Notes

1. J. Christopher Conkling, *A Joseph Smith Chronology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 24–26; emphasis added. Note that reference to canal boats was made. However, Church history books do not elaborate on what that meant.
5. The Prophet Joseph Smith sent Elders Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt to petition Congress to let the Saints open the West: “April 25, 1844, Orson Hyde made a lengthy report of his labors in Washington. Orson Pratt was with him, and they drafted a bill to be presented to Congress in which they said their general course would be westward, through Iowa to the Missouri River, thence up the North Fork of the Platte into the mouth of the Sweetwater River in longitude 107 degrees, 45 minutes west, and thence up said Sweetwater River to the south
pass of the Rocky Mountains about 1100 miles from Nauvoo; and from said south pass, in latitude 42 degrees, 28 minutes, north to the Umpqua and Klamet Valleys in Oregon bordering on California” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56], 3:334). The Mormon Trail followed this route almost exactly to South Pass, where it turned southwest into the Salt Lake Valley.

Richard E. Bennett notes that “while building their cabin city at Winter Quarters, skirmishing with Indians, sparring with agents, eking out a living, and coping with sickness and disease, Church authorities analyzed and reanalyzed their plans. In question was the spring departure of a pioneer company of yet unknown size and makeup, along some still-to-be-finalized overland trail, to some obscure resting place at the foot of the mountains, and eventually to ‘Zion’ in some unde
termined valley over the Rockies. The planning councils in which these issues were discussed were essentially extensions of earlier Nauvoo deliberations, for the leaders had always intended to reestablish the Church in the West. But their stay at the Missouri provided time and opportunity to restock their supplies; rethink their plans; con
er with gentile traders, trappers, and missionaries who knew the West firsthand; obtain the best, most reliable maps; and formulate a deliberate, foolproof plan of action. Yet despite these advantages, until the eve of their exodus they did not agree on many details of their impending march and eventual destination. And if Brigham Young knew precisely where he was going when he and the advance party left in April 1847, it was the best-kept secret in camp” (“Finalizing Plans for the Trek West: Deliberations at Winter Quarters, 1846–1847,” *BYU Studies* 24, no. 3 [Summer 1984]: 235; emphasis added).
In section 129 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord provides “three grand keys” by which the Saints may know whether any angelic ministration is from God or from the devil. Verse 8 informs us that should the devil (or one of his hosts) appear attempting to deceive you into thinking he is a divine messenger sent from God, “when you ask him to shake hands he will offer you his hand, and you will not feel anything; you may therefore detect him.” For many this verse gives the impression that because Satan and his hosts lack mortal bodies, they are incapable of having physical contact with humans. In other words, the passage appears to focus on the nature of the bodies of Lucifer and his spirit followers, suggesting that their physical makeup is the reason their hands cannot be felt. However, a series of events that took place early in the Restoration suggest that this interpretation may not be accurate. In an effort to test the common exegesis of D&C 129:8, this paper will recount a handful of early Luciferian encounters, applying the implications of such to our understanding of the nature of Lucifer’s person.

The Prophet Joseph Smith

Of course, the reader will be familiar with the first and most sacred of events tied to the Restoration—namely the appearance of the Father and Son to the Prophet Joseph Smith. That spring morning of 1820, Joseph had a very physical encounter with the adversary—an experience that left Joseph with no doubts about Satan’s power in the physical realm:
I kneeled down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction, . . . and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction—not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light. (Joseph Smith—History 1:15–16)

Joseph describes here what must have been a terrifying and unimaginable encounter. Among other things, he notes that he was “seized upon” and was “entirely” overcome by Satan. He states that Lucifer bound his tongue so that he could not speak or cry out. Elsewhere, Joseph noted that during this experience, the devil caused his tongue to physically swell up and cleave to the roof of his mouth. He also spoke of hearing distinct footsteps walking toward him as he began his prayer, but he could not see Satan’s person. In one account of the experience, the Prophet noted that throughout the ordeal, he was “severely tempted” with “improper pictures,” and his mind was “benighted . . . with doubts”—all via the devil’s influence. This was certainly not the Prophet’s only encounter with the adversary. Although we do not know all the details surrounding each of these experiences, we do know that Joseph confided to at least one of his brethren that Satan had made repeated attempts to physically destroy him. President Heber C. Kimball states: “Brother Joseph . . . told me that he had contests with the devil, face to face. He also told me how he was handled and afflicted by the devil.” Heber shares the details of one of the many demonic encounters the Prophet had suffered:

I will relate one circumstance that took place at Far West, in a house that Joseph had purchased, which had been formerly occupied as a public house by some wicked people. A short time after he got into it, one of his children was taken very sick; he laid his hands upon the child, when it got better; as soon as he went out of doors, the child was taken sick again; he again laid his hands upon it, so that it again recovered. This occurred several times, when Joseph inquired of the Lord what it all meant; then he had an open vision, and saw the devil in person, who contended with Joseph face to face, for some time. He said it was his house, it belonged to him, and Joseph had no right there. Then Joseph rebuked Satan in the name of the Lord, and he departed and touched the child no more.
Thus, the record shows that Joseph experienced Satan in a very real and tangible way. This was not isolated to the very strange encounter in the Sacred Grove; on the contrary, the devil—apparently on multiple occasions—physically and violently accosted the Prophet “face to face.”

Heber C. Kimball

We should not be surprised to learn that the Prophet Joseph was not the only member of the early Church to be attacked by Lucifer. Indeed, Elder Kimball’s conversation with Joseph regarding physical satanic attacks did not come up at random. Rather, the conversation was provoked by an encounter Heber had while serving a mission to the British Isles. Brother Kimball spoke of this experience on numerous occasions, each time sharing additional and different details. Because space will not allow us to provide each of Brother Kimball’s many descriptions, what follows is an amalgamation of the salient points of the experience.

In 1837, Elders Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Orson Hyde, and Isaac Russell were laboring as missionaries in Preston, England. They were sharing a three-story flat on Wilford Street when the unthinkable happened. On Sunday, July 30, sometime around daybreak, Elder Russell rushed into the room of Elders Kimball and Hyde, waking them, and claiming that he was so afflicted with evil spirits that he would not live long if someone did not cast them out. The two brethren administered to him, rebuking the devil and petitioning the Lord for relief from the enemy that held Isaac bound. Elder Kimball was voice during the blessing. Near the end of the administration, his voice began to falter, and then his tongue was bound so that he could no longer speak. Suddenly he began to tremble and reel back and forth. At that moment, some invisible force threw him forward onto the floor. As he hit the floor, he let out a deep groan and then lay prostrate as though he were a dead man. Elder Hyde, with the assistance of Elder Russell, immediately laid hands on Elder Kimball, blessing him and rebuking Satan—at which point Heber regained consciousness but had only partial strength. He noted that as he regained his senses, sweat began to roll from him so profusely that it was as though he had just stepped out of a river. Elders Hyde and Russell lifted Elder Kimball and placed him on his bed. However, his physical agony was so intense that he pulled himself back onto the floor. Reaching his knees, he began to plead with the Lord for intervention.

At some point during these bizarre happenings, Elder Willard Richards awoke and made his way up to the third floor where the events
were unfolding. Elder Kimball noted that, having finished his prayer, he sat on his bed, and, to the surprise of all present, they were wrapped in a vision of the “infernal world.” The four brethren said that they saw “legions” of evil spirits, company after company of them. According to Heber, these demonic hosts “struggled” to attack the elders and “exerted all their power and influence” to destroy them. These spirits were in the shape of men, with fully formed bodies, hands, eyes, hair, ears, and every other human feature—though some had hideous distortions in their face and body. With knives, they “rushed” upon the brethren “as an army going to battle.” Elders Kimball and Hyde testified that they saw them as plainly as one would see a person standing in front of them. These demonic assailants came toward them, foaming at the mouth and “gnashing their teeth upon” the elders. Orson Hyde noted that there were also numerous snakes accompanying the satanic hosts, hissing, writhing, and crawling over each other. Willard Richards, who had his watch on his person, noted that these “foul spirits” remained in the room threatening the brethren for an hour and a half.¹⁰ Elder Kimball indicated that the following day he was so weak from the physical attack that he could scarcely stand.

Years later he spoke in detail of the encounter and then added, “I cannot even now look back on the scene without feelings of horror; yet, by it I learned the power of the adversary, his enmity against the servants of God, and got some understanding of the invisible world.”¹¹ Similarly, nearly two decades after the experience, Elder Hyde wrote: “Every circumstance that occurred at that scene of devils is just as fresh in my recollection at this moment as it was at the moment of its occurrence, and will ever remain so.”¹² Although much of the foregoing account was visionary, rather than tangible, Heber was quite clear that he was physically assaulted with a force that felt like being punched in the face by the fist of a strong man—to say nothing of the faltering voice, bound tongue, and physical weakness he encountered.

Wilford Woodruff

Not unlike the experiences of Joseph, Heber, Orson, Willard, and Isaac, Elders Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith were physically attacked by the devil during the winter of 1840 as they labored in London. Elder Woodruff spoke of this assault on numerous occasions. On October 18, 1840, he wrote the following in his journal:

We [Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith] retired to rest in good season and I felt well in my mind and slept until 12 at night. I awoke and meditated upon the things of God until near 3 o’clock and while forming
a determination to warn the people in London and overcome the powers of Darkness by the assistance of God; A person appeared unto me which I considered was the Prince of Darkness or the Devil. He made war with me and attempted to take my life. He caught me by the throat and choked me nearly to death. He wounded me in my forehead. I also wounded him in a number of places in the head. As he was about to overcome me I prayed to the father in the name of Jesus for help. I then had power over him and he left me though much wounded.

Three personage dressed in white came to me and prayed with me and I was immediately healed and [they] delivered me from all my troubles.

Although he doesn’t mention it here, on later occasions Wilford indicated that Satan did physical harm to both him and George A. Smith—and had it not been for “three holy messengers . . . dressed in temple clothing” who gave them each a priesthood blessing, both of them would have been killed by Satan on that occasion.

Newel Knight

The Prophet and the early missionaries were not the only individuals to suffer physical attacks at the hands of the adversary. In what has come to be known as the “first miracle of the Church,” Newel Knight had a rather strange physical encounter with Lucifer. In the History of the Church, we find the following reference to the event:

Amongst those who attended our meetings regularly [in April of 1830], was Newel Knight. . . . Newel had said that he would try and take up his cross, and pray vocally during meeting; but when we again met together, he rather excused himself. . . . Accordingly, he deferred praying until next morning, when he retired into the woods; where, according to his own account afterwards, he made several attempts to pray, but could scarcely do so. . . . He began to feel uneasy, and continued to feel worse both in mind and body, until, upon reaching his own house, his appearance was such as to alarm his wife very much. He requested her to go and bring me to him. I went and found him suffering very much in his mind, and his body acted upon in a very strange manner; his visage and limbs distorted and twisted in every shape and appearance possible to imagine; and finally he was caught up off the floor of the apartment, and tossed about most fearfully.

His situation was soon made known to his neighbors and relatives, and in a short time as many as eight or nine grown persons had got together to witness the scene. After he had thus suffered for a time, I succeeded in getting hold of him by the hand, when almost immediately he spoke to me, and with great earnestness requested me to cast the devil out of him, saying that he knew he was in him, and that he also knew that I could cast him out.
I replied, “If you know that I can, it shall be done;” and then almost unconsciously I rebuked the devil, and commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ to depart from him; when immediately Newel spoke out and said that he saw the devil leave him and vanish from his sight. . . .

This scene was now entirely changed, for as soon as the devil had departed from our friend, his countenance became natural, his distortions of body ceased, and almost immediately the Spirit of the Lord descended upon him, and the visions of eternity were opened to his view. . . .

All this was witnessed by many, to their great astonishment and satisfaction.16

Knight confirms the History of the Church account in his autobiography, where he not only acknowledges that the event took place but also speaks in detail of the subsequent June 29, 1830, trial in which he was called as a witness and interrogated regarding the encounter.17 Although Newel’s experience may seem more like demonic possession than satanic attack, clearly he was being physically accosted. Not only was his body actually distorted and disabled by the experience but also he notes that Satan physically lifted him off the floor and “tossed” him about the room as if he were a rag doll.

Sidney Rigdon

Lesser known is an event that took place in September of 1831. The Prophet Joseph decided to take his family, then dwelling in Kirtland, and move to Hiram, Ohio, where he could continue the work of translating the Bible. Sidney Rigdon was left to preside over the Saints in Kirtland. On one occasion during Joseph’s absence, Sidney informed a body of Saints that the “keys of the kingdom” had been taken from the Church.18 Those present were confused and dismayed by the announcement. Joseph was immediately sent for and, upon his return, declared that the things Sidney had taught were false. The Prophet added that, because of the things Elder Rigdon had said and done, “the devil [would] handle him as one man handles another.”19 In fulfillment of Joseph’s words, “a few weeks after this, Sidney was lying in bed alone, and suddenly ‘an unseen power lifted him from his bed . . . and tossed him from one side of the room to the other.’ His family heard the noises coming from the room and rushed in ‘and found him going from one side of the room to the other.’”20 This happened some three times over the course of the night.21 Sidney was physically “laid up” for five or six weeks because of the effects of the experience. Thus, having spoken under the influence of the devil, Sidney was then turned over to the physical buffetings of Lucifer.
Benjamin Brown

Although each of the aforementioned stories involved high-profile members of the Church, a number of lesser-known believers in the restored gospel had similar encounters. For example, one early Saint by the name of Benjamin Brown spent the years prior to his discovery of the Church looking for “the ancient gospel” of New Testament Christianity. In the process, he is said to have had a number of visions. However, when Brown shared these experiences with a local minister, he was told that both his visions and his desires to find “the ancient” Church of the Bible were “of the Devil.”

On one occasion after his conversion, Brother Brown and two friends were called upon to cast an evil spirit out of a possessed sister. While attempting to exercise the priesthood, Brown and one of his companions learned from direct experience Satan’s ability to physically interact with mortals. He notes:

The evil spirit . . . came out full of fury, and, as he passed by one of the brethren, seized him by both arms and gripped them violently. Passing towards me, something, which by the feel appeared like a man’s hand, grasped me by both sides of the face, and attempted to pull me sideways to the ground, but the hold appearing to slip, I recovered my balance immediately.

My face was sore for some days after this. The other brother that was seized was lame for a week afterwards.

Like so many others, Brother Brown and his companion learned firsthand that Satan’s hands can be felt!

Harvey Whitlock

One final experience is worth sharing here. It involves the ordination of Harvey Whitlock to the office of high priest. Brother Whitlock was an “on again, off again” Latter-day Saint who was baptized into the Church three times before finally becoming a member of the RLDS Church. Brother Whitlock’s experience with Satan was recorded by a number of individuals, some of whom actually witnessed it. For example, Levi Hancock wrote:

The Fourth of June [1831] came and we all met . . . near Isaac Morleys in Kirtland, [Geauga] County, Ohio. . . . Joseph put his hands on Harvey Whitlock and ordained him to the high priesthood. He turned as black as Lyman was white. His fingers were set like claws. He went around the room and showed his hands and tried to speak, his eyes were in the shape of oval O’s. Hyrum Smith said, “Joseph, that is not of God.” . . . Joseph bowed his head, and in a short time got up
and commanded Satan to leave Harvey, laying his hands upon his head at the same time. At that very instant an old man said to weigh two hundred and fourteen pounds sitting in the window turned a complete summersault in the house and [landed on] his back across a bench and lay helpless. Joseph told Lyman to cast Satan out. He did. The man’s name was Leamon Coply [Leman Copley], formally a Quaker [Shaker]. The evil spirit left him and as quick as lightening Harvey Green fell bound and screamed like a panther. Satan was cast out of him. But immediately entered someone else. This continued all day and the greater part of the night. . . . After this we . . . heard Harvey Whitlock say when Hyrum Smith said it was not [of] God, he disdained him in his heart and when the Devil was cast out he was convinced it was Satan that was in him and he knew . . . it. I also heard Harvey Green say that he could not describe the awful feeling he experienced while in the hands of Satan.  

Lucy Mack Smith also referred to the Harvey Whitlock experience in her 1844–45 preliminary manuscript that would become her History of Joseph Smith by His Mother. While she confirms Levi Hancock’s account of the events, she adds a couple of additional insights that Hancock did not include. Mother Smith states that Whitlock convulsed when under the physical influence of Satan and was left physically weak after the devil was cast out of him. She also notes that Copley had his tongue bound during the episode, preventing him from speaking. Both of these “symptoms,” if we can call them such, are comparable to the experiences of Joseph Smith, Heber C. Kimball, and Newel Knight. Philo Dibble, who was a firsthand witness to this experience, confirms Lucy Mack Smith’s additions to the story. Dibble writes:

Harvey Whitlock stepped into the middle of the room with his arms crossed, bound by the power of Satan, and his mouth twisted unshapely. Hyrum Smith arose and declared that there was an evil spirit in the room. . . .

Shortly Hyrum rose the second time, saying, “I know my duty and will do it,” and stepping to Harvey, commanded the evil spirits to leave him, but the spirits did not obey.

Joseph then approached Harvey and asked him if he believed in God. Then we saw a change in Harvey. He also bore record of the opening of the heavens and of the coming of the Son of Man, precisely as Lyman Wight had done.

Next a man by the name of Harvey Green was thrown upon his back on the floor by an unseen power. Some of the brethren wanted to administer to him by laying on of hands, but Joseph forbade it. Harvey looked to me like a man in a fit. He groaned and frothed at the mouth. Finally he got upon his knees and came out of it.

Next thing I saw a man came flying through the window from outside. He was straight as a man’s arm as he sailed into the room over two
rows of seats filled with men, and fell on the floor between the seats and was pulled out by the brethren. He trembled all over like a leaf in the wind. He was soon . . . calm and natural. His name was Lemon Copley. He weighed over two hundred pounds. This I saw with my own eyes and know it is all true, and bear testimony to it.27

What seems significant here—at least as it relates to our discussion—is not so much the fact that Harvey Whitlock was possessed by the devil, as others apparently were. Rather, what seems noteworthy are the physical attacks upon Leman Copley and Harvey Green. Whereas Whitlock was clearly possessed, these brethren exhibited behavior that implied they were also being physically (not just spiritually) harassed by the adversary.

The Nature of Satan’s Person

What has been shared is only a sampling of the numerous examples of demonic attacks recorded in the diaries and journals of the early Saints and in the historical records of the Church. Were space not an issue, many more could be offered as evidence that Lucifer is capable of physical contact with mortals. As Elder Joseph Fielding Smith writes: “We must not discount the power of the adversary of all righteousness. There are scores of cases, fully attested in our own day of demon influence.”28 Hauntingly, President George Q. Cannon spoke to this subject on more than one occasion, cautioning the Saints:

I have come to the conclusion that if our eyes were open to see the spirit world around us, . . . we would not be so unguarded and careless, and so indifferent whether we had the spirit and power of God with us or not; but we would be continually watchful and prayerful to our heavenly Father for His Holy Spirit and His holy angels to be around about us to strengthen us to overcome every evil influence. . . .29

If he could [Satan] would shed the blood of every man and woman on the face of the earth, rather than it should go into the hands of God. All those who are connected with him would, if they could, slay every man that stands in their pathway. The more faithful a man is in the cause of God, the more the hatred of the wicked is manifested against him.30

Of course, all these accounts raise a question, how is it possible that the devil and his minions—beings without physical bodies—are able to attack human beings in such a physical manner? Are we to be dismissive of these historical narratives as simple misunderstandings on the part of those who experienced the events described? This solution does not appear to be a viable one. Not only are a number of these brethren known to be men of character, righteousness, and trustworthiness31 but also each seems quite certain about what he saw, experienced, and
described. Beyond this, there is a consistency in their experiences that suggests they are describing events that actually happened (such as being left weak, having one’s tongue bound, being pinned or thrown to the floor, being tossed about the room, and so forth). Reason suggests that these events happened as described.

Perhaps one explanation of these happenings is to be found in the nature of Satan’s body. We commonly cite the Prophet Joseph’s comment: “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine’s body to having none.”32

Accurately, this statement points out that Satan’s premortal rebellion and fall stripped him of the right to have a mortal body. However, the tendency is to assume that Joseph is here saying that Lucifer’s “spirit body” is therefore void of any physical properties. Yet this is clearly not what the Prophet is claiming. Regarding the physical nature of the “spirit body,” the Prophet notes that “the body is supposed to be organized matter, and the spirit, by many, is thought to be immaterial, without substance. With this latter statement we should beg leave to differ, and state that spirit is a substance; that it is material, but that it is more pure, elastic and refined matter than the body.”33

Similarly, approximately a year later, Joseph stated: “There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes; we cannot see it; but when our bodies are purified we shall see that it is all matter” (D&C 131:7–8). Latter-day Saint scholars Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett write: “Spirits are made of matter. Just as matter can change form from matter to energy, so, apparently, matter can be refined and purified to the point where it is normally discernible only to bodies that have been similarly refined and purified. The universe is not composed of two mutually exclusive entities, matter and spirit, but of only one—matter in one or another stage of refinement.”34 The notion that Satan’s spirit body—or the spirit body of any being—is immaterial, and thus intangible, appears to be incorrect. The devil’s spirit body is made of matter, just as our physical bodies are made of matter. And the aforementioned encounters strongly suggest that spirit matter and mortal matter can interact.

As a parenthetical note, the material nature of spirits is not isolated to Luciferian angels. The physical makeup of righteous spirits is also material. For example, we understand that the priesthood continues to
function in the spirit world, as it does here on earth.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, we have every reason to believe that part of the communication that takes place in the postmortal spirit world is physical—spirit to spirit.\textsuperscript{36} They touch, interact, and so forth. We know that in the premortal world, where we were also spirits, men were ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood in anticipation of their reordination here in mortality, and this was probably done by the laying on of hands.\textsuperscript{37} In addition, those who would serve in callings within the Church during their mortal experience were foreordained to those callings while they were still spirits.\textsuperscript{38} Elders Orson Hyde and Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles both taught that in our premortal state as spirits, we each entered into all the gospel covenants that would later be reintroduced to us in mortality.\textsuperscript{39} These two Brethren suggest that we actually signed a document that would be retained in the heavens to be presented to us at the judgment day, attesting to the premortal covenants we had made.\textsuperscript{40}

David Patten Kimball, son of President Heber C. Kimball, had an experience in which he had physical contact with the spirits of his deceased parents, who visited him from the spirit world. He had gotten lost in the desert of Arizona and was near death for want of water. His father and mother appeared to him and gave him a drink of water, which sustained his life until he could be found.\textsuperscript{41}

Elder Parley P. Pratt had a similar experience. He was unjustly incarcerated in Richmond, Missouri, and had been fasting and pleading with the Lord to know if he would ever be freed from that “gloomy, dark, cold and filthy dungeon.” In response to his prayer, his wife—who had been deceased for nearly two years—appeared to him. She held his hand and laid her cheek against his. Parley noted the warmth of her face as she pressed it against him. She had come in answer to his pleadings and informed him that he would again see the light of day.\textsuperscript{42}

In the Gospel of Matthew, we are informed that it was an angel that rolled back the stone covering the opening of the sepulcher in which Jesus had been placed (see Matthew 28:2).\textsuperscript{43} All of these accounts simply show that righteous spirits also have a material nature that is capable of touch, interaction, ordination, and so forth. Nothing is immaterial!

**Doctrine and Covenants 129:8**

As we turn our attention back to Doctrine and Covenants 129:8, we are left with the impression that the passage is not primarily about the nature of Satan’s body. As has been shown, the issue is not whether the devil can have physical contact with mankind. Indeed, the history
of the Church is filled with examples that show he can. Rather, Doctrine and Covenants 129:8 appears to be highlighting some conditional restriction that has been placed upon Lucifer.44

As scripture attests (see D&C 121:4; Revelation 1:18; 9:1; Job), Satan does not have free reign to do as he wishes. Certainly, as President Joseph Fielding Smith noted, he “has some control over the elements. This he does by powers which he knows but which are hidden from weak mortal men.”45 However, he is bound by divine law, by which God keeps the adversary of all mankind “in check,” as it were. Thus, as the Prophet Joseph states, we know that “wicked spirits have their bounds, limits, and laws by which they are governed or controlled.”46 We take it for granted that the devil simply is not allowed to do certain things. For example, he cannot tempt little children until they begin to become accountable (see D&C 29:47), he cannot tempt translated beings (see 3 Nephi 28:39), and he cannot come in the sign of the dove.47 Some have even conjectured that he cannot imitate the witness of the Holy Ghost.48 We can safely add to our list that Lucifer and his minions cannot shake hands with us if we request that they do so.49

As with any passage of scripture, the background of the passage examined is necessary if we are to understand the context of the words given. Section 129 is no different. When the context is understood, the meaning is much clearer.

First, this section offers “keys” that were intended for the Saints to protect them against the adversary. Bruce A. Van Orden writes: “These instructions and keys concerning angels became very useful for the Twelve in Britain, for in addition to being ministered to by righteous angels in the course of their missionary work, they were likewise plagued by evil spirits.”50 Professor Van Orden’s point is that, as we have seen, the brethren who were sent on missions greatly needed the knowledge that Joseph received by revelation at least as early as June 27, 1839—knowledge that would eventually become section 129 of the Doctrine and Covenants.51 This information would prove valuable, not so they would understand that Satan is void of a body but rather so encounters with him might be discerned from encounters with divine beings.52 Certainly Joseph and Oliver learned the value of such knowledge. In one of his many efforts to deceive, at some point (likely in 1829), Satan appeared in the form of an “angel of light” to these two brethren. Of this experience the Prophet writes: “And again, what do we hear? . . . The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light!” (D&C 128:20). One contemporary of Joseph and Oliver said that he heard the Prophet say that this Satanic
appearance happened as these two brethren were running from a mob. It is conjectured by this same source that in their frightened and exhausted state, Lucifer tried to deceive them by giving them a false revelation.\textsuperscript{53} The placement of this event in section 128 of the Doctrine and Covenants, immediately preceding section 129 on the discernment of spirits, is not coincidental.

As alluded to above, Joseph spoke on the subject of discerning angels on numerous occasions. Indeed, although section 129 is dated February 9, 1843, we know that the substance of this revelation was revealed to Joseph at least as early as June 27, 1839. On that date, Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal the content of section 129, as delivered by Joseph to members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve before they left for their missions to England.\textsuperscript{54} Indeed, Joseph conveyed the principles taught in section 129 on numerous occasions prior to February 1843.\textsuperscript{55} As an example, on Sunday, May 1, 1842, Joseph preached in the grove, delivering a sermon on the keys of the kingdom. He stated: “The keys are certain signs and words by which false spirits and personages may be detected from true, which cannot be revealed to the Elders till the Temple is completed. . . . There are signs in heaven, earth and hell; the Elders must know them all, to be endowed with power, to finish their work and prevent imposition. The devil knows many signs, but does not know the sign of the Son of Man, or Jesus. No one can truly say he knows God until he has handled something, and this can only be in the holiest of holies.”\textsuperscript{56}

Clearly, Joseph saw the “signs” and “keys” of the holy temple as endowments of “power” to keep one from being “imposed” upon or deceived.\textsuperscript{57} Nine of the brethren learned of this connection when, on May 4, 1842, Joseph revealed to them the holy endowment.\textsuperscript{58} Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook have noted that what was received that day was so sacred that when Heber C. Kimball wrote to fellow apostle Parley P. Pratt just a few weeks later, he said that Joseph had taught them some precious things on the priesthood that would cause his soul to rejoice if he knew them, but that Joseph had given instructions that these keys not be written about. Heber concluded his description of the newly revealed endowment by saying that Parley would have to come to Nauvoo to receive the instructions for himself. . . . Parley arrived in Nauvoo on 7 February 1843, and . . . after only two days . . . [Joseph gave] him the instructions contained in D&C 129—the same instructions as given in [Joseph’s] discourse, 27 June 1839.\textsuperscript{59}

From the foregoing quote, there appears to be no question but that the “keys” delivered in section 129 were given to Heber, Parley,
and others as part of the temple endowment. Hence, Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett have noted that Joseph’s public remarks on this section indicate that he “connected the substance of Doctrine and Covenants 129 with the ordinances of the temple and believed that the information in this revelation held increased significance for those who had been endowed.”

Conclusion

I conclude this article as I began it—with a recitation from D&C 129:4, 8: “When a messenger comes saying he has a message from God, offer him your hand and request him to shake hands with you. . . . If it be the devil as an angel of light, when you ask him to shake hands he will offer you his hand, and you will not feel anything; you may therefore detect him.” By way of exegetical summary, several significant ideas are contained in these two verses—ideas that were discussed during the course of this article but that warrant summary here:

- **When a messenger comes:** Angels are, at times, sent from the presence of God with communications from Him.

- **Offer him your hand:** According to the Prophet Joseph, in any such encounter, the temple-initiated Saints should request a “token” as a “key,” or sign of the angel’s divine commission.

- **If it be the devil as an angel of light:** Satan seeks to deceive us. He seeks to appear as an “angel of light”—or, in other words, as an angel sent from the light (from God and His celestial realms)—to deceive and draw away disciples after him.

- **He will offer you his hand:** As shown above, the devil will either offer you his hand or he will shirk back, but he will not stand still. He is obligated by some divine law to act in such a way that you will be able to clearly detect him and see through his efforts at deception.

- **You will not feel anything:** In any circumstance wherein Satan attempts to convey the “tokens” or “keys” offered patrons in the holy temple, Doctrine and Covenants 129:8 promises us that he will be bound and prevented from conveying that which he knows. Even though his spirit body is unquestionably made of refined matter that can be felt, under any circumstance in which he seeks to utilize the “keys” of the temple as a means of deception, God forbids and prevents him from acting.
You may therefore detect him: As the Prophet Joseph Smith notes, “The keys are certain signs and words by which false spirits and personages may be detected from true,” and these “signs” are to be had only in the holy temple.63

Apparently, we can draw but one conclusion from the historical record—namely that, in Joseph’s eyes, one of the purposes for which the endowed are given these “keys” is to enable them to have the power of discerning spirits. In other words, that which is learned in the Lord’s holy house will enable those in possession of this knowledge not to be deceived by the “father of all lies” (2 Nephi 2:18). Additionally, we can say with certainty that Doctrine and Covenants 129:8 is not a declaration about the noncorporeal nature of Satan’s body. Nor is it a promise that the faithful will be physically protected from attacks by the devil and his angels—although it appears that such encounters were much more common in the early days than they are today. Rather, the crux of the message being conveyed in Doctrine and Covenants 129:8 is the doctrinal assurance that Satan may be able to appear to, deceive, and even accost God’s children on the earth, but when it comes to the things conveyed to those endowed in the Lord’s holy house, limitations have been placed upon the devil and his angels.64 By divine decree, the fallen third-part (Revelation 12:4; D & C 29:36) of the hosts of heaven have been forbidden to “shake hands” with the temple-going Saints. They are bound by law! They have been strictly prohibited from utilizing that which is taught in the holy temple in order to gain the trust of mortals on the earth. This is the primary message of Doctrine and Covenants 129:8. 

Notes

1. The Prophet Joseph gave a number of “keys” by which the Saints could discern Satan and his messengers. In this paper we examine only one of those, namely, the command to ask any angelic visitant to shake hands with you (see D&C 129:3–9). However, Joseph gave numerous other “keys” of discernment. For example:
   a. What is the feeling or spirit attending the ministration? (see Romans 15:13; D&C 68:6; Joseph Smith—History 1:32). If a vision or revelation is of God, the recipient should feel a strong spirit of peace and love.
   b. Is there a glory or brightness radiating from the ministrant? (see Joseph Smith—History 1:16, 30, 32; Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 325). Satan is void of light (Moses 1:12–14) as is his abode, outer darkness.
   c. What color of hair does the ministrant have? (see Smith, Teachings, 214; Times and Seasons, April 1, 1842, 747). Recorded accounts of angels
appearing to the prophets indicate that angels traditionally appear with white hair.

d. What clothing is the ministrant wearing? (see Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978], 5:267–68). It is traditional for angels to be dressed in white clothing, commonly robes. Hugh Nibley notes that “as far as we know, the angels all dress alike, in basic white” (Approaching Zion [Provo, UT: FARMS, 1989], 277).

e. Does the ministrant’s message contradict former revelations? (see Smith, Teachings, 215). Revelations given by God through His prophets are authoritative and will not be contradicted by angels that appear to you.

f. Does there appear to be no apparent reason for the visitation or no important message communicated? (see Smith, Teachings, 161). If God sends an angel, there will be a purpose, a message conveyed. Otherwise, it is not of God.

g. Did the ministration take place in the presence of those outside of the covenant or in the presence of nonbelievers or gawkers? (see Smith, History of the Church, 5:31). Sacred spiritual experiences are not traditionally given in large groups or with disbelieving or scoffing onlookers present.

h. Was the revelation given for the entire Church or for someone outside the recipient’s ecclesiastical jurisdiction? (see Smith, Teachings, 111). It is the right and responsibility of the President of the Church to receive revelations for the whole Church.

i. Was the ministration in any way of a violent or irreverent nature? (see Smith, Teachings, 203–4). God’s Spirit is not violent, nor does it move us to violence. It is peaceful, calming, and uplifting.

These are but a few of the many ways in which followers of Christ may discern whether a spiritual experience, particularly a vision, is from God.

2. William Clayton’s account of what the Prophet Joseph taught is slightly different from what is currently recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 129. In December of 1840, Clayton recorded: “If an Angel or spirit appears offer him your hand; if he is a spirit from God he will stand still and not offer you his hand. If from the Devil he will either shrink back from you or offer his hand, which if he does you will feel nothing, but be deceived” (extract from William Clayton’s Private Book, December 1840, in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps., The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], 44; emphasis added). Of this Ehat and Cook write: “Unlike other versions of these instructions given by Joseph Smith from 1839 to 1843, this account indicates that the Devil is not compelled to ‘offer his hand.’ Apparently Joseph Smith believed that the Devil had sense enough to avoid obvious detection but that unlike ‘a spirit from God,’ he would not remain motionless” (56n3; see also 20n21).


9. Laboring with these four brethren in Preston were John Snider, Joseph Fielding, and John Goodson. However, these three brethren were not present during the Satanic encounter.


13. The sentences “He wounded me in my forehead. I also wounded him in a number of places in the head” are written in the original but have been struck through with pencil by someone at a later date.

14. Journal of Wilford Woodruff, October 18, 1840, 1:532; spelling and capitalization standardized.

15. Wilford Woodruff, March 3, 1889, discourse, in Stuy, *Collected Discourses*, 1:218; Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1881), 109–10; Wilford Woodruff, October 19, 1896, discourse, in Stuy, *Collected Discourses*, 5:236–37. For some reason, no reference to this event by George A. Smith has survived. However, Elder Woodruff states that he and Elder Smith were sleeping on cots some three feet apart when Satan appeared to them that night. Thus, George was probably aware of what happened.


17. See Newel Knight, Newel Knight Autobiography, 3–4, 8–9, 13, L. Tom Perry Special Collections; see also Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:91–93; Roberts,
Comprehensive History, 1:207.

18. See Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith by His Mother (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, n.d.), 221; Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 561. Richard L. Bushman conjectures that the reason for Rigdon’s claim that the “keys of the kingdom [had been] rent from the Church” was a concern he had about property (Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005], 186).

19. Philo Dibble, “Philo Dibble’s Narrative,” in Early Scenes in Church History (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructors Office, 1882), 80.


24. Today the RLDS, or Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, is known as the Community of Christ. For information on Whitlock, see Susan Easton Black, Who’s Who in the Doctrine and Covenants (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 326–27.


26. She wrote: “When [Joseph] came to Kirtland he found . . . the Devil had been deceiving them with a specious appearance of power manifested by strange contortions of the visage and unnatural Motions which they supposed as being occasioned by an opperation of the power of God. . . . He . . . called upon one of the brethren who had been deceived by an evil spirit to speak[.] [W]hen he arose he was immediately convulsed in the most singular manner[,] his face[,] his arms[,] and his fingers being drawn like a person in [a] spasm[,] Joseph turned to Hyrum and said will you go and lay hands on that brother[?] [W]hen Hyrum did so the man fell back into his chair as weak as though he had exhausted himself by excessive hard labor[,] [H]e then called upon another who was standing . . . on the outside of the house leaning in the window[,] [T]his man . . . pitched forward into the house and[,] after trying sometime to speak without being able to do so[,] was administered to by the laing on of hands which affected him . . . the same as the one who had preceeded him” (Lucy Mack Smith, “Unpublished Preliminary Manuscript,” 1844–1845, 193, Church Archives; a transcript of this manuscript is available in Anderson, Lucy’s Book, 506–8).


31. The reader may be aware of comments suggesting that demonic attacks are allowed, if not caused, by disobedience to God’s commands. For example, Joseph Smith reportedly said, “The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power” (Smith, *Teachings*, 181). Likewise, Charles W. Penrose teaches, “Satan cannot obtain the mastery over any human being, except by yielding to him” (in Conference Report, October 1906, 57). Orson Pratt says, “The devil has not the power to take full possession of the tabernacles of human creatures, unless they give way to him and his influence to that degree that he gets power over them” (December 19, 1869, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:64). In general terms, it seems correct to say that those who disobey God’s commands place themselves outside the protection of the Holy Spirit and are thus in potential subjection to the devil and his influence. Nevertheless, the righteousness of men like Joseph Smith, Heber C. Kimball, Wilford Woodruff, or George A. Smith seems to be a given. In their specific encounters with Satan, a lack of personal righteousness does not appear to be the cause. Rather, as Joseph Smith taught, such attacks are evidence that the adversary feels his kingdom and power are being threatened by the work, faith, and righteousness of those whom he therefore chooses to attack (see Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 131–32).


36. See, for example, Brigham Young, September 1, 1859, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:239.

37. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 3:81; Smith, *Teachings*, 157, 167, 365; see also Alma 13:7; Jeremiah 1:4–5. Perhaps we might argue that we do not know for certain that such “ordinations” were by the laying on of hands. True, this author knows of no official statement indicating that such is necessarily the case. However, as the earthly Church is patterned after the heavenly, we can logically assume that the premortal Church follows suit. Indeed, the notion that there was no physical contact between spirits in the premortal world—or between God and His spirit offspring—goes entirely against reason.

38. Joseph Smith taught that “every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was” (Smith, *Teachings*, 365).

39. This is not to suggest that we picked our spouses in the premortal world. Certainly the Brethren have discredited such a suggestion. See, for example, Boyd K. Packer, *Eternal Love* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 11; *C.E.S. Seminary Old Testament Teacher’s Outline* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints, 1990), 57–59; Edward L. Kimball, ed., *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998), 305; Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1949), 44–45. However, because all covenants—including the new and everlasting covenant of marriage—are made between individuals and God (not between people), it is entirely possible for a man or woman to enter into such a covenant in the premortal world without having a specific spouse in mind. Indeed, when we are sealed in the Lord’s holy temple, we make covenants regarding our spouse but not to our spouse. All temple covenants are made between a singular person and God.


41. See David P. Kimball to Helen Mar Whitney, January 8, 1882, cited in Orson F. Whitney, “A Terrible Ordeal,” in *Helpful Visions* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1887), 9. In a somewhat related vein, according to our history, when Joseph and Oliver went to Cumorah to return the plates to Moroni, the hill opened up and inside was a room some sixteen feet square. (Some accounts only mention Joseph and Oliver, but when the various accounts of the experience are combined, the list of those present includes Joseph, Oliver, Hyrum Smith, David Whitmer, and Joseph Smith Sr.) The room was said to be filled with plates—“wagon loads” of them—lining the walls. There was light in the cave, a table in the center of the room, and the sword of Laban hanging upon the wall (see Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:508; 19:38; Edward L. Stevens, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Edward Stephens, 1893], 14–15; H. Donl Peterson, *Moroni: Ancient Prophet—Modern Messenger* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 135–37). Joseph and Oliver handled items in the room, yet Joseph reportedly believed that these “wagon loads” of plates were not actually deposited in the hill in New York from which he acquired the Book of Mormon. Rather, sources suggest that Joseph believed that the room he and Oliver entered—the room in which they touched items pertaining to the Nephite nation—was somewhere in Central America (see H. Donl Peterson, “Moroni, the Last of the Nephite Prophets,” in *The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi Through Moroni—From Zion to Destruction*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. [Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1995], 243–47). Thus, Joseph and Oliver had a physical encounter with items they were seeing with their “spiritual eyes.”


43. Although it is possible that this angel was a resurrected being—having been one of those who obtained his resurrection with Christ (see Matthew 27:52–53)—Greek scholar Joseph Thayer suggests that the “angel” in Matthew 28:2 is a spirit rather than a resurrected personage (see Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999], 5). Of course, we cannot rule out the possibility that this was a translated being either. It is worth noting that the term *angel*, as it appears in the Hebrew Bible or Greek New Testament, can refer to unembodied spirits (in leagues with God or the devil), disembodied spirits, translated beings, resurrected beings, or even occasionally mortals who are on God’s errand.

44. It is also possible—although unlikely—that some “restriction” has been
placed on mortals too, as Doctrine and Covenants 129:8 states that we will not be able to feel his hand. This may imply that, although Lucifer and his angels have a material nature, you and I are prohibited by some divine law from making any conscious physical connection with that which is purely spiritual.

45. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946–49), 1:207.
47. Smith, *Teachings*, 276.
48. See, for example, Truman G. Madsen, *Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 17. In light of Satan’s appearance as an “angel of light” to the Prophet Joseph (D&C 128:20), not everyone agrees with this assumption.
51. Doctrine and Covenants 129 is dated February 9, 1843, because that is the date on which the Prophet’s secretary, William Clayton, recorded the information. Clayton penned this as he listened to Joseph explain the principles to Parley P. Pratt, who had just returned from a mission to England (see McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration*, 1038).
52. The question naturally arises, why was Satan so intent upon opposing the early Saints in such a violent manner? Although we cannot say with certainty exactly what is in the mind of Lucifer, several things are clear, including this: the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel posed an enormous threat to the adversary and his kingdom. The Prophet Joseph encouraged the Saints to “try the Spirits” they encountered. In response to the Restoration, Satan multiplied his efforts to dissuade people from believing the truth. The more God manifested Himself and His will, the more Lucifer manifested himself and his angels. Joseph noted, “Lying spirits are going forth in the earth. There will be great manifestations of spirits, both false and true” (Smith, *Teachings*, 161). President Brigham Young stated, “If true principles are revealed from heaven to men, and if there are angels, and there is a possibility of their communicating to the human family, always look for an opposite power, an evil power, to give manifestations also; look out for the counterfeit” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 68). President Young added, “So when individuals are blessed with visions, revelations, and great manifestations, look out, then the Devil is nigh you, and you will be tempted in proportion to the visions, revelation, or manifestation you have received” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, 338).

Throughout history Satan has made a number of tactical errors. Technically he erred in Eden in that Adam and Eve would not have progressed if Satan had not encouraged them to transgress and leave Eden. Had they remained in Eden, we would have remained unborn, and none would have achieved exaltation. Similarly,
stirring up the hatred and vehement and murderous animosity of the Sanhedrin toward Christ only facilitated the Atonement. It seems quite certain that Satan saw in the First Vision and the subsequent Restoration one last chance to rectify all of his previous tactical errors. His violence against the early Saints appears to be a last-ditch effort to destroy the Lord’s work. Certainly Lucifer knew that if the Restoration successfully took root in the hearts of the early Saints, his success would greatly be reduced.

The Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 50:33 states, “And that seer [Joseph Smith] will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; for I will remember you from generation to generation; and his name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father; and he shall be like unto you; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation.” That which Joseph would bring would be for the salvation of God’s people! The efficacy of the Atonement for most people who have ever lived is dependent upon the Restoration. Saving ordinances have not been on the earth during most people’s lifetimes. The sanctifying gift of the Holy Ghost has been unavailable to most, as has been the endowment and celestial marriage. The Restoration brings back those necessary ordinances that had been lost, along with work for the dead, so that all can have access to these necessary and exalting ordinances. Were it not for the courage and receptivity of the Prophet Joseph, these necessary ordinances and gifts would not be available to the majority of God’s children. Without the Restoration, at Christ’s coming we would see a literal fulfillment of the Lord’s declaration, “the whole earth would be utterly wasted at [my] coming” (D&C 2). Is it any wonder that Doctrine and Covenants 135:3 says, “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”?

53. See letter from Addison Everett to Oliver B. Huntington, February 17, 1881, recorded in Oliver B. Huntington’s journal, journal 14, January 31, 1881, L. Tom Perry Special Collections; see also Alma 30:53, where Korihor indicates that Satan appeared to him in the “form of an angel.”

54. “June 27th I spent the day in Commerce in Council with the Presidency & Twelve. We had an interesting day. Joseph was president of the Council. Brother Orson Hide was restored to the Church and the quorum of the Twelve in full fellowship by a full vote of the Council, after making an humble Confession & acknowledgement of his sins &c. Among the vast number of the Keys of the Kingdom of God Joseph presented the following one to the Twelve for there benefit in there experience & travels in the flesh which is as follows: In order to detect the devel when he transforms himself nigh unto an angel of light. When an angel of God appears unto man face to face in personage & reaches out his hand unto the man & he takes hold of the angels hand & feels a substance the same as one man would in Shaking hands with another he may then know that it is an angel of God, & he should place all Confidence in him. Such personages or angels are Saints with there resurrected Bodies. But if a personage appears unto man & offers him his hand & the man takes hold of it & he feels nothing or does not sens any substance he may know it is the devel, for when a Saint whose body is not resurrected appears unto man in the flesh he will not offer him his hand for this is against the law given him & in keeping in mind these things we may detec the devil that he deceived us not” (Journal of Wilford Woodruff, June 27, 1839).
55. Numerous people record hearing Joseph teach the content of Doctrine and Covenants section 129. For example, sometime before August 8, 1839, Willard Richards recorded it. In December 1840, William Clayton recorded it. An anonymous pamphlet published in Nauvoo in 1841 recorded it. Joseph addressed the subject before the Relief Society on April 28, 1842. He also commented on it to the general membership of the Church on May 1, 1842. (See Robinson and Garrett, *Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, 4:215–16. See also Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 56n3; Robert J. Woodford, *The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants*, PhD diss. [Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1974], 3:1701–4; McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration*, 1038–39; Van Orden, in Millet and Jackson, *Studies in Scripture*, 498, 502–4.) Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl write: “It should be noted that this Revelation came . . . before so-called spirit-rapping had been discovered, or invented, by the Fox family at Hydeville, N.Y., . . . giving birth to Spiritism with all its delusions. By this Revelation the Saints were forewarned and therefore saved from being deceived by false pretensions or by evil spirits” (Doctrine and Covenants Commentary, rev. ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978], 811).


57. *Noah Webster’s First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language, 1828 Facsimile Edition* (San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education, 1967), s.v. “Imposition.” In this discourse, Joseph also indicated that “to know God,” a person “must handle ‘something.’” Of course, Joseph knew what that “something” was. His vagueness here may be because it would not be for another three days before any of his hearers received their endowment. Thus, detailed reference to the activities of the endowment ceremony would have little meaning to them. It is also possible that the Prophet’s comment regarding “handling something” in the “holiest of holies” has reference to the receipt of the Second Comforter—a subject Joseph also discussed on almost three years earlier (see Smith, *Teachings*, 149–50; Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 5–6). Which of these two ideas Joseph intended is uncertain. Joseph indicated that the “devil knows many signs” but does not know—or at least cannot utilize—“the sign of the Son of Man.” Traditionally, the phrase “sign of the Son of Man” was used by the Prophet in reference to the Second Coming of Christ. However, the context of the quotation under examination here does not lend itself to such an interpretation. As there is only one source for this comment, we cannot say with certainty what Joseph meant. However, the context is clearly the temple endowment, and those familiar with the ordinances of the temple will also find the language “sign of the Son of Man” somewhat familiar. It seems fair to say that no one can truly know God until he or she has received the Second Comforter.

58. The nine brethren were Hyrum Smith (Assistant President of the Church and Patriarch to the Church), William Law (a counselor in the First Presidency), Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Willard Richards (all three members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles), William Marks (president of the Nauvoo Stake), George Miller (president of the Nauvoo high priests quorum and Presiding Bishop), Newel K. Whitney (Presiding Bishop), and James Adams (patriarch and branch president); see Andrew F. Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981), 27–28.


61. Of course physical attacks are not the only way—or even the primary way—the devil seeks to deceive and tempt us, or thwart our salvation.


Of course, prior to the Fall, the serpent was a symbol or type for Christ, His atoning death, and His Resurrection—hence its use in Numbers 21:8; Alma 33:19–20; and Helaman 8:13–15. See Andrew C. Skinner, “Savior, Satan, and Serpent: The Duality of a Symbol in the Scriptures,” *The Disciple as Scholar—Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 359–84; Walter L. Wilson, *A Dictionary of Bible Types* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 363; Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 78. Thus, whether Satan talked to Adam and Eve through a snake or appeared to them as an “angel of light,” his intent was the same; he was seeking to usurp the role of Christ by appearing to Adam and Eve in a form that would make then think he was the Christ (see 2 Nephi 9:9).


One essential purpose of our earth life is to learn from the great teacher, experience. That learning can come firsthand or vicariously. If we learn our lessons well, we can be strengthened against sin and the fiery darts of the adversary and become more deeply committed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of life’s many kinds of experiences, adversity is most like a refiner’s fire. If we allow it to do so, adversity can remove the impurities from our souls and make us more like our Savior, who “shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (D&C 128:24).

Amid the darkness of his days in the Liberty Jail, Joseph Smith received comfort from the Lord, who gave a partial recitation of the Prophet’s trials and travails, including having his name used in derision, having hell rage against him, passing through tribulation, being in peril among false brethren and robbers as well as on land and at sea, being falsely accused and torn from his loved ones, being cast into the pit or into the hands of murderers, and having the jaws of hell gape open after him (see D&C 122:1–7). Then the Lord concludes, “All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7). The hard experiences of his life and his constant reliance on the Lord made him equal to the task of restorer, translator, prophet, seer, revelator, and friend to all Saints, past and present. Thanks be to God that these stories have been recorded for our profit, instruction, and motivation. What examples of discipleship, long-suffering, faith, and refinement!
The examples of those who have gone before us, including the Savior Himself, imbue us with the faith that our Heavenly Father will be there when we face our own trials. I learned about adversity firsthand during the year I spent in Vietnam on the front lines. The experiences of that time have provided lifelong lessons—lessons of faith, reliance on the Lord, prayer, and holding to the rod—but, most of all, they taught me that the Lord’s hand is truly manifest in our lives and that He strengthens us in our times of hardship. In the lines that follow, I have included some of my experiences from that time and reflections about their meaning.

“God Is Going to Watch Out for You Today”

It was dawn. We had marched all night to reach our objective: a medium-sized Vietnamese village with a large rice plantation located on its south side. Our company had come in from the southwest. Three other companies also came in under cover of night to form a cordon around the village, a suspected Viet Cong stronghold.

As we awaited orders to move in, a dozen or so children from the village came out to view these curious-looking men in olive drab and to filch cigarettes or leftover C-rations. A middle-aged man came out as well, carrying a dingy white styrofoam cooler salvaged from a U.S. base. In it were fifteen to twenty homemade popsicles. I reached into my pocket for a wad of piasters left over from a weekend leave in Saigon, bought the vendor’s entire stock, and handed it out to the youngsters.

My buddy Rufus Burleson, a black soldier from the Texas-Louisiana border who had grown up near other rice fields, told me, “God is going to watch out for you today because you were kind to those kids.” I was grateful for his words. We had grown to be good friends since one of my first days in the field when I had been bogged down in mud clear up to my waist. Four fellow riflemen had passed me by before Rufus came and pulled me out.

“Move out!” came the command. We took our positions around the village while specialists moved in to look for weapons caches, rat-holes, and, of course, the Viet Cong themselves. As we approached, I observed sticks and rocks placed in telling configurations on the ground next to our trail. “Charlie [the Viet Cong] is here, and these are his signs. This place is booby-trapped,” I warned. No one seemed to believe me despite the fact that recognizing these signs had been part of our advanced infantry training.

Louisiana, Wagner, Chicago, and I were soon called out and assigned as a reconnaissance team to check out a large grove of trees bound together with thick underbrush that stood between the rice
fields and the village. I was assigned to take the lead. The standard policy in the Third Brigade of the Eighty-second Airborne Division was to not allow a married soldier to act as a point man, but this time I didn’t mind. I often envied the point man in swampy areas because he had the easiest time going through the mire. Each succeeding man would sink in just a little deeper than the previous one, and the going would get progressively harder.

As we moved toward the thicket, Chicago called out. His machine gun had jammed. Our platoon leader, Louisiana, took the point and told me to help Chicago. We fixed the problem, and the four of us continued to move forward. I had gone from first in line to last. The order was now Louisiana, Wagner, and Chicago, and I followed in the rear.

The trail led to a narrow gap between two trees. The first two men reached the trees. Chicago was about two yards behind them, and I was eight feet behind him. As we inched ahead, something exploded at Chicago’s feet. Dust and debris flew everywhere. For a few seconds, everything seemed to go into slow motion. I could see shrapnel flying all around me. Yet it was as if there was an invisible shield in front of me, and, as far as I could tell, nothing hit me directly.

The blast sounded like a grenade, and I instinctively dove into the bushes. After a few seconds, I crawled out and surveyed the area for Viet Cong. Then I saw the size of the hole in the ground and realized that Chicago had stepped on a mine.

Louisiana and Wagner had been more than superficially wounded but were well enough to take care of each other and were busy applying bandages to one another’s wounds. Chicago was in shock. His leg was severely damaged. There were deep wounds on his right side, and he had lost fingers. I applied a compress bandage to his leg and frantically called for a medic.

Two medics came, along with four or five of our platoon members. They attended to the wounded men. The radioman called for a dust-off, or evacuation by helicopter, from the nearby field hospital. It didn’t take long for the chopper to arrive, and the three victims were carefully placed on board.

Suddenly, two of my buddies took hold of me and said, “Come on, Olsen, let’s get you on the chopper too.”

“Am I hit?” I wondered if I had really been hit but had just not noticed it because of adrenalin or shock. “I don’t think I’m hit.”

Simons told me I had to have been hit: “You were right there in the middle of the explosion, and it blew you into the bushes.”

“Check me out, guys. I don’t think I’m hit.”
They checked me three times, and I was unscathed. I had been saved by the tender mercy of a gracious Heavenly Father.

“Don’t Tell the Other Men”

After the dust-off, the rest of our platoon was assigned to look for weapons caches around the rice fields. When the mine had exploded, some inner mechanism or spiritual strength had taken over, giving me presence of mind and blocking out fear and panic. Those defenses began to fade as the reality of what I had just been through started to sink in. I realized there could be other mines, other booby traps, and every step I took had the potential of unleashing death and destruction. I began to consciously and earnestly pray every step of the way. I prayed that the Lord would guide my feet and continue to keep me out of harm’s way.

Rufus reminded me, “I told you God would bless you.” I thanked him. Then almost immediately he stepped on a trip wire. Fortunately the Chi-Com (Chinese-Communist) grenade to which the wire was connected had gotten wet in the rain and rice paddies, and the detonator failed to work. God had rewarded Rufus’s kindness as well. As we exploded the booby trap in place, Rufus was visibly shaken and offered fervent prayers of thanksgiving.

After that long and eventful day, we moved out to a predesignated area and set up a makeshift camp for the night. I was assigned the first watch as one of the perimeter guards. I set up my position in some tall, thick plants. A short time after darkness had fallen upon us, I heard a rustling in the undergrowth behind me, coming from the main encampment. It was Henry. “Olsen, I just wanted you to know that what happened today was a miracle, and I know it was because you live your religion and your family back home is praying for you.” I hadn’t known Henry that well, but he had deep personal convictions about God, and I got to know him better as we chatted for a few minutes. “But don’t tell the other men I said this,” were his parting words as he crawled back to camp.

About fifteen minutes later, another soldier, whom I can visualize but whose name the years have erased, came out to see me and repeated in essence what Henry had told me. He too asked that I not tell the other men that he had borne witness to me that he knew God’s hand had been manifest that day.

Reflections on Trials

The experiences of those days have given me much to contemplate. Why did some of the men ignore the warnings about the danger that
lay in our path? Why did some want to hide their faith? Why was I spared and Chicago maimed? What strange destiny had brought me to the battlefront?

During my last weeks of advanced infantry training, I attended a servicemen’s worship service at Fort Ord. One man there had been assigned to Germany, whereas most of us were on orders to serve in Vietnam. This man told us that it was because he was living the gospel that he had not been sent to Vietnam and that God would not let a righteous man go there.

I do not believe our Heavenly Father works that way. Sometimes He lets the evil prosper and the righteous suffer—for a season—to fulfill His purposes. He gives each of us what we need to achieve our divine destiny. I suspect that I was living just as good a life as my friend who went to Germany, but I also understand that God’s plan for us is not always the easy one or the one we would choose for ourselves at the time. We do not have sufficient wisdom to know the eternal implications of all our mortal choices and the events of our lives; however, from time to time we are blessed with glimpses of why things happen to bolster our faith. I know that in my case a kind Father was teaching me lifelong lessons, including this promise: “If ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land” (Alma 37:13). I believe He was preserving my life for a higher purpose. In the final analysis, He gives each of us the specific challenges we need to mold us, if we live up to our potential, into stronger, better, more faithful, and more useful people.

Adversity generally comes as a consequence of one or more of the following: our own foibles and sins, someone else’s inhumanity, or the higher purposes of a loving Father’s wisdom. Regardless of why they may come, trials offer us an opportunity to strengthen and refine ourselves, to trust in or to reject our God. Each struggle fortifies us against the next siege, if we endure. And the antidotes to adversity’s accompanying discouragement and despair are ever the same: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, obedience, endurance, and communion with the Infinite, whereby forgiveness and comfort come. We can be sure that in the end God will always give us what we need to make us whole—if we turn to Him. That wholeness is burned into our hearts by the refiner’s fire, which, if allowed to work its miracle, will, among other things, enable our “confidence [to] wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). And although at times in our trials it may seem that the just suffer and the wicked do not, justice will always prevail in God’s eternal plan, and mercy will be graciously extended to the truly penitent.
German Ellsworth (left) and Lorin Farr

This photo was taken in front of Lorin Farr's old home in Nauvoo, Illinois, September 30, 1905. Lorin did the carpentry on the house himself.

Photos courtesy of Church Archives unless noted.
The year 2005 was a landmark year in Church history. We celebrated the Prophet Joseph Smith’s two hundredth birthday on December 23. On that day, President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke at the Prophet’s birthplace in Sharon, Vermont, to commemorate that historic event. Many other events and publications throughout the year reminded us of the remarkable life of the Prophet of the Restoration.

In 1905, the Church commemorated the one hundredth birthday of Joseph Smith by erecting a large granite monument in Sharon. The dedication of the monument was attended by Smith relatives and guests. A less-noted yet significant event also occurred in that year when a sizable group of Latter-day Saint leaders, missionaries, and special guests visited Nauvoo, Illinois. I will look at these two 1905 events through the eyes of Lorin Farr, who was present at both. Lorin Farr was an early associate of Joseph Smith and was called by Brigham Young to lead the settlement of Weber, Utah.

Lorin Farr was born July 27, 1820, in Lower Waterford, Vermont. The Farr family joined the Church in Charleston, Vermont, in 1832 as a result of the preaching of Orson Pratt and Lyman Johnson. The high point of the Farrs’ conversion was the instant healing of Lorin’s mother, Olive, by the young missionary Orson Pratt. Olive had been sick for five years, and her doctors expected her to die. After her healing, though, she lived until age ninety-four, outliving Orson Pratt.1

The Farrs left Charleston in 1837 to join the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio. From there they went through all the joys and hardships that
Saints typically experienced en route to Utah. Lorin Farr lived with and became well acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith while in Missouri. Lorin taught the Smith children and other Mormon families in the area. He was a bodyguard, scribe, and good friend to the Prophet. Emma and Joseph referred to Lorin as their “boy,” and Lorin said of Joseph, “I know him to have been a great, good and true man, and one who never betrayed his trust.”

While Lorin was serving a mission to Europe, the *Millennial Star* reported at a conference in Glasgow, Scotland, that “Elder Farr had been with the church 39 years, and was associated with Joseph Smith more or less up to the time of his death. He had ridden with him, and [lodged] with him, and knew that he was a good man, a worthy man, and an exemplary man in all things.”

Lorin had been Joseph’s bodyguard, walking by his side with gun and sword and sleeping outside the Smiths’ door at night when needed. Lorin was part of the Smith household: he wrestled with the Prophet, ran races with him, and became his full-fledged chum. He was with Joseph at the time of the Haun’s Mill Massacre and at Adam-ondi-Ahman.

After leaving Nauvoo in 1845, Lorin served as the first president of the Weber Stake and as mayor of Ogden, Utah. Throughout his life, he bore testimony of Joseph whenever he could. As the year 1905 came, Lorin Farr must have reflected more than ever on Joseph Smith’s birth, his accomplishments, and the impact that Joseph had on Lorin. At eighty-five years old, Lorin was one of the few people living who had personally known the Prophet.

In a special *Deseret News* dispatch, Lorin Farr reported that he left Ogden for Nauvoo on September 20, 1905. After some sixty years of absence, Lorin attended the first missionary conference held in the City of Joseph since the 1845 exodus. According to the local newspaper, the *Nauvoo Independent*, which was quoted extensively by the *Deseret News*, he was among an increasing number of Latter-day Saints to visit the city, which once had twenty thousand inhabitants but had dwindled to fourteen hundred. Vineyards and apple orchards grew where homes once stood. The current residents welcomed visitors from the West in hopes that the neglected city would be revitalized.

Lorin reported how the minds of the people had changed. “All [the people] that I saw seemed to be pleased to see me, and I was never treated better than by the people of Nauvoo. . . . They are very friendly to our people. . . . There were in attendance about 50 missionaries mostly from Illinois . . . and quite a number of sisters, some of them missionaries. We had a splendid meeting on Sunday: it seemed like old times
Deed to Winslow Farr’s property (father of Lorin Farr), Nauvoo, Illinois, signed by the Prophet Joseph Smith, William Clayton, and Willard Richards.

Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library.
when we used to have our conference in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In fact I never enjoyed a meeting much better than we had there. All of the people I talked with were anxious to have our people come back there and live there. . . . I told them that most of the people that were men and women when we left 60 years ago were not living.”

The Nauvoo Rustler of October 3 reports that Lorin Farr visited the brick house his family had owned while in Nauvoo. This home was owned by someone else then, although Lorin still had the deed to the house.

The visit of the missionaries was the first active proselyting work done by the Church in Hancock County since 1845. As the elders came into Nauvoo on September 29, they were warmly welcomed and given lodging in homes originally owned by Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and others. Meetings were held in the city hall, which was on the same block a few feet from where the temple once stood. In fact, the city hall had been built in part from the rock used in the temple construction. The mayor granted the visitors all the privileges necessary for their preaching. On the evening of the twenty-ninth, they held a meeting on Mulholland Street, sang a few songs, and invited the people to attend the meetings to be held over the next few days. The first meeting was well attended. It was a fast and testimony meeting, as it was the first Sunday of the month. They were privileged to meet in the Nauvoo House, which stands on the banks of the Mississippi River. There was a beautiful view of the placid waters of the Mississippi River sparkling in the early morning sunlight. Rain the night before had cleared the air for this wonderful sight. The visitors could hardly comprehend the friendly and warm feelings exhibited by the inhabitants of Nauvoo, where once such bitterness prevailed. A beautiful spirit was manifested throughout the conference, making a deep and lasting impression on everyone there. Many said that they had never experienced such exquisite happiness as they did during this visit to Nauvoo. Most had never enjoyed such an outpouring of brotherly love and the Spirit of the Lord.

In a meeting at the Mansion House, Lorin Farr captured the attention of his listeners by stating that the trials of the Saints who were driven from Nauvoo were a pleasure because God was preparing His people for the future. Lorin’s age, vigor of body, white locks, honest countenance, testimony, and Christlike attitude toward the people made quite an impression. His testimony of the divine mission of Joseph Smith rang with the tone of one who knew. He said that they would not quarrel with any man, so when people became abusive and quarrelsome, the Latter-day Saints moved west.
During the 1905 conference, Lorin made a prediction that would be realized a century later: “I thought some time in the near future many of the Latter-day Saints would come and assist in the building of a beautiful city, as I considered that Nauvoo is one of the prettiest sites or locations for a city lying on the Mississippi River.” Today, a century after that prediction, Nauvoo includes the rebuilt temple, many other restored buildings, and a strong, growing Latter-day Saint presence.

The gathering at Nauvoo was a prelude to the historic journey to Sharon, Vermont, in December 1905 to dedicate the granite monument honoring the one hundredth anniversary of Joseph Smith’s birth. Lorin Farr was invited by President Joseph F. Smith to travel with a party of thirty prominent Church members to Sharon. They departed on December 18. Lorin was in the company of his son-in-law, John Henry Smith, and his grandson, George Albert Smith, both members of the Quorum of the Twelve. George Albert Smith was in charge of the details of the trip, as he was the newest member of the Twelve. The party visited the birthplace of Hyrum Smith in Tunbridge, Vermont, and then visited the Joseph Smith Sr. farm. The group celebrated with music and speeches as they visited various sites. The biggest event was the raising and dedication of the Joseph Smith Monument. Junius Wells, project

chairman and inspired instigator for the monument, told of locating stone for the monument, moving its sixty tons for polishing and cutting, and then transporting it by rail and wagon to the current site.\textsuperscript{11}

From there, they visited Boston and then traveled to Palmyra to visit the Smith farm and the Sacred Grove. On this trip, they finalized the purchase of the Mack farm in Vermont and began the process to purchase the Smith farm, the Sacred Grove, and the nearby Hill Cumorah. George Albert Smith, Lorin’s grandson, played a vital role in acquiring these properties, having developed relationships with the owners of these important historic sites. The trip lasted through the beginning of January 1906. During the entire trip, they held evening services with song and prayer. They had a testimony meeting on New Year’s Eve where all members of the party, including Lorin, expressed their feelings. It was a warm, wonderful, and sentimental trip for those involved. By the time they arrived back in Salt Lake City, they had traveled fifty-five hundred miles.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1905, Lorin Farr was one of the last living witnesses of the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He testified with clarity and power that the Prophet was who he said he was and that his testimony and teachings are valid for the ages. \textsuperscript{RE}
Notes

7. *Deseret News*, October 16, 1905. That deed, received by the Winslow Farr Sr. Family Organization, was sold to the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Curt Bench, a rare documents dealer and owner of Benchmark Books in Salt Lake City, said it was worth $8,500 in 2003.
Brigham Young University and Jerusalem before Semester Abroad, 1931–1968

Kahlile B. Mehr

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The relationship between Brigham Young University and Jerusalem is generally noted to have commenced with the first Semester Abroad program there in 1968. Yet precursors to that program go back to 1931 when BYU professors and staff studied Hebrew in Israel and came into contact with prominent Israelis. Though we recognize 1968 as the beginning of a formal relationship between the city and the university, understanding the informal relationships nurtured by a handful of forerunners helps us to appreciate the roots from which emerged both the Semester Abroad program and subsequently the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies.

Forerunners who blazed the trail for the establishment of the center and Semester Abroad included a BYU Travel Study program, which functioned as the institutional arm of BYU in Jerusalem; individual professors who studied Hebrew in language schools, became acquainted with the country, and imbibed its biblical heritage; and an Israeli dance group from the Pasadena California Stake. The experiences of individuals involved in these programs engendered a desire to broaden the involvement of BYU and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the religious heritage of Jerusalem. The purpose of this article is to trace a brief history of these individuals and groups in the Holy Land, noting the contribution each made.
Sidney B. Sperry

Sidney B. Sperry was the first of several who forged a link between BYU and Jerusalem. The father of religious studies at BYU, Sperry was also the first BYU professor to study in Jerusalem. After teaching seminary and institute in Utah and Idaho, Sperry sought to deepen his scholarship. He received a doctorate in Old Testament languages and literature in 1931 from the University of Chicago. Pursuing his studies further, he spent a year doing postdoctoral work in archaeology at the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. Joining the BYU faculty in 1932, he inspired many BYU scholars to focus their teaching on Christian origins in the land of the Savior’s mortal ministry.¹

Early Holy Land History

For nearly a millennium, Jerusalem and the Holy Land had been part of the Islamic world. A province of the Ottoman Empire for several centuries prior to World War I, it was transformed into a British protectorate at the conclusion of the war, which was the political condition during Professor Sperry’s sojourn in 1931. World War II was in the offing as Hitler established a reign that would strike at the moral foundation of civilization, with the Jewish people bearing the greatest brunt. In the aftermath of that war, dispossessed Jewish masses sought refuge in a land they claimed on the basis of their Hebrew Bible.

Early Church Involvement in the Holy Land

The interest of BYU (founded, funded, and firmly directed by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) in Jerusalem and Israel extends back to the formative experiences of the Church. Ninety years before Professor Sperry’s educational pursuit in Jerusalem, Apostle Orson Hyde pronounced his blessing on the Mount of Olives, just east of the city. Missionaries sporadically ranged through the area from 1886 to 1928.

The year after Sperry’s return, Elder John A. Widtsoe, president of the European Mission, established a mission and blessed the land again, the fourth Apostle to do so since Elder Orson Hyde. The mission headquarters was located in Haifa from 1933 to 1935 and then moved to Beirut, Lebanon. The mission closed in 1939 with the advent of the war, but it reopened from 1947 to 1951. No proselytizing occurred in the Protectorate, though it was considered part of the mission when the Jewish state of Israel emerged as a political entity after an unexpected victory of the Jewish refugees over the Arab armies.
Eldin Ricks

The next person to foster a BYU–Jerusalem connection was Chaplain Eldin Ricks. A seminary teacher who had graduated from BYU in 1941, he was inducted into the U.S. Army in 1943 and served in Africa and Italy. In August 1945, at war’s end, he was included in a group of twenty army chaplains permitted to visit the Holy Land. Hosted by the British Chaplain’s Corps, they toured many sites made famous in biblical history. The experience, he wrote home, “helps you connect things up in your mind and should be an invaluable aid in future teaching.” Thus, Ricks anticipated the course of his career. Still on duty, he kept track of his alma mater, observing in a subsequent letter that BYU would soon be enlarged to accommodate five thousand students. Ricks began employment at BYU in 1949. In 1952, he was approached by the director of Extension Services, Harold Glen Clark, who was seeking to take advantage of Ricks’s experience.

Clark had initiated a travel study program in 1951, sending a group of thirty-one by bus to Latter-day Saint historical sites in the Midwest and a group of seventeen by private automobile to Mexico. The program was directed primarily toward adults, not students, but it presaged later student programs. Clark had encouraged Professor Sperry to send a group of adults to Israel. Sperry was the only Latter-day Saint educator with firsthand experience in the region and seemed an ideal candidate to attract prospective travelers. He had a fault, however—he had no penchant to recruit, which at that time was a responsibility of those who directed tours. Recruiting was critical because the BYU Board of Trustees had charged the program to be self-supporting. Clark turned to Ricks, the other BYU professor with in-country experience and offered to make him the assistant director if he could solicit the needed participants. To aid him in the quest, Clark gave Ricks a list of wealthy Church members.

Ricks needed the approval of BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson, who questioned the need for two directors and wondered how they might both be spared from the Division of Religion at the same time. Ricks responded by referring to the experience of two BYU professors who had recently returned with a student tour group that had gone to Europe: “They say that they found the multitude of details relative to tickets, baggage, meals, hotel accommodations, not to mention special lectures concerning historic sites, proved a full time job for both of them.” To the second concern, Ricks responded that colleagues had “expressed their willingness to accept a temporary overload of classes”
to make the tour possible.\textsuperscript{7} The person writing letters of appointment to Sperry and Ricks was Lynn M. Hilton, assistant director to Clark. Within a few years, Hilton would carry the baton of Travel Study to the Holy Land.

The tour was limited to twenty-four persons.\textsuperscript{8} That limit was nearly reached. The final tally was a party of twenty-one, including the two directors. They came primarily from Utah but included a few from Idaho and one from California. They spent sixty-one days steaming to Europe, traversing the continent, and flying to Egypt and Israel, returning homeward through England and Scotland. In the Middle East, they were carried by camels to view the pyramids and the Sphinx and transported by train to Luxor to observe the ruins in the sun-baked landscape at Karnak. On the flight to Jerusalem, they passed over the Gulf of Aqaba at the north end of the Red Sea, imagining below them the path trodden by Lehi’s family centuries earlier. Landing on the Arab side of the border, they walked in the Garden of Gethsemane, hiked the Mount of Olives, tarried at the Garden Tomb, and visited the Dead Sea. It was rewarding for Dr. Sperry to see the land restored to fruitfulness, manifested by new orchards, vineyards, towns, and agricultural cooperatives.\textsuperscript{9} Entering Israel, they bussed north through the Plain of Esdraelon to Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee, where they boated to historical sites around the sea’s coastline. Yet despite its title as the “Holy Land Tour,” the group spent only thirteen days in Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, compared to forty days in Europe. In reality, it was a European tour with a Holy Land segment.

After the tour, Ricks pursued his doctoral studies at Dropsie College, Philadelphia. Founded in 1907 by a Jewish lawyer, it was a center for Jewish learning “free of theological, sectarian, or political considerations, and open to all races and creeds.”\textsuperscript{10} It was a small institution with a student body of 115 students in 1957, 40 percent non-Jewish. The first scholar to view the Dead Sea Scrolls, Eleazar Sukenik, was a Dropsie alumnus. A portion of Ricks’s curriculum included three months of Hebrew language study in Jerusalem, from July to September 1956. Though of shorter duration than Sperry’s yearlong precedent, it was the second extended study sojourn by a BYU professor in Jerusalem.

Five weeks into his course, the struggling student wrote home to his mother, “I am sorry to say I don’t yet speak Hebrew like a native. In fact, I have scarcely scratched the surface.”\textsuperscript{11} He studied five hours a day with a class of twenty-eight Jewish immigrants from eight nations. “No English is spoken,” he wrote home. When Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion visited the class, they assailed him with questions
in “bad Hebrew,” which elicited a good-humored laugh from the distinguished visitor. Prior to Ricks’s departure, Jordanian soldiers killed three and wounded eighteen members of an archaeological tour. In a reprisal raid, the Israeli army killed thirty-eight Jordanian soldiers. Commenting on the event, Ricks wrote, “All the ingredients to World War III are already here—or so it seems. Certainly the next fifty years will see great world shattering events taking place in this part of the world.” In early October 1956, his wife and four children welcomed him back to their Philadelphia apartment.

**Ellis T. Rasmussen and Truman G. Madsen**

In addition to Ricks, other Latter-day Saint scholars were involved in studying the biblical past, though not in Israel. Ellis T. Rasmussen, who would later become the chair of the Department of Ancient Scripture (1969–1971) and eventually dean of Religious Education (1976–1981), was an acquaintance of Sperry from his time as an undergraduate. Working as a seminary teacher after graduation, he returned to BYU annually to pursue graduate work under Sperry’s guidance. Upon Sperry’s recommendation, Rasmussen pursued the study of Old Testament languages and literature and was employed full-time at BYU in 1951. At the suggestion of Sperry, from 1957 to 1958, he lived in Philadelphia and studied at Dropsie College. Rasmussen was also a friend of Ricks, their association dating back to when they both started teaching seminary in 1941. Another faculty member with biblical interests was Truman G. Madsen, who began his BYU service in 1957 teaching biblical studies and Latter-day Saint Church history. He obtained a doctorate in the history and philosophy of religion from Harvard University in 1960. Both Rasmussen and Madsen would be involved with BYU Travel Study to Israel before the end of the decade.

**Lynn M. Hilton**

The cause of Travel Study to Israel was picked up again in 1961 by Harold Glen Clark’s assistant in the Extension Division, Lynn M. Hilton. Having obtained an undergraduate degree from the University of Utah, Hilton entered a doctoral program in educational administration at the University of Chicago’s College of Education. He graduated in 1952. President David O. McKay, passing through Chicago to New York, personally offered Hilton employment at BYU. Hilton served as a BYU administrator for twelve years, from 1953 to 1959 at the main
campus and from 1959 to 1964 as the founding director of the BYU Center in Salt Lake City. In the words of Clark, he was “young, ambitious, full of ideas, and moved the work along rapidly.” He instigated evening school on campus as well as Education Week and helped develop off-campus courses and adult education centers. Most significantly, with regard to Israel, he helped promote the Travel Study program.

One of Hilton’s passions was the Jewish people and their increasing presence in the Holy Land. In 1953, he began to study the subject and authored a series of five lectures on “The Jews, a Promised People.” Delivered at various BYU adult education forums, they were published as part of the Know Your Religion series in 1954. In lecture three, he noted that there had been an increase in Latter-day Saint interest in Judah during the last few years. No doubt this was a result of the creation of a Jewish state in the Middle East and the gathering of Jews to live there in what appeared to be a literal fulfillment of centuries-old prophecy. In lecture five, he recollected that during a Chicago stake conference, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith commented that the day of Judah was dawning and that the day of the Gentile was closing. Hilton further reflected that the idea struck him with great force.

Hilton corresponded with Elder LeGrand Richards concerning a proselytizing effort among the Jews and was excited by the response. In a letter dated June 2, 1954, Elder Richards wrote: “For your information, this matter [preaching the gospel to Judah] was discussed in a meeting of the Church missionary committee some time ago. It was the feeling at that time that as soon as the literature was prepared properly and intelligently to present our message to the Jews that a mission might be opened up in various stakes of Zion where there are large numbers of Jews residing, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, New York and Washington.” In 1955, Elder Richards appointed Lynn to a committee formed to establish this program, an effort that flowered mostly in Southern California but that was canceled by direction of the First Presidency in 1959. Though canceled, this effort spawned a later development: a group of Latter-day Saint youth known as the Yovail Dancers. In 1964, this group, directed by Mildred Handy, would take its enterprise to Israel and indirectly beget a BYU student program.

In August 1959, Hilton embarked on a life-altering journey of circling the globe, spending two months of language study in Israel in the process. He traveled with Donald Blackwelder, a family friend. Frugal in their expenditures, they budgeted a mere $2,600 for expenses. They visited twenty-six countries, bicycled through England and Europe, were mistakenly arrested as spies in Jerusalem for taking notes during
conversations with military draftees, skin-dived in the Gulf of Aqaba, and were quarantined in India on their way home through Asia. They visited Lynn’s parents in New Zealand, steamed across the Pacific to San Francisco, and hitchhiked back to Salt Lake City. In Israel, they lived at Beit Hashita, a kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley, twenty miles southeast of Nazareth, tending groves of pomegranate, olives, and citrus to pay for their board while pursuing their study of the Hebrew language. In approving Hilton’s sabbatical, President Wilkinson jokingly addressed him as “Lazarus Moses Hiltonsky” (apparently alluding to Lynn’s interest in Jewish affairs), stating that “I can’t for the life of me understand what you are going to obtain from adult education in Jerusalem. The answer to this will either expose my ignorance or yours.”

Though Hilton went to study adult education, his experience engendered an enduring interest in Israel and the Middle East, which he would visit repeatedly and where he would even reside for five years. Even more significantly, it was here that he first got the idea for a BYU educational project in Jerusalem, an idea that he would espouse for the duration of his tenure at BYU. He thought primarily in terms of adult education and was a key proponent in two Travel Study tours to Israel thereafter.

The stay in Israel prepared Hilton to propose and host a 1961 Travel Study tour called the Bible Lands Tour. The tour group consisted of seventeen people, an average-sized group when compared with other Travel Study tours that year. The roster consisted of two men and fifteen women, ages twenty-six to eighty-three, from Utah, California, Arizona, Canada, and England. The trip included a European segment from July 4 to August 2, an Arabic segment in Egypt and Jordan from August 3 to 8, an Israel segment from August 9 to 20, and a return through Spain and Portugal from August 21 to 26. They spent a month in the Middle East, a significantly longer stay than the two weeks spent by the Sperry tour eight years earlier. Though the tour was for adults, Hilton penned the following note in his tour binder: “Resident Program in Israel. Send 25 young students to Israel 2 1/2 months, middle June–middle of August.” Though Hilton never saw the realization of this idea, it foreshadowed the future.

Robert C. Taylor

During the decade prior to the 1961 tour, the Travel Study program had matured. Operated initially out of the Extension Division director’s office, a Travel Bureau was authorized in 1953 with R. Max Rogers as a part-time director. The 1953 Sperry-Ricks tour had been the ninth tour after three years of activity. Five to seven tours were
conducted each year from 1954 to 1957. The program expanded dramatically to twelve tours in 1958, attracting 301 participants. Of the twenty-one universities in the nation offering education travel programs in 1958, only one had more than five tours, less than half the number of BYU tours. Another significant initiative in 1958 was a student-in-residence study program in Mexico City. Another was set up the following year in Quebec. These were short-term programs. Semester Abroad was still in the future, but the precedent for having students domiciled in their place of study was set. By the end of 1959, the program had evolved to merit a full-time director. The appointment went to Robert C. Taylor.

Taylor had worked in Hollywood for seven years as a staff assistant for the Howard Hughes Production Company and was married to Kathy Cook, a model and the head of the fashion department on Queen for a Day, a popular daytime television show. Desiring to return to Utah, Taylor gave notice to Hughes prior to learning by happenstance of the job opening at BYU. He directed the program for the next three and a half decades. A premonition of her husband’s later involvement in Israel first came to Kathy while she was visiting Haifa in 1965. She announced to Robert upon her return, “We are going to be involved in something important in Israel.” Robert remembered his wife’s inspiration when a Jerusalem Semester Abroad program was proposed in 1966. In 1992, he wrote that “there had not been a day in the last 27 years when [his] mind had not dwelt on Jerusalem and the Holy Land.”

Second Bible Lands Tour

In 1962, a second Bible Lands Tour was canceled because of insufficient interest. So the appeal of the tour could be broadened, it was combined in 1963 with archaeological sites in Mexico and renamed the “Bible & Book of Mormon Lands Tour.” The overall travel time was reduced from the fifty-three days of the 1961 tour to thirty-nine days, seventeen of them in Israel. The 1963 tour had thirty-one participants, exceeding the number of the 1953 and 1961 tours. It was the fourth most popular tour that year, following the perennially popular Church History Tour (72), the Student European Tour (54), and the Fine Arts European Tour (34). W. Cleon Skousen, emeritus BYU professor, author of The First 2,000 Years (1953), and a popular lecturer at the time, initially agreed to direct the tour. When his schedule precluded this possibility, Hilton was asked to conduct the new tour. Because of the tour’s size, he was permitted to have an assistant director, and he assigned Ellis Rasmussen the job.
The tour began Rasmussen’s twenty-four-year period of conducting tours and teaching Semester Abroad. He wrote afterward, “For me personally the tour was one of the most effective, impressive, and valuable experiences of my life. . . . In many significant sites we were able to visualize historic and inspirational events while we read from the Scriptures the narratives and teachings that came from those very places . . . and for the first time were often able to feel that the people and events were indeed real, and their message more vital than we had even before known them to be.” Similarly, Ricks wrote in 1971 that “[visits to Israel] have by no means decreased my interest in the great events that transpired there in the past but have served to increase my excitement at the unfolding miracle of the present and prophecies of fascinating developments yet future.” The feelings of Rasmussen and Ricks were probably shared by others touring Israel, and as such they are the key to understanding the popularity of the Travel Study to Israel that continued to grow with the introduction in 1968 of the Semester Abroad program, BYU faculty tours, continuing adult tours, and the eventual establishment of the BYU Jerusalem Center.

In 1963, Hilton approached Church Commissioner of Education William E. Berrett and proposed sending institute and seminary teachers to Israel for an experience in biblical geography. Like his efforts to sponsor adult tours to Israel and his thoughts to promote student study there as well, this idea later became a reality. He would not be directly involved, as he left BYU in 1964 to establish a successful language study abroad program for high-school students, but he was not forgotten. In March 1991, Taylor reported to a tour group in Mexico on the building of the BYU Jerusalem Center. He said, “The BYU programs [in Israel] continued to flourish over the years from the work started by Lynn Hilton.”

Daniel H. Ludlow

After Hilton’s departure, others pursued BYU involvement in Israel, primarily Daniel H. Ludlow. Ludlow’s interest in Israel began in 1948 when he edited *Latter-day Prophets Speak: Selections and Sermons from the Writings of the Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.* He joined the BYU Department of Religious Instruction in 1955 and obtained an EdD degree in 1956 from Columbia University. He developed an intense interest in Israel during his discussions on the subject with his colleagues Sperry, Rasmussen, and Ricks. In 1959, the Church Missionary Committee assigned Ludlow and his three colleagues to study the Rose Marie Reid lessons that had been an important factor in the Jewish proselytizing program in Southern California the previous
decade. They expanded their study to the plans of Irving Cohen in New York and Artel Ricks in Washington DC. The result was a new set of eight lessons titled “Teach the Gospel to the Jewish People,” which they submitted to Church headquarters for review in March 1960. There is no record of an official response to this submission.

In 1963, Ludlow took sabbatical leave and spent five months studying in Israel. He studied Hebrew for several months, first in Jerusalem and then at Kibbutz Alonim, situated in the Jezreel Valley, the prophesied site of Armageddon. He then joined faculty members from various universities on a three-week trip entitled “Land of the Bible Workshop,” sponsored by New York University and officially sanctioned by the State Department. They met major governmental, education, business, and religious leaders, including recently retired Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion. They also visited major archaeological sites. This experience was the foundation for a continued connection to Israel, as Ludlow soon became the key figure in promoting a Jerusalem Semester Abroad program. A second experience set his course in that direction.

The Yovail Dancers

In January 1964, the Yovail Dancers, an indirect result of the Jewish proselytizing program in Southern California, announced in the Church News their pending performance trip to Israel in the coming summer. The troupe of fifty youth dancers from the Pasadena Stake had performed throughout the fall and winter and had received a standing ovation from sixty-five hundred people at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. The group contacted BYU to set up the tour, and Robert Taylor asked Daniel H. Ludlow to direct it.

Performing during July 1964, the troupe swept the country with singing and dancing routines. Abba Eban, famed Israeli statesman and deputy to the prime minister at that date, awarded the dancers the Israeli peace medal, only the second one given, Pope John XXIII having received the first. Guri Kadman, the mother of Israeli folk dancing, was visibly touched and wept at a performance. The clean-looking young people impressed the nation, and Ludlow began to consider how this influence might be perpetuated.

Semester Abroad Plans

In January 1966, Ludlow took the proposal for a Jerusalem Semester Abroad program to President Wilkinson. In the meantime, Taylor
had worked to focus Travel Study on educational study rather than touring. As the “creative leader” in this effort, his endeavor paid off in 1965 with the creation of the first Semester Abroad program. During the winter of 1965, 143 students attended classes given by five BYU faculty members in Salzburg, Austria. They ended the semester with a three-week tour of Europe. Ludlow’s proposal was presented to the Board of Trustees in February 1966 and was referred to the First Presidency. Church President David O. McKay approved it in June 1966 with one important caveat—that half of the program be in Arab territory and half in Israeli territory.

In October 1966, Taylor made his first trip to Israel. He felt that it would take a miracle to get the program set up in the politically turbulent region, as it had been difficult enough to get going in the peaceful countries of Austria and France (January–June 1966). Ricks and Ludlow gave him letters of introduction to ease the way. Upon his return, Taylor confirmed the possibility of a program housed in Jerusalem, half the time in the Jordanian sector and half in the Israeli sector. It was to be limited to fewer than thirty students. He summarized that it was the most successful and important trip he had ever taken. Privately, both he and his wife, who had been there in 1965, felt they had “succumbed to that strong emotional attachment to the land, . . . and we knew we would return.”

Bible Land Tours, 1966–68

After a hiatus from 1964 to 1965, adult Travel Study tours began again. Rasmussen directed a small Bible Lands Tour in 1966 for eleven participants. Doyle Green, managing editor of the Improvement Era, was there to take pictures for that publication. In 1967, Truman G. Madsen conducted a group of eighteen. As was normally the case, the group toured in the Arab nations surrounding Israel before going into the country. Any passport stamped with an Israeli visa would prevent crossing an Arab border. They were stopped without explanation in Beirut prior to entering Israel. The Six-Day War erupted on the second day after the denied entrance, resolving the mystery of the border closure. This outcome did not deter Madsen from returning with another group in 1968 and nearly every year thereafter through 2004. He would later serve as a director of the BYU Jerusalem Center.

Semester Abroad

Although the war may have seemingly dashed hopes for a Semester Abroad program in 1968, President Wilkinson encouraged continued
recruiting by Ludlow, the scheduled director of the program. Wilkinson himself publicized the program in a devotional assembly and, in time, enough students (twenty) had committed to go, permitting the program to carry forward.\textsuperscript{51} Returning from Israel in late 1967, Taylor reported his favorable impression that the students would be safe.\textsuperscript{52} This feeling was echoed in a letter from Ludlow to the parents and friends of the students in which he noted that the area appeared more stable than when he was there in 1963 and 1964.\textsuperscript{53} Taylor was excited and requested that Roy Doxey, acting dean of the College of Religious Instruction, cover the topic of the Jerusalem group in the college newsletter with this statement: “We believe this is, perhaps, the most significant semester abroad program yet developed.”\textsuperscript{54}

**Jerusalem Center Plans**

So the Jerusalem Semester Abroad program came to pass, leading eventually to even greater BYU involvement in Israel. Even before the students departed Utah for the first Semester Abroad, there had been discussion of a future student center in Jerusalem. In a proposal drafted in June 1967 by Ludlow, Clark, Madsen, and Taylor, among others, it was argued that a dormitory in Jerusalem was needed—not only for the Bible Land tours and residence program but also for the Around the World Tour and the faculty Study Tour anticipated in 1968. More significantly, the report foresaw a need for a permanent presence there, given the prophesied role of Jerusalem as one of the latter-day world capitals.\textsuperscript{55} After seeing his students off, Ludlow turned around and conducted the Lands of the Scriptures Workshop in June and July, the first BYU faculty tour of the Middle East. As these and an increasing number of other contacts between BYU and Israel continued in the years to follow, the Semester Abroad program was of prime importance as an impetus for the eventual construction of a BYU Jerusalem Center.\textsuperscript{56}

**Conclusion**

Although Semester Abroad became the roots from which the center emerged, the decades of interest in Israel reflected in the activities of BYU professors and staff in that country were the soil from which Semester Abroad sprouted. From Sidney B. Sperry’s yearlong study in 1931, when Israel was still the British Protectorate of Palestine, a succession of professors—Ricks, Rasmussen, Ludlow, and Madsen—and Travel Study administrators—Hilton and Taylor—sustained an interest in Israel. It was not a formal BYU effort until the founding of the Semester Abroad program, but the pioneers were all connected to the institution.
In subsequent years, the bond between BYU and Jerusalem forged a link between the Jewish and Latter-day Saint faiths, both of which trace their spiritual lineage back to Abraham. The efforts of those mentioned in this article were not the only reasons the program was started. The interest in the land where Jesus lived and taught has always been the key attraction of the Holy Land not only to Latter-day Saints but also to all Christians. Still, these few transient scholars sowed the seeds later harvested as a permanent presence for BYU and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Jerusalem.

Notes


3. Eldin Ricks to Mother and Family, August 2, 1945, photocopy of transcript obtained from Irene Ricks; in author’s possession.

4. See Eldin Ricks to Mother, Wanda, Family, and Clyde, September 14, 1945, photocopy of transcript obtained from Irene Ricks; in author’s possession.


7. Eldin Ricks to Ernest L. Wilkinson, October 30, 1952, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author’s possession.

8. See Harold Glen Clark to Dear Friend, January 19, 1953, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author’s possession.


11. Eldin Ricks to Mrs. Hyrum Ricks, August 10, 1956, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author’s possession.

12. Eldin Ricks to Mrs. Hyrum Ricks, September 29, 1956, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author’s possession.


14. See Ellis Rasmussen Oral History, interview by Kahlile Mehr, February 14,
2004, Orem, Utah, and telephone interview, February 24, 2004; notes in author’s possession.


17. Harold Glen Clark, “The Golden Years of Continuing Education at Brigham Young University,” in Lynn M. Hilton Papers, accn 1945, carton 5, folder 4; Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.


19. Lynn M. Hilton, “Plan of Ways in Which Fulbright Grant Is to Be Used,” photocopy of original obtained from Lynn Hilton; in author’s possession.


28. See Henstrom and Oakes, The World Is Our Campus, 236. Still, the number of student participants was low. Fifty percent of the Stanford graduating class in the 1960s spent two quarters at one of their foreign campuses (see Robert C. Taylor to Ernest Wilkinson, August 30, 1966, Re: Tour Report, in Division of Continuing Education, Harold Clark Files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 12; L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah).

29. See Robert Taylor to Ernest L. Wilkinson, August 30, 1966, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

30. See Henstrom and Oakes, The World Is Our Campus, 236; “Master List of Travel-Study Tours,” in Harold Clark files, 547c, box 17, folder 11, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU; Robert C. Taylor to Ernest L. Wilkinson, August 30, 1966, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

31. Robert Taylor, “A Modern Miracle in Jerusalem, the Holy City, 1994,” 6, 12–23; unpublished manuscript obtained from Taylor’s daughter Michelle; notes in author’s possession.

32. See Robert Taylor to Ernest L. Wilkinson, May 24, 1963, in Harold Clark files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 10, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.
34. See “Travel Study Report: 1963 Programs,” in Harold Clark files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 11, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.
35. See Robert Taylor to Harold Clark, October 8, 1963, Re: Justification for Sending Lynn M. Hilton on Tour, in Harold Clark files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 11, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.
36. Ellis T. Rasmussen, “Review and Evaluation, Book of Mormon-Bible Lands Tour,” photocopy of original obtained from Ellis Rasmussen; in author’s possession.
37. Eldin Ricks to [prospective tour participants], March 13, 1971, photocopy of original obtained from Irene Ricks; in author’s possession.
38. Lynn Hilton, notes from a talk of Robert Taylor, March 5, 1991, Coatzacoalcos, Mexico, photocopy of original obtained from Lynn Hilton; in author’s possession.
41. At the end of the direct proselytizing effort in Southern California, Ken Dyal, San Bernardino Stake mission president, initiated a program called “Understanding Israel,” which focused on helping Latter-day Saints become better acquainted with Jewish culture and tradition. In 1961, Mildred Handy converted Dyal’s program into a youth Israeli dance program, first in the San Diego Second Ward and later in the Pasadena Stake, where they adopted the name Yovail Dancers (see Arnold Green, “Survey of Latter-day Saint Proselyting Efforts,” 109–21).
48. See Rasmussen Oral History. The pictures and stories were published in March and August 1967 issues of the Improvement Era.
49. See “Comparison of BYU Study Tours, 1960–1969,” in Harold Clark files, UA 547c, box 45, folder 12, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.
50. See Madsen Oral History.
52. See Robert Taylor to R. Wayne Shute, November 2, 1967, Recent Trip to Europe and Israel, in Wayne Shute files, 547i, box 5, folder 14, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.
53. See Daniel Ludlow to Parents and Friends of Students in Jerusalem Semester Program, February 27, 1968, in Division of Continuing Education, Robert Taylor files, UA 547s, box 1, folder 8, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.
54. See Robert Taylor to Roy Doxey, February 29, 1968, in Robert Taylor files, UA 547s, box 1, folder 8, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

55. See Roy Doxey, Robert Clark, Truman G. Madsen, Robert C. Taylor, Daniel H. Ludlow, and Robert K. Thomas to Ernest L. Wilkinson, June 29, 1967 (draft), in Robert Taylor files, UA 547s, box 1, folder 8, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.

“Tap Lightly”: Managing Classroom Behavior

William C. Ostenson

Mike Mansfield, a highly respected United States senator from Montana, served as majority leader for sixteen years and, after retiring from the Senate, as an ambassador to Japan for an additional twelve years. Much of his success as a senator and an ambassador can be attributed to the fact that in his relationships with people, he always tried to “tap lightly.” He picked up this saying from his nine years in the copper mines of Butte, Montana, following his service in all three branches of the military during and after World War I.

The statement came as a warning to those who used explosives to loosen the rock in which the copper ore was embedded. An experienced miner would drill holes into the rock and then place an explosive charge deep into each hole. The charges had to fit tightly deep in the rock or the force of the explosion would cause a rockslide that would almost certainly lead to sudden death. This process required the miner to tap the explosive into the hole until it reached the far end. Of course, if he tapped too hard, the charge would go off prematurely, leading to the caution, “Tap ’er light.” Mike Mansfield saw in this a metaphor for dealing with people. As he sought to apply this rule in his relationships with people, he won the respect not only of Republicans and Democrats in the Senate but also of the Japanese people.

Teachers and principals in the seminary program can use this same principle to solve disciplinary problems.

As a principal, I once worked with a student whose teacher had kicked him out of class for persistent disobedience. I do not recall all
the complaints the teacher had about this student, but on that particular day the student had brought a can of pop into class and had refused to put it away. I invited the student into my office, and I began by getting better acquainted with him. That is not what students usually expect when going into a principal’s office for disciplinary reasons, but to be of any help to this student I needed to know something about him. Furthermore, such an approach is usually disarming, and I could address the issue at hand more easily once the student’s defenses had been loosened up. After getting better acquainted, I asked him to tell me his side of the story. I find that this approach too can be disarming and can reveal a great deal about a student. “Tapping lightly” in this way is often the first step toward a solution.

When I asked the student for his side of the story, he complained that because his high-school teachers allowed him to bring pop into their classes, he couldn’t see what was wrong with bringing it into seminary. I explained that this was merely the rule we had throughout the seminary, and because he was able to drink pop in all his other classes, he certainly did not need to drink pop in seminary. That was my way of showing my support for the teacher in that situation, and he was hard pressed to disagree. I also thought that he would agree to being more cooperative if I promised to ask his teacher to cut him some slack. He agreed to that as well, and then the teacher and I had a talk.

As teachers, we sometimes get pulled into a contest of wills with a student, and it becomes difficult for us to see our own contribution to the contention that exists between us. I could have moved this student to another class, but it seemed important that the student and teacher work through their differences. First, the young man needed to stop showing his independence through disobedience, and second, the teacher needed to learn how to tap more lightly and take it less personally when his students tested his authority.

Having worked for fourteen years as a coordinator in the U.S. Northeast Area, I knew that this young man was one of the reasons why we have released-time seminary. During my fourteen years of service to the wards and branches of northern Indiana and the northwest corner of Ohio, I had the opportunity to watch many excellent teachers teach in early-morning and home-study classes. All of them were volunteers. But the percentage of enrollment in early-morning or home-study classes was never as high as in released-time classes, which is why we rarely saw a casual student—like the young man—in those classes. Such students do come to our released-time classes, however, and as such they provide some of the justification for paying a profes-
sional teacher to teach those classes. We ought not to be too quick to dismiss them when they become a challenge for us.

As part of my assignment as a coordinator, I taught a monthly lesson to the home-study and early-morning students prior to their monthly stake, or Super Saturday, activities. I always enjoyed those classes, and I seldom had problems with discipline. Yet on one occasion the students came to class so excited that early into the lesson I had to stop and wait quietly for them to settle down. All seventy to eighty students responded to this approach except for one young lady in the very center of the chapel who resumed talking to a young man on her left as soon as I started the lesson again. When I saw her talking again, I stopped and announced that I would wait until she was finished before I continued. Having been singled out, she stomped out of the chapel, pushing her way past the students who sat between her and the aisle. I could not tell how anyone else felt, but when she got up to walk out of the room, I felt like the Spirit walked out too.

We always held an in-service meeting for the teachers after the students left for their activity. During the meeting, I asked which teacher had that young lady in his or her local class. When I found out, I asked her teacher to do everything she could to get that young lady back again next month. I also admitted to the teachers that I had not set a very good example for how to handle a disciplinary problem, though the teachers admitted they were hard pressed to think of another way of handling it.

For the next monthly lesson, we met in a different building, and we were in a different room than the chapel. Eighth-graders had also been invited so they could see what a Super Saturday was like because they would be attending the following year. The room was so full of people that a number of students had to sit on the floor in the front of the class. When I started the lesson, everyone was once again excited and inattentive. But I knew that I had a good lesson prepared, so I began by directing a series of questions to a group of eighth-graders sitting on the floor to my immediate right. When I saw the fear in their eyes turn into sincere interest in the lesson, I turned to another group and endeavored to pull them into the lesson as well. I kept doing that until I had everyone in the room engaged in the lesson except for the young lady from the previous month. She was sitting in the very center of the room and seemed intent on challenging my authority once again. But it was a good lesson, and she quickly became interested when I began involving her in it.

With twenty minutes left in the lesson, I saw one of our home-study teachers and another student come into the room and sit down
on the floor to my left. Then I saw that teacher get up and leave, only to return moments later with another student. I was interested in what he had to say in our in-service meeting once the lesson had concluded and the students had left for their activity. First, he apologized for being late. He was a new teacher, and he had no idea how long it would take him to pick up his students who needed a ride. When they finally got there, it was so late that he could only convince one of them to come into class with him. But once he got into the room, he felt the Spirit so strongly that he left to try and convince his other students to come into the room so they could at least feel the Spirit that was there. That Saturday our in-service lesson was on how to discipline students by using questions to pull them into the lesson rather than pushing them away by pointing out their misbehavior. In other words, how do we “tap lightly” enough to loosen sometimes rock-solid resistance without having our efforts blow up in our faces?

There is no substitute for a well-prepared lesson when it comes to discipline in the classroom—and especially when it comes to those disciplinary problems that arise from boredom. Because of four years of good lessons from a variety of teachers, the young man who had brought pop into class did feel the Spirit at times and did learn some things about the gospel in spite of himself. I know that because I kept an eye on him for the next four years. And even though he did not graduate from seminary, I believe that what Elder Henry B. Eyring said in 1993 applied to him: “If you treat them as seekers, they will feel that you love them, and that may awaken a hope in them that they could have a softer heart. It may not happen every time, and it may not last. But it will happen often, and sometimes it will last. And all of them will at least remember that you believed in the best in them—their inheritance as a child of God.”

Nevertheless, part of loving and believing in them is to discipline them when they need to be disciplined. For example, when I became principal for the third time, I discovered that we had more than twenty seniors who were using their released-time status to do whatever they wanted. I had each of these students into my office to visit with them individually about their plans for the future and to ask if they were planning to graduate from seminary. All of them said they wanted to graduate, so I told them that they could as long as they never skipped class again. But if they did skip again, I would be required to dismiss them from seminary, and they would not graduate. I explained to them why it was important for them to honor their released-time contract with the high school and how important it was for us to protect our
legal status as a released-time program and maintain a good relationship with the high school. I said that what I was saying had nothing to do with how I felt about them personally, as I had to live by the same rules as they did. Finally, I said that I would be calling their parents to tell them the same.

With one exception, the parents were supportive. One father said that it was about time his son was held accountable and that his son would complete his makeup work before spring break or be left home while his friends went on a trip to Lake Powell. All those students but one stopped skipping class and graduated. The one who skipped class had her enrollment discontinued, after which she came and asked if there was any way she could still graduate. Having acted blatantly in her most recent absence, I told her that I was unable to trust her enough to allow her back into released-time, but I would set up a demanding alternative for her, which, upon completion, would enable her to graduate. She accepted and graduated with her friends.

I believe the rules we have in seminary should be used to motivate our students to do what they already know they should do. In other words, we ought to always “tap lightly” with the rules rather than use them to their full weight. I have learned that if you are kind but firm with students, they almost always step up and do the right thing. When they do not, the consequences belong totally to them. We can take comfort in knowing that we have followed the admonition of President Howard W. Hunter, who encouraged us to “give a soft answer” when we might otherwise be tempted to give a harsh answer, to “encourage [our] youth” rather than discourage them, to “try to understand” them rather than being quick to judge them as lacking in spirituality or maturity, to “examine [our] demands on [them],” and to be “kind” and “gentle” with them. The is good counsel for those of us who want to “tap ’er light.”

Notes

Gary E. Smith, *Joseph Smith's Visit by Moroni in the Field*

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As gospel teachers, we have a charge to help those we teach strengthen their testimonies. The purpose of this article is to identify what a true testimony is and then determine how we as teachers can best help those we teach build testimonies equal to the challenges that will be theirs and that will lead them back to the presence of their Eternal Father.

In the context of missionary work, shallow missionaries frequently get shallow converts. Surely the same principle is true of the classroom. Shallow teaching produces shallow students. The principle is obvious: all things beget after their own image and in their own likeness. That which is shallow produces that which is shallow.

You Cannot Build a Strong Testimony out of Weak Doctrine

“When crises come in our lives—and they will—the philosophies of men interlaced with a few scriptures and poems just won’t do,” states Elder Jeffrey R. Holland. “Are we really nurturing [those we teach] in a way that will sustain them when the stresses of life appear? Or are we giving them a kind of theological Twinkie—spiritually empty calories? President John Taylor once called such teaching ‘fried froth,’ the kind of thing you could eat all day and yet finish feeling totally unsatisfied. During a severe winter several years ago, President Boyd K. Packer noted, a goodly number of deer died of starvation while their stomachs were full of hay. In an honest effort to assist, agencies had supplied the superficial when the substantial was what had been needed. Regrettably they had fed the deer but they had not nourished them.”

Joseph Fielding McConkie

Joseph Fielding McConkie is a professor emeritus of ancient scripture at BYU.

Joseph Fielding McConkie (joseph.mcconkie@yahoo.com) is a professor emeritus of ancient scripture at BYU.
If we are to build for the Lord, we must build on a strong foundation. Consider the parable of the unwise builder:

A certain man inherited a choice piece of ground whereon to build an house to shelter his loved ones from the storms of the day and the cold of the night.

He began his work with zeal and skill, using good materials, for the need was urgent.

But in his haste, and because he gave no heed to the principles of proper construction, he laid no foundation, but commencing immediately, he built the floor, and raised the walls, and began to cover them with a roof.

Then, to his sorrow, because his house had no foundation, it fell and became a heap of rubble, and those whom he loved had no shelter.

Verily, verily, I say unto you: A wise builder, when he buildeth an house, first layeth the foundation and then buildeth thereon.

Now consider my interpretation of the parable:

A certain gospel teacher was called to build a house of faith and righteousness and salvation for the souls entrusted to his care. Knowing he had been called by inspiration and having great zeal, he hastened to teach gospel principles without first laying the foundation of faith and testimony and conversion.

He spent his time on teaching aids and devices and classroom activities, but he never laid the great and eternal foundation upon which all things must rest in the Lord’s house—the foundation of our theology and of our doctrine.²

Understand What a Testimony Is

As a point of beginning, we must define what a testimony is. A testimony is what you know. It is that to which you would be a competent witness in a court of law. In the context of the gospel, it is what you know by the spirit of revelation about the principles of eternal life.³

Some gospel teachers, including some missionaries, have supposed that they could substitute the bearing of testimony for their responsibility to know and teach adequately the principles they were called to teach. In so doing, they misunderstand not only their responsibility as teachers but also the meaning and purpose of testimony. The message you are commissioned to bear is your testimony. In a court of law, your testimony is not a substitute for evidence—it is the evidence. Having given that evidence, you can then say, “What I have told you is the truth.” But to do so you must first have declared what the truth is.

Illustrating this point, President Joseph F. Smith states that “the voicing of one’s testimony, however eloquently phrased or beautifully
expressed, is no fit or acceptable substitute for the needed discourse of instruction and counsel expected” of those we have been commissioned to teach. “The man . . . who assumes that his testimony embraces all the knowledge he needs, and who therefore lives in indolence and ignorance shall surely discover his error to his own cost and loss.”

Nor can it be overlooked that this failure to teach also comes at the “cost and loss” of those who deserved to be taught but who were not.

It is a meaningless thing for a teacher to say “I know the gospel is true” if that teacher does not know the gospel and has not taught it adequately. For gospel teachers, a testimony without an attendant message is basically an empty package. It not only leaves those to whom it was given a feeling that they were cheated of something they needed but also leaves the Holy Ghost with little or nothing to bear witness of.

Simply stated, if you have not taught anything, you cannot legitimately bear testimony to what you supposedly have taught. That is, your testimony as a teacher cannot be confined to a formal declaration at the end of a class or the end of a course that the gospel is true; your testimony must reflect the composite of all you have taught during that class or course.

In the mission field or in the classroom, the principles are the same. You cannot teach what you do not know, and therefore you cannot legitimately testify of that which you have not taught. Again, in the true and proper sense, your testimony based on your knowledge is what you teach. Shallow teaching cannot produce a deep and meaningful testimony in those being taught any more than shallow soil can give root to a great tree.

All Gospel Truths Are Not Equal

Paul said that if we have not charity, we are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal (see 1 Corinthians 13:1). These words reflect sound doctrine. Disciples of the true gospel will always have an overriding concern for those in need, and true Christians will always be found feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Therefore, they will then be able to teach those they have clothed and fed, as necessary, how to provide both food and clothing for themselves. This principle survived the Apostasy, and at least in modern times it is taught and practiced by all Christian faiths.

Distinguish between Social and Eternal Principles

The principle of Christian charity, however, does not negate Christ’s command that we must be baptized or else be damned (see
Mark 16:16; 3 Nephi 11:34; D&C 22). Nor can it discount the need for that baptism to be performed by the proper priesthood authority. This is hard doctrine; there is no compromise in it. Baptism places us on a path that is strait, narrow, and often steep, yet it is the only path that leads back to the presence of God. How much good, we might ask, have we done by assisting weary travelers while withholding from them the knowledge that they are on the wrong path?

No right-thinking person questions the necessity of charity. Yet if the entire Christian message begins and ends with charity, there was no need for Joseph Smith or the Restoration of the gospel; there was no need, for instance, for John the Baptist to come to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and restore the authority to baptize and the knowledge that baptism by the proper authority is essential to salvation.

Many principles that we hold to as Latter-day Saints unite us with the historical Christian world, and charity is one example. Many principles of our faith, however, such as continuous revelation, the nature of God, and the divine sonship of Christ, separate us from historical Christianity. Baptism by the authority restored by John the Baptist is an example. The principles that unite us did not require that the heavens be opened, that ancient prophets came to restore the majesties of heaven, that there be living prophets, or that ancient scriptural records be restored. The principles that unite us with the churches of the world survived the Apostasy and are commonly had by good people everywhere. It is assumed that such principles embrace all good ethics. Among their number are honesty, kindness, charity, brotherly love, and service. Such principles teach that we must love our neighbors, obey laws, and fight against influences that are destructive to family or community values. These are all moral or ethical principles.

If holy writ had never mentioned the necessity of our embracing moral and ethical principles or if our leaders had never admonished us to embrace them, Latter-day Saints would still be expected to know intuitively that such behavior is expected of them. No revelation is necessary to tell a man that he should love his wife and be kind to his children, that he should deal honestly with others, and that he should not take that which does not belong to him. Such principles reflect the Light of Christ. These social or ethical principles are preparatory, like the law of Moses was to the coming of Christ. They are like an Elias to the fulness of the gospel. Their purpose is to prepare the hearts and minds of those who abide them to receive greater light and truth.

President J. Reuben Clark Jr., in “The Charted Course,” his sterling address to the Church Educational System, repeatedly says that we demean
the restored gospel when we reduce it to a system of ethics. Doing so is to deny our testimony of the Restoration. President Clark states:

Students already know that they must be “honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and [do] good to all men” and that “if there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13)—these things they have been taught from very birth. They should be encouraged in all proper ways to do these things which they know to be true, but they do not need to have a year’s course of instruction to make them believe and know them.

These students fully sense the hollowness of teachings that would make the gospel plan a mere system of ethics. They know that Christ’s teachings are in the highest degree ethical, but they also know they are more than this. They will see that ethics relate to the doings of this life, and that to make of the gospel a mere system of ethics is to confess a lack of faith, if not a disbelief, in the hereafter. . . .

[They know that] one living, burning, honest testimony of a righteous God-fearing man that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph was God’s prophet, is worth a thousand books and lectures aimed at debasing the gospel to a system of ethics or seeking to rationalize infinity.

Repeating President Clark’s charge to recognize that all doctrines are not created equal, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, also in an address to those of Religious Education, notes:

We have some passing interest in ethical principles but not a great deal as far as emphasis in teaching is concerned. If we teach the doctrines of salvation, the ethical concepts automatically follow. We do not need to spend long periods of time or make elaborate presentations in teaching honesty or integrity or unselfishness or some other ethical principle. Any Presbyterian can do that. Any Methodist can do that. But if we teach the doctrines of salvation, which are basic and fundamental, the ethical concepts automatically follow. . . .

Pitfalls we are supposed to avoid are the teaching of false doctrine, teaching ethics in preference to doctrine, compromising our doctrines with the philosophies of the world, entertaining rather than teaching, and using games and gimmicks rather than sound doctrine—“coddling students,” as President Clark expressed it.

So it is that there are principles that bless and others that also exalt. Those that bless unite true religion with all that is good in the world, whereas doctrines that exalt separate the true disciple from all those who are of the world. Indeed, these doctrines invite us to receive more than the world’s theologies have dared suppose God would be willing to grant.

Joining the Church in the early days of this dispensation equaled
leaving home, family, community, and nation to join with the Saints. This dedication did not occur because the newly converted embraced a system of ethics that required honesty, kindness, and selflessness. Such virtues were common to converts’ behavior before the message of the Restoration came to them. The ideas that God would manifest Himself to man in this day as He had done anciently, send forth a new book of scripture, and send angels to minister to men on earth were the doctrines that caused their family and neighbors to ostracize them.

A true testimony embraces both those principles that unite us with the world and those doctrines that separate us from it; both doctrines are as much a part of our faith as youth and adulthood are part of a full and meaningful life. Our challenge today is to remain in a world that simultaneously respects and rejects us, one that lauds the fruits of the gospel while seeking to entice us to abandon the roots from which they came.

We should note that those critical of our faith of necessity ignore our allegiance to the doctrines of brotherly love and charity. Our good works are typically dismissed silently or are depicted as attempts to deceive the world while we substitute works for the grace of Christ.

The history of the Latter-day Saint people attests that weak doctrines cannot produce strong testimonies. Physical strength will not increase with a weak workout routine. The more that is demanded of muscles, the stronger they get. The same principle applies in the realm of spirituality.

**Our Testimonies Must Be Rooted in That Which Separates Us from the World**

The requirement of a true testimony is that it be rooted in those principles that separate us from the world. A temporal world is a poor host to eternal principles. As light eschews darkness, so darkness eschews light.

Some have sought to protect people with tender testimonies by building fences around them, but the testimony forever protected remains forever tender. Perhaps we would be better served by growing up into truth rather than avoiding it. The greater protection is needed against the sectarian doctrine of sufficiency. Nephi described the attitude of those embracing such a stance as saying, “A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible” (2 Nephi 29:3). Thus, in the name of loyalty to God and prophets, the heavens are sealed. “Wo be unto him,” Nephi said, “that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough! For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give
unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have” (2 Nephi 28:29–30).

Strong Doctrines Are Those That Bring Peace

Light cannot compromise with darkness, nor can darkness exist in the presence of light. The peace of heaven is born of light; it is born of heaven-sent truths. When we teach those truths, their light dispels darkness and brings peace. Thus, the paradox of gospel teaching is that only when we teach the principles that the prince of darkness contends with can the light of heaven banish the principle of contention. A wonderful illustration of this principle is found in the vision of the redemption of the dead. Those who love darkness rather than light in this life receive the same in the spirit world. The vision states: “Neither did the rebellious who rejected the testimonies and the warnings of the ancient prophets behold his [Christ’s] presence, nor look upon his face. Where these were, darkness reigned, but among the righteous there was peace” (D&C 138:21–22; emphasis added). Where we would have expected the text to say “light,” it says “peace,” suggesting that the two concepts are inseparably linked.

I return again to the mission field as a point of reference, for it was there that I learned that tough doctrines, those that missionaries were sometimes tempted to slip by if they could, were the very doctrines that were the most attractive to the spirit of peace. These were the doctrines that brought the greatest strength to those who were honest of heart. The tough doctrines (like one true Church, the Word of Wisdom, or the law of tithing) brought the light that chased away the darkness of contention and replaced it with a spirit of confidence and assurance.

During a round of zone conferences held while I presided over the Scotland Edinburgh Mission, I challenged the missionaries to proselyte for one month without taking their Bibles with them. This challenge meant that they had to do all their teaching from the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. I told them that they had no business teaching any principle they could not teach from those sources because it was not a part of the message the Lord had commissioned us to take to the ends of the earth. It seemed a reasonable assumption to us that if the gospel had indeed been restored and if we in reality represented a new gospel dispensation, then we could teach the message as the Lord
had given it to us.

From then until our next round of zone conferences, the reports flooded in. The missionaries spoke of a stronger, even overwhelming, Spirit in their cottage meetings. It was obvious that the Holy Ghost liked being a part of what they were doing. What was particularly noticeable was the increased confidence the missionaries took with them into the teaching situation when they knew they were standing on their own ground. The natural result was that they started to find more people to teach than they ever had located before. This outcome I expected, but what I did not expect was that the spirit of contention common to many of their efforts to teach was now gone. After our one-month experiment, our missionaries refused to return to their old methods. Baptisms greatly increased, as did the testimonies of our missionaries.

By standing on their own ground and teaching doctrine from latter-day scripture, the missionaries found a greater inner strength, and they also discovered that by doing this they could avoid the spirit of contention that is often associated with proving our doctrines from the Bible.

**Knowledge of God Must Be Empirical**

Knowledge precedes faith. We cannot worship a God whom we do not know, nor can we practice principles of which we are ignorant. To abide the law, we must first know the law. Having been introduced to the law, we must then live it if we are to truly understand it. The Savior says, “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:16–17).

In His great Intercessory Prayer, Christ says, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). He spoke of an empirical knowledge. We know the Father and the Son only to the extent that we are like Them. Our knowledge of Them grows only as we become more like Them. Salvation consists of our learning to think as They think, act as They act, and feel as They feel.

We cannot live on borrowed light. The strength of our testimony must rest in the strength of our understanding, which comes only by living the principles we teach.

**To Have Faith, We Must Do Things That Require Faith**

“The pursuit of easy things,” my father repeatedly told his children, “makes men weak.” He was never hesitant about giving us challenging tasks. I applied the same principle as a mission president. When new mis-
sionaries arrived in our mission, I told them that I had too much respect for who and what they were to ask anything of them that did not require faith and courage. They responded in a marvelous manner, which I take as a reflection of the wonderful parents and teachers who had trained them.

I recently listened to a sacrament meeting talk that was excellently crafted. The thought content was deep and rich and the manner of its expression direct and clear. It was a wonderful compilation of quotations from various Church leaders. I wondered why those present, myself included, seemed so uninterested.

My question evoked a memory of the Old Testament story of David being commanded to offer a sacrifice on the threshing floor of Araunah. David went to see Araunah, who generously offered to give him whatever was needed for the sacrifice. David responded that he would not make an offering to the Lord of that which cost him nothing (see 2 Samuel 24:24).

Perhaps the problem with the talk in which people seemed to have so little interest was that it had cost the speaker nothing. Although the quotations he was reading were wonderful, they needed to be bound together by the price of his own feelings and experiences. We can borrow the words and thoughts of others, but we cannot plagiarize the Spirit that comes to those who lived the principles involved.

President Gordon B. Hinckley notes that “without sacrifice there is no true worship of God.” The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation.” If we cannot live on borrowed light, we certainly cannot live on borrowed experiences. We cannot teach what we do not understand, and we cannot understand that for which we have not paid a price. Good teaching must reach beyond good quoting. It must embrace what we have experienced. It must facilitate experience on the student’s part. Thus, the teacher becomes a tree of life, laden with good fruits, the seeds of which are planted in the hearts of his or her students. The teacher who gets lost in methodology and ethics becomes as the fig tree cursed by the Savior for the pretext of bearing fruits when it did not.

The Testimony That Saves Requires Courage

The scriptures are plain that those who inherit the celestial kingdom will be those who were valiant in the testimony of Christ (see D&C 76:79; 121:29). Surely these words mean that they knew no neutrality where the cause of Christ was concerned—that for them there was no middle ground and for their neighbors there was no ques-
tion where they stood on all things where the kingdom of God was concerned. Surely it means that their every expression and every action attested to where they stood and with what army they marched.

If those we teach are going to make a difference in this world, they must be different from the world. That difference will not come by teaching only easy doctrines, nor will it come by pretending that we believe the same things that everyone else does. Such things demean the sacrifice of our forefathers and the cost they paid for our right to live and believe as we do. If we want those we teach to stand for something, we must give them something worth standing for. If they are to be “valiant in the testimony,” our testimonies must embrace something that requires faith and courage.

In the councils of heaven, it was determined that Moroni would be Joseph Smith’s mentor, that he would play the primary role in preparing the youthful prophet for all that stood before him. We note with interest that Moroni began that instruction in a room filled with light, that he addressed Joseph by name, and that he told him God had a work for him to do. Having so done, he then told Joseph that his name would be “both good and evil spoken of among all people” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

There were no delusions here—this was God’s work. Joseph was to be His messenger, and His message would not go forth without opposition. If Moroni had prepared a lesson plan, perhaps it would have read something like this: “Major objective: Announce to Joseph that God has called him to a work that will require considerable faith and courage.” As to the church Joseph would eventually organize, Moroni promised, “It will increase the more it is opposed,” thus suggesting that the same principles would apply to all who were called to labor in the same great cause.¹¹

### We Must Help Our Students Build Strong Testimonies

Two great themes dominate President Hinckley’s training of priesthood leaders. He states both very succinctly: “Lead them with doctrine,” and “Bless them with responsibility.”¹² These words mean that we must teach our students the great doctrines of the kingdom and do so in a way that challenges them to live those principles. It is this marvelous union of eternal truths and the responsibilities that attend them that give birth to strong testimonies. As Elder McConkie explains, “If we are to have faith like Enoch and Elijah we must believe what they believed, know what they knew, and live as they lived.”¹³
Notes

2. This parable is taken from a talk given by Elder Bruce R. McConkie at a regional representatives seminar in the Church Office Building, April 3, 1981; copy in author’s possession. I have modified its interpretation to fit gospel teachers of all kinds.
8. I have heard it said on a number of occasions that we ought to confine what we teach to the first principles of the gospel, that these principles embrace all that is necessary for us to know. If this were the case, why did the Lord send Peter, James, and John to restore the higher priesthood, even though John the Baptist had already restored the authority to teach the first principles? Similarly, we must wonder why the Lord revealed so much to us in the standard works that goes beyond the first principles if we are not to go beyond them. Are we to remain ignorant of all these things, or are we to advance from grace to grace until we, like Christ, receive the fulness of the Father?
Brigham Young portrait, about 1882 (attributed to John W. Clawson)

Courtesy of Museum of Church History and Art
Profiles of the Prophets:
Brigham Young

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Brigham Young was born to a farming family in Vermont. He learned to work hard early on, and his practical skills and perspective helped him throughout his life. He eventually married and, after years of religious study, learned of the restored gospel and was baptized. A dedicated follower of Christ, Brother Brigham was always loyal to the Prophet Joseph Smith and was committed to the building up of the kingdom of God. Eventually, Brigham was called to be an Apostle and, later, the President of the Quorum of the Twelve. When the Prophet Joseph was martyred, the Quorum of the Twelve guided the Church under President Young’s leadership. He organized and led the Saints’ westward exodus and was ordained President of the Church in 1847.

A remarkable colonizer, President Young helped the Saints settle the Great Basin. In a relatively short time, he was elected governor of the provisional state of Deseret, sent settlers throughout the basin, established the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company, and broke ground for the Salt Lake Temple. Missionary work remained paramount in his administration as he sent missionaries throughout the world.

Life History

Brigham Young was born in Whitingham, Vermont, on June 1, 1801. He was the ninth of eleven children born to John and Abigail Young. Abigail suffered from tuberculosis and had to rely on the children to care for each other and be responsible for the many duties around the house. The family struggled to make a living off the land
and, in 1804, moved to central New York in hopes of finding better land to farm. The family was large and poor, so Brigham diligently labored to help with all the necessary chores. He later remarked that there were times when he worked in the “summer and winter, not half clad, and with insufficient food until my stomach would ache.”

When Brigham was only fourteen years old, his mother lost her struggle with tuberculosis and passed away. Her death, combined with the rigors of farm life, helped the boy grow quickly into a man. The children were left in the care of their father who, though a good man, was often very strict. Brigham later said of his father that “it used to be a word and a blow, with him, but the blow came first.” His father sometimes had to leave the children on their own while he worked or got supplies. One time Brigham and his brother were so hungry, with nothing but maple sugar in the house, that Brigham resorted to shooting a robin so the two boys could have something to eat. It was not long after his mother’s death that his father told him it was time to leave home. “When I was sixteen years of age, my father said to me, ‘You can now have your time; go and provide for yourself,’ and a year had not passed away before I stopped running, jumping, wrestling and the laying out of my strength for naught; but when I was seventeen years of age, I laid out my strength in planing a board, or in cultivating the ground to raise something from it to benefit myself.”

Brigham left home and became an apprentice carpenter, painter, and glazier. Over the next five years, he gained a reputation for being a capable and hardworking man. He eventually met and married a beautiful young woman, Miriam Works, and the couple was blessed with two daughters.

**Finding Peace in the Restored Gospel**

Brigham’s parents belonged to a branch of the Methodist Church and raised their children in a strict religious environment. But despite the fact that young Brigham grew up in such circumstances, studied the Bible, and meditated upon deeply spiritual questions, he did not belong to any church for quite some time. His resistance to the religious teachings of his day was not born of arrogance; he recognized that there was truth in some of what was said, but he wanted to “reach the years of judgment and discretion” so he could “judge” for himself. Brigham tried to live a good, Christian life of morality and utmost integrity, conscientiously studying the Bible and applying its teachings, but he simply could not find a church that appeared to be founded upon those
teachings. Finally, about the time of his marriage, Brigham joined the Reformed Methodist Church. He insisted on being baptized by immersion, even though his new church did not believe the method of performing the ordinance was important.

In 1830, Brigham’s older brother Phinehas purchased a copy of the Book of Mormon from Samuel Smith, the young missionary brother of the Prophet Joseph. Phinehas, as well as other members of the Young family, read the book and quickly proclaimed their acceptance of it. Brigham, on the other hand, took more time, carefully studying the book and the church behind it. While he had investigated a number of different religions, this new religion struck him as something very different from all the others. This religion went deeper for Brigham than the others he had examined; it answered his questions and made sense to him. He was careful, however, not to rely only on his practical approach of studying or on the commitment to the new church that others in his family were willing to make. He wanted to pray and feel right about each important aspect of the religion before moving forward.

After studying the Book of Mormon and Bible, meeting with missionaries, and even traveling to Pennsylvania to observe a church meeting, Brigham firmly decided to be baptized. “I examined the matter studiously for two years before I made up my mind to receive that book,” he later said. “I knew it was true, as well as I knew that I could see with my eyes, or feel by the touch of my fingers, or be sensible of the demonstration of any sense. Had not this been the case, I never would have embraced it to this day; it would have all been without form or comeliness to me. I wished time sufficient to prove all things for myself.”
On a snowy day in April 1832, Eleazer Miller baptized Brigham in his own millpond. The next day his close friend Heber C. Kimball was also baptized, and within three weeks, the wives of both men were baptized as well. Eventually, all of Brigham’s immediate family joined the Church. Brigham had found the restored gospel and the joy that comes through living it. “Our religion has been a continual feast to me. With me it is Glory! Hallelujah! Praise God! instead of sorrow and grief. Give me the knowledge, power, and blessings that I have the capacity of receiving. . . . Give me the religion that lifts me higher in the scale of intelligence—that gives me the power to endure—that when I attain the state of peace and rest prepared for the righteous, I may enjoy to all eternity the society of the sanctified.”

Serving the Lord as a New Disciple

Brigham demonstrated his commitment to the restored gospel by his unwavering willingness to diligently serve the Lord and His Church. He devoted much of his time to preaching the gospel, including going on a mission by foot to Canada. He met with personal tragedy once again in his life when his wife, Miriam, passed away from tuberculosis, leaving him to care for their two young daughters. Despite the challenges he faced, he was completely dedicated to the gospel and felt no hesitancy to do what he could to serve in his new religion. “I hear people talk about their troubles, their sore privations, and the great sacrifices they have made for the Gospel’s sake. It never was a sacrifice to me. Anything I can do or suffer in the cause of the Gospel, is only like dropping a pin into the sea; the blessings, gifts, powers, honour, joy, truth, salvation, glory, immortality, and eternal lives, as far outswell anything I can do in return for such precious gifts, as the great ocean exceeds in expansion, bulk, and weight, the pin that I drop into it.”

One especially significant event was his first visit with the Prophet Joseph Smith. Brigham, his brother Joseph, and Heber C. Kimball stayed with family in Kirtland, Ohio, and soon made their way to the Smith home. They were informed that the Prophet was chopping wood. “We immediately repaired to the woods,” Brigham later explained, “where we found the Prophet, and two or three of his brothers, chopping and hauling wood. Here my joy was full at the privilege of shaking the hand of the Prophet of God, and received the sure testimony, by the Spirit of prophecy, that he was all that any man could believe him to be, as a true Prophet.” Brigham was always a true friend to the Prophet and was loyal without question.
In 1833, Brigham moved to Kirtland with his two daughters. “When I went to Kirtland,” he later said, “I had not a coat in the world, for previous to this I had given away everything I possessed, that I might be free to go forth and proclaim the plan of salvation to the inhabitants of the earth. Neither had I a shoe to my feet, and I had to borrow a pair of pants and a pair of boots.” At that time, Kirtland was a village of about thirteen hundred people, set in a beautiful location of rolling green hills near the Chagrin River. While there, he grew closer to the Prophet Joseph, continuing his gospel education. Brigham met Mary Ann Angell, a native of New York who was then living in Kirtland, and the two married on February 18, 1834. While Brigham labored in building homes, he spent most of his time preaching.

Although the Prophet Joseph and many of the Saints resided in Kirtland, about twelve hundred members of the Church had settled in Jackson County, Missouri, to help establish Zion there. Many difficulties arose for the Saints in Missouri, however. “There, an angry mob, led by a militant minister, destroyed the Mormon store and printing establishment, tarred and feathered the bishop, and finally, in November 1833, drove the Saints from their homes with whippings.
and plunder. Many houses were burned, live-stock was killed, and furniture and other domestic property were seized and carried away. Daniel Dunklin, the Missouri governor, promised to help the Saints get their homes back if they would provide him with help in doing so. The Prophet decided to recruit a group of men, called Zion’s Camp, to help. Always a staunch supporter of the Prophet, Brigham was one of the first to volunteer for the camp; he and Heber were chosen to be captains of their respective companies.

The march to Missouri was extremely difficult with little sleep, poor roads, hot weather, and unsanitary eating and drinking conditions. Many of the men complained to the Prophet about their circumstances. “We had grumblers in that camp,” Brigham said. “We had to be troubled with uneasy, unruly and discontented spirits. . . . Brother Joseph led, counselled and guided the company, and contended against those unruly, evil disposed persons.” By the time the men made it to Missouri, the governor had backed away from his promise, deciding not to help the Saints recover their homes. The men of Zion’s Camp received threats of violence but were spared when an approaching mob was stopped by a terrible storm within two miles of Zion’s Camp and had to turn back.
The company of Saints saw the hand of the Lord in this and were grateful for His protection. It was just a matter of days later, though, that cholera spread throughout the camp. Sixty-eight members of the camp were afflicted, and fourteen died. Joseph called the men together and told them that if they would humble themselves and covenant to follow his direction, the epidemic would be stopped. The men covenanted to be obedient, and the Prophet’s promise came true. On July 3, 1834, he discharged the group without their having to go to battle.

The Prophet had promised Brigham that if he would follow him to Missouri and keep his counsel, he would come back unharmed. Brigham did indeed return safely, but, sadly, some did not. The Prophet later spoke of how he had a vision in which he saw the men who had died in Zion’s Camp and how the Lord had cared for them. “Brethren, I have seen those men who died of the cholera in our camp; and the Lord knows, if I get a mansion as bright as theirs, I ask no more.”

In the eyes of some members of the Church at the time, Zion’s Camp failed in what was thought to be its purpose. However, it proved to be an important education for many men who would later be leaders in the Church. “Ask those brethren and sisters who have passed through scenes of affliction and suffering for years in this Church, what they would take in exchange for their experience, and be placed back where they were, were it possible,” Brigham said years later. “I presume they would tell you, that all the wealth, honors, and riches of the world could not buy the knowledge they had obtained, could they barter it away.” Brigham gained much from closely associating with the Prophet during this trying time and considered it an important beginning for learning how to lead the Saints. Regarding those who questioned the benefit of Zion’s Camp, Brigham proclaimed, “I told those brethren that I was well paid—paid with heavy interest—yea that my measure was filled to overflowing with the knowledge that I had received by travelling with the Prophet. When companies are led across the plains by inexperienced persons, especially independent companies, they are very apt to break into pieces, to divide up into fragments, become weakened, and thus expose themselves to the influences of death and destruction.”

Loyal Member of the Twelve Apostles

In February 1835, just a few months after Zion’s Camp had returned to Kirtland, Joseph Smith gathered together the veterans of the camp, along with other Church leaders, and announced that the time had come to organize the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Quorum of
the Seventy. Joseph called upon the Three Witnesses—Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris—to select the Twelve, and they called both Brigham and Heber to be members of the Quorum. Because the first Quorum of the Twelve was organized according to age, Elder Brigham Young was the third in the quorum, and Elder Heber C. Kimball was the fourth. Nine of the twelve men called to the Quorum had served with the Prophet Joseph in Zion’s Camp.

During the summer months, Elder Young served missions in the eastern United States, and for the rest of the year, he helped build up the Church in Kirtland and care for his wife and children. He was involved in painting and finishing the Kirtland Temple, working on the windows, and helping supervise the exterior masonry; later, he participated in the temple’s dedication. Such devotion to building of the first temple in this dispensation was not without sacrifice, for Elder Young found little time to support his family financially and had to rely on the Lord and the help of others. At this time, he was also involved in the School of the Prophets, where he received instruction in the gospel and other subjects, such as history and languages.

Despite the great blessings that flowed from having the temple in Kirtland, a troubling spirit of fierce contention spread throughout the village. Many members of the Church believed that Joseph was unwisely combining the spiritual with the secular and should not allow the Church to be involved in temporal affairs. They blamed him for “meddling” with a financial institution, the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Association, which ultimately failed. Brigham Young defended him and his inspired role as head of the Church against all critics—even certain members of the Twelve. He knew Joseph was not perfect, but he also knew he was a prophet. The unrest against the Prophet and those who supported him became so severe that Elder Young had to leave Kirtland under the cover of night for his own safety.

Not long thereafter, the Prophet, Elder Young, and many other Saints began settling in Far West, Missouri. Eventually, the governor of Missouri, Lilburn W. Boggs, issued his infamous “extermination order.” The Saints fled to Nauvoo, a new gathering place that the Prophet Joseph had designated for the members of the Church. After a short time, Elder Young and other members of the Twelve left for missions to Great Britain. Elder Young was extremely ill but refused to listen to his sister’s pleadings for him to wait until he was well. “I was determined to go to England or to die trying,” he said. “My firm resolve was that I would do what I was required to do in the Gospel of life and salvation, or I would die trying to do it.”
In April 1840, the Apostles in England “formally and unanimously” sustained Brigham Young as the President of the Twelve, a role he had filled since 1838.\(^9\) He quickly led his brethren in an extensive program of doing missionary work, publishing, and preparing to help the English Saints immigrate to America. Among their publications were an edition of the Book of Mormon, a hymnbook, and the \textit{Millennial Star}.\(^{30}\) After a year of hard work and continual spiritual development, President Young and his brethren had baptized thousands of people. The positive effects of this English mission for the Twelve blessed the Saints for years to come. “As a result of the mission to England, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles came of age precisely at the time its support and strength were needed most. Under Brigham Young’s direction, the Twelve had achieved unprecedented proselyting success and, for the first time, had become an effective agency of ecclesiastical administration.”\(^{31}\)

After the mission to England, the available members of the Twelve were called together by the Prophet. He announced that the time had come for that quorum to take additional responsibilities in overseeing the affairs of the Church. Also, during this time in Nauvoo, the Prophet instructed the Twelve on four new doctrines and practices: baptism for the dead, plural marriage, the full temple endowment, and the sealing of children to parents.\(^{32}\) As always, President Young supported the Prophet and followed his teachings, but Brigham found that the doctrine of plural marriage was an especially difficult concept. “I was not desirous of shrinking from any duty,” President Young later said about first hearing of the new practice, “nor of failing in the least to do as I was commanded, but it was the first time in my life that I had desired the grave, and I could hardly get over it for a long time.”\(^{33}\) After weeks of study and prayer, President Young accepted the doctrine and, with his wife’s consent, married his first plural wife, Lucy Ann Decker Seeley, in June 1842.\(^{34}\) He married a number of other plural wives throughout his life.

As President of the Quorum of the Twelve, Brigham Young was a very influential man with many responsibilities in Nauvoo. He was president of the quorum that had been charged by the Prophet to take care of such things as “directing missionary work and the work of the gathering” of the Saints, “managing the temporal affairs of the Church,” and “assisting in the building of the Nauvoo temple.”\(^{35}\) Around March 26, 1844, Joseph conducted a solemn meeting with the Twelve in which he announced that something important was going to happen soon—perhaps he would even be murdered. He bestowed upon them all the keys and powers that he held, thus ensuring the
authority needed for the future administration of the Church.\footnote{36} Just three months later, this sacred meeting proved to be a priceless treasure to the Saints and their future.

Receiving the Mantle of the Prophet

President Young was away on a mission in Boston when he found himself deeply sorrowful while sitting in a railway station on June 27, 1844. Though he did not know the reason for his “depression of spirit” at the time, he learned weeks later about the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum.\footnote{37} He returned to Nauvoo as quickly as he could, only to find Sidney Rigdon trying to persuade the Saints that he should lead the Church as its “guardian.” Sidney was a member of the First Presidency but had become unsupportive of the Prophet and had moved from Nauvoo. President Young did not wonder about the next course of action, however, because he understood that he and the Twelve held the priesthood keys necessary to lead the Church.

A miraculous event occurred when President Young stood to address the gathered Saints. Many in attendance received a “divine witness” that the mantle of the martyred Prophet had fallen upon him.\footnote{38} Many thought President Young sounded and even looked like Joseph as he spoke. In fact, there are at least 101 “written testimonies of people who say a transformation or spiritual manifestation occurred.”\footnote{39} As one of the witnesses to this amazing event, Benjamin F. Johnson wrote that “President Brigham Young arose and spoke. I saw him arise, but as soon as he spoke I jumped upon my feet, for in every possible degree it was Joseph’s voice, and his person, in look, attitude, dress and appearance was Joseph himself, personified; and I knew in a moment the spirit and mantle of Joseph was upon him. . . . I knew for myself who was now the leader of Israel. New confidence and joy continued to spring up within me.”\footnote{40} The people voted to sustain the Twelve as the leaders of the Church.

Though the Prophet Joseph was gone, his influence was forever with President Young. Brigham wrote one of his daughters about feeling Joseph’s presence in spirit though not in body: “This much I can say—the spirit of Joseph is here, though we cannot enjoy his person. Through the great anxiety of the church, there was a conference held last Thursday. The power of the Priesthood was explained and the order thereof, on which the whole church lifted up their voices and hands for the twelve to move forward and organize the church and lead it as Joseph had. This is our indispensable duty. The brethren feel well to think the Lord is still mindful of us as a people.”\footnote{41} Not only
Brigham Young, about 1864, Charles R. Savage, photographer
Courtesy of Neal A. and Colleen Hinckley Maxwell
did President Young rely on the experiences he had with the Prophet’s teachings and character but he also received counsel from him in spiritual experiences. In one dream, for example, the Prophet Joseph appeared to President Young and taught him the importance of the people’s being humble and following the Spirit. “Tell the people to be humble and faithful,” the Prophet told him, “and be sure to keep the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away from the small still voice; it will teach you what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the kingdom. Tell the brethren to keep their hearts open to conviction, so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them, their hearts will be ready to receive it.”

Leading the Saints to the Great Basin

The increasing hostility toward the Church made it clear that the Saints would not be able to stay in Nauvoo much longer. Joseph Smith had spoken of finding a place for them to dwell peacefully west of the Rocky Mountains, and, after much study and discussion, the Twelve decided to lead the Saints in an exodus to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Believing it imprudent to wait, President Young led a group in the snowy cold of February 1846. In leading his people on such a dangerous exodus, he did all he could to help them. “I would not go on until I saw all the teams up,” he wrote about their departure from Nauvoo. “I helped them up the hill with my own hands.”

During the difficult journey west, having just seen his people forced out of their homes without governmental protection, Brigham received word that U.S. President James Polk had authorized the enlistment of five hundred Mormon men to serve in the U.S. war with Mexico. He realized that this was an opportunity not only to serve the country but also to earn much-needed funds for the exodus west, and he personally visited men and boys to encourage them to volunteer for what would be called the “Mormon Battalion.” Although members of the Mormon Battalion are honored today for “their willingness to fight for the United States, for their march of some two thousand miles from Council Bluffs to California, for their participation in the early development of the West, and for making the first wagon road over the southern route from California to Utah in 1848,” they were also honored by President Young for blessing the Church.

After staying in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, for the winter of 1846–47, President Young headed for the Salt Lake Valley with an advance party. Because he was ill, he did not arrive in the valley with the advance party but came a few days later. On July 24, 1847, he
saw the valley and confirmed that it was the right place for the Saints to settle. He identified the spot where the temple would be built and began directing the settling of the valley in such endeavors as farming, surveying, and building. In August, President Young led a group of men back to Winter Quarters to help the families there prepare for the trek to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Later, President Young refused to take praise for the great accomplishment of guiding so many people so far: “I do not wish men to understand I had anything to do with our being moved here, that was the providence of the Almighty; it was the power of God that wrought out salvation for this people, I never could have devised such a plan.”

After President Young returned to Winter Quarters, the Twelve met several times for “lengthy discussions and prayer sessions” concerning how the leadership of the Church should be organized. After much deliberation, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles decided to organize a First Presidency, with Brigham Young as President, in December 1847. They sustained his selection of Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards as counselors. Three weeks later, the Iowa members of the Church sustained the new First Presidency.

Though President Young had presided over the Church as President of the Twelve, he now presided over the Church as its President. Years before, when Brigham Young was a new convert to the Church, the Prophet Joseph made what must have seemed to be an amazing prophecy at the time. The Prophet said that “the time will come when brother Brigham Young will preside over this Church.” Similarly, Levi Hancock bore his testimony that “one day he was chopping a Beech log with Joseph and saw Br Brigham for the first time. Joseph remarked to him before Brigham came within hearing ‘There is the greatest man that ever lived to teach redemption to the world and will yet lead this People.’”

President of the Church

One of the greatest challenges President Young faced was settling the Great Basin area and thereby establish a place for the Saints to gather. “We came to these mountains because we had no other place to go,” he said. “We had to leave our homes and possessions on the fertile lands of Illinois to make our dwelling places in these desert wilds, on barren, sterile plains, amid lofty, rugged mountains.” His great strength as a leader and organizer proved invaluable in meeting these challenges. He led the wide variety of efforts needed to bring in the newly arrived Saints successfully and established the many programs and systems they needed to start their new lives. And always, despite his
many heavy responsibilities, President Young was a caring father and husband, actively participating in all the facets of his large family’s life. One of his daughters, Clarissa, shared a particular account of what it was like to have Brigham Young as her father: “Father usually discussed the topics of the day, and then we would all join in singing some familiar songs, either old-time ballads or songs of religious nature. Finally we would all kneel down while Father offered the evening prayers. One distinct phrase in his prayer I shall never forget it so impressed my childish mind was—‘Bless the church and Thy people, the sick and the afflicted and comfort the hearts that mourn.’”

In 1849, President Young convened a constitutional convention that created the “state of Deseret”—a vast area, comprising most of present-day Utah and Nevada and portions of Arizona, Oregon, Wyoming, Idaho, Colorado, New Mexico, and California. He was elected governor of this provisional state and considered one of his most important goals to be getting Deseret admitted as a state in the United States. As a first response in 1850, the U.S. Congress changed the name from “Deseret” to “Utah” and established a territorial government for it instead of granting statehood. President Young attempted to gain statehood for the territory several times, but Utah was not granted such status until after his death.

President Young established the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company in 1849 to help with the immigration of thousands of members of the Church to the area. His vision of settling the Great Basin was not a matter of simply occupying the land; he saw a paradise and had the determination to build it. “Let the people build good houses, plant good vineyards and orchards, make good roads,” President Young taught his people, and “build beautiful cities in which may be found magnificent edifices for the convenience of the public, handsome streets skirted with shade trees, fountains of water, crystal streams, and every tree, shrub and flower that will flourish in this climate, to make our mountain home a paradise and our hearts wells of gratitude to the God of Joseph.”

In 1851, U.S. President Millard Fillmore appointed President Young as superintendent of Indian Affairs of Utah Territory and governor. Though President Young certainly had the support of the people of Utah, he faced many problems working with the appointees who were assigned by the federal government. He did not see them as sympathetic to the Church or to the needs and interests of the people of the territory. Many of the individuals who had been appointed by the federal government in various capacities returned to the East with
Charles R. Savage, photographer, Brigham Young, 1876.
Widstoe Collection, J. Willard Marriott Library.
complaints about President Young and the Saints in general. In addition, the public announcement in 1852 about the practice of plural marriage caused even greater concern among leaders of the United States. By 1857, Washington DC was filled with "rumors and allegations charging the Mormons with murder, destruction of legal records, religiously biased courts, and conspiracy with the native American Indians to promote conflict against non-Mormon immigrants."56

As a result of these allegations and rumors, U.S. President James Buchanan decided to replace President Young with a federally appointed governor and to send part of the U.S. Army to Utah to put down any Mormon rebellion. He did not inform President Young of the military action, so when soldiers were observed heading for the territory, President Young assumed the worst and told his people to prepare to defend their homes. "They never did anything against Joseph till they had ostensibly legalized a mob; and I shall treat every army and every armed company that attempts to come here as a mob," President Young told the members of the Church.57 Before any battle became necessary, however, a peaceful solution was agreed upon, and the army occupied Camp Floyd, about forty miles from Salt Lake City. President Young was replaced as governor, and the army left at the start of the Civil War in 1861.
President Young was first and foremost a disciple of Christ. He was a committed member of the kingdom and was willing to serve faithfully and fully in whatsoever role he was called upon to assume. Above such titles as governor or such duties as organizer and colonizer, he was the President of the Church. His organizational abilities and spiritual gifts were great blessings to the Saints. He divided the city into wards and appointed bishops, counseled with countless people, encouraged the Saints to develop their communities as places of education and culture,
and sent groups of missionaries to many countries. He gave hundreds of sermons in which he shared his recollections of the Prophet Joseph, his commitment to the restored gospel, and his great views of the doctrines of the kingdom. Always searching to bless the Saints, President Young encouraged the organization of Relief Societies in each ward and established both the University of Deseret (later named the University of Utah) and Brigham Young Academy (later named Brigham Young University). Though he did not live to see the completion of the Salt Lake Temple, he dedicated the temple in St. George, Utah.

President Young taught his people the gospel with great enthusiasm and plainness. He believed in a practical gospel to make a person’s life better not only in the next life but also in this one as well. “Life is for us, and it is for us to receive it to-day, and not wait for the millennium. Let us take a course to be saved to-day, and, when evening comes, review the acts of the day, repent of our sins, if we have any to repent of, and say our prayers; then we can lie down and sleep in peace until the morning, arise with gratitude to God, commence the labours of another day, and strive to live the whole day to God and nobody else.”

On August 29, 1877, a great period of Church history ended with President Brigham Young’s death. He had been suffering from what doctors now believe to be an infection caused by a ruptured appendix. As one of his daughters wrote, when “he was placed upon the bed in front of the window he seemed to partially revive, and opening his eyes, he gazed upward, exclaiming: ‘Joseph! Joseph! Joseph!’ and the divine look in his face seemed to indicate that he was communicating with his beloved friend, Joseph Smith, the Prophet. His name was the last word he uttered.” Brigham Young was the man the Lord raised up to accomplish overwhelming tasks in an especially difficult time—and accomplish them he did. It is little wonder that he is known as the American Moses, the Lion of the Lord.

Notes


15. Arrington, American Moses, 37.
19. Arrington, American Moses, 42–45.
30. Arrington, American Moses, 81.
32. Arrington, American Moses, 100–2.
34. Arrington, American Moses, 102.
41. Brigham Young to Vilate Young, August 11, 1844, Brigham Young Papers, Church Archives, Salt Lake City, as quoted in Holzapfel and Shupe, *My Servant Brigham*, 72.


43. Young, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young*, 142.


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$19.95, ISBN 978-0-8425-2652-4
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“We may not fully value [these gifts] or recognize the significance of them in our lives and in our basket of overflowing blessings.”