"When we are in dire circumstances and want to cry 'Where art Thou?' it is imperative that we remember He is right there with us—where He has always been!"

Lessons from Liberty Jail
Elder Jeffrey R. Holland
ON THE COVER:
A pillar of light in Antelope Canyon symbolizes God’s presence in our lives.

“When we are in even the most troubling of times, ‘Let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God.’”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

COVER PHOTO BY LUCAS LÖFFLER
As we complete the final issue of the tenth volume of the *Religious Educator*, I express gratitude to the many individuals who have joined us on this adventure.

We begin this issue with a thoughtful talk from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, who established the RSC in 1975.

Increasingly, Latter-day Saints are learning about an archaeological site in Israel purporting to provide evidence for the story at the beginning of the Book of Mormon. We asked Jeffrey R. Chadwick, the only Latter-day Saint trained in biblical archaeology who is also currently working on a dig in Israel, to provide a thoughtful review of the arguments and the evidence.

We then present several articles rooted in the Book of Mormon text: Zachary Nelson’s “The Rod of Iron in Lehi’s Dream,” Deanna Draper Buck’s “Internal Evidence of Widespread Literacy in the Book of Mormon,” Anthony Sweat’s “Active Learning and the Savior’s Nephite Ministry,” and “Peacable Followers of Christ.” Next, Allan Rau helps us with his article, “Fostering Conversion through Faith-Inspired Actions.” John Hilton adds another excellent contribution with “See That Ye Do Them.” BYU continues its efforts to extend its influence beyond the Church audience; in an interview, we introduce readers to James E. Faulconer, who is making a difference in this area.

As we conclude our study of the Doctrine and Covenants in Gospel Doctrine, we present several articles explaining medical terms and illnesses in the nineteenth century. Nathan Welch, my former research assistant and now a medical doctor, has examined Joseph Smith’s 1813 illness. Joseph B. Hinckley, another research assistant who is now in law school, has written “Saints and Sickness: Medicine in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters,” which serves as an introduction to a piece called “Medical Terms Used by Saints in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters, 1839–48,” by Douglas C. Heiner, Evan L. Ivie, and Teresa Lovell. Ivie and Heiner add another helpful study, “Deaths in Early Nauvoo, 1839–46, and Winter Quarters, 1846–48.”

Scott C. Esplin considers how hard it must have been for those early Kirtland Saints to move to Ohio and then on to Missouri. Susan Easton Black then provides insights to the University of Nauvoo. You will then find part 2 of our roundtable discussion on the Doctrine and Covenants with content experts J. Spencer Fluhman, Steven C. Harper, Grant Underwood, and Robert J. Woodford.

N. T. Wright is well known among New Testament scholars and many Protestants, but less known among the Saints. To rectify that, Bob Millet provides us an excellent introduction to one of Wright’s recent works, *Surprised by Hope* (2008), giving us some food for thought.

Finally, we introduce you to Chad H. Webb, the new director of Seminaries and Institutes, with an interview conducted by Kenneth L. Alford.

I hope you will find something of value in this issue. Enjoy!

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel
Editor
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Lessons from Liberty Jail

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland is a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

This address is from a Church Educational System fireside for young adults on September 7, 2008, at BYU.

My beloved young friends, it is a thrill for Sister Holland and for me to be with you tonight for this worldwide satellite broadcast. It’s always a thrill to be in the Marriott Center. I wish it were possible for us to be in each of your individual locations, seeing you personally and being able to shake your hands. We haven’t figured out a way to do that yet, but we send our love and greeting to all of you wherever you are in the world. In spite of the vastness of our global audience, we hope all of you are individually able to feel the love we have for you tonight and that each of you can gain something from our message that is applicable in your personal lives.

The Prophet in Liberty Jail

One of the great blessings of our assignments as General Authorities is the chance to visit members of the Church in various locations around the world and to glean from the history that our members have experienced across the globe. In that spirit I wish to share with you tonight some feelings that came to me during a Church assignment I had last spring when I was assigned to visit the Platte City stake in western Missouri, here in the United States.

The Platte City Missouri Stake lies adjacent to the Liberty Missouri Stake, now a very famous location in Church history encompassing
several important Church history sites, including the ironically named Liberty Jail. From your study of Church history, you will all know something of the experience the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brethren had while imprisoned in that facility during the winter of 1838–39. This was a terribly difficult time in our history for the Church generally and certainly for the Prophet Joseph himself, who bore the brunt of the persecution in that period. Indeed, I daresay that until his martyrdom five and a half years later, there was no more burdensome time in Joseph’s life than this cruel, illegal, and unjustified incarceration in Liberty Jail.

Time does not permit a detailed discussion of the experiences that led up to this moment in Church history, but suffice it to say that problems of various kinds had been building ever since the Prophet Joseph had received a revelation in July of 1831 designating Missouri as the place “consecrated for the gathering of the saints” and the building up of “the city of Zion” (D&C 57:1, 2). By October of 1838, all-out war seemed inevitable between Mormon and non-Mormon forces confronting each other over these issues. After being driven from several of the counties in the western part of that state and under the presumption they had been invited to discuss ways of defusing the volatile situation that had developed, five leaders of the Church, including the Prophet Joseph, marching under a flag of truce, approached the camp of the Missouri militia near the small settlement of Far West, located in Caldwell County.

As it turned out, the flag of truce was meaningless, and the Church leaders were immediately put in chains and placed under heavy guard. The morning after this arrest, two more Latter-day Saint leaders, including the Prophet’s brother Hyrum, were taken prisoner, making a total of seven in captivity.

Injustice swiftly moved forward toward potential tragedy when a military “court” convened by officers of that militia ordered that Joseph Smith and the six other prisoners all be taken to the public square at Far West and summarily shot. To his eternal credit, Brigadier General Alexander Doniphan, an officer in the Missouri forces, boldly and courageously refused to carry out the inhumane, unjustifiable order. In a daring stand that could have brought him his own court-martial, he cried out against the commanding officer: “It is cold-blooded murder. I will not obey your order. . . . And if you execute these men, I will hold you responsible before an earthly tribunal, so help me God.”

In showing such courage and integrity, Doniphan not only saved the lives of these seven men but endeared himself forever to Latter-day Saints in every generation.
Their execution averted, these seven Church leaders were marched on foot from Far West to Independence, then from Independence to Richmond. Parley P. Pratt was remanded to nearby Daviess County for trial there, and the other six prisoners, including Joseph and Hyrum, were sent to Liberty, the county seat of neighboring Clay County, to await trial there the next spring. They arrived in Liberty on December 1, 1838, just as winter was coming on.

The jail, one of the few and certainly one of the more forbidding of such structures in that region, was considered escape proof, and it probably was. It had two stories. The top or main floor was accessible to the outside world only by a single small, heavy door. In the middle of that floor was a trapdoor through which prisoners were then lowered into the lower floor or dungeon. The outside walls of the prison were of rough-hewn limestone two feet thick, with inside walls of 12-inch oak logs. These two walls were separated by a 12-inch space filled with loose rock. Combined, these walls made a formidable, virtually impenetrable barrier four feet thick.

In the dungeon the floor-to-ceiling height was barely six feet, and inasmuch as some of the men, including the Prophet Joseph, were over six feet tall, this meant that when standing they were constantly in a stooped position, and when lying it was mostly upon the rough, bare stones of the prison floor covered here and there by a bit of loose, dirty straw or an occasional dirty straw mat.

The food given to the prisoners was coarse and sometimes contaminated, so filthy that one of them said they “could not eat it until [they] were driven to it by hunger.”2 On as many as four occasions they had poison administered to them in their food, making them so violently ill that for days they alternated between vomiting and a kind of delirium, not really caring whether they lived or died. In the Prophet Joseph’s letters, he spoke of the jail being a “hell, surrounded with demons . . . where we are compelled to hear nothing but blasphemous oaths, and witness a scene of blasphemy, and drunkenness and hypocrisy, and debaucheries of every description.”3 “We have . . . not blankets sufficient to keep us warm,” he said, “and when we have a fire, we are obliged to have almost a constant smoke.”4 “Our souls have been bowed down”5 and “my nerve trembles from long confinement.”6 “Pen, or tongue, or angels,” Joseph wrote, could not adequately describe “the malice of hell” that he suffered there.7 And all of this occurred during what, by some accounts, was considered then the coldest winter on record in the state of Missouri.
It is not my purpose to make this a speech about the sorrow and difficulty these men confronted in Liberty Jail, so let me put a few photos on the screen and conclude this little introductory portion of my message. I promise I have something else in mind to say.

Here is a photo of the jail pretty much as it stood at the time Joseph and his brethren were incarcerated there.

Here is a photo taken some years later when officers and historians from the Church visited the location. I’m not sure if that fellow on top is trying to get out or get in.
Here is a cross section of the Church’s reconstruction of the prison, which can now be seen at our visitors’ center there. Note the two-story arrangement with a rope and bucket, the only link between the dungeon and the upper floor.

Here is a painting by Liz Lemon Swindle showing Joseph in prayer. Note the forlorn, longing look on Joseph’s face.
And here’s a portrayal by Greg Olsen showing how Joseph may have written some of the revelations that came during this imprisonment.

And this is my final photo, which leads me to the real message I have come to give tonight.

A Prison-Temple Experience

Most of us, most of the time, speak of the facility at Liberty as a “jail” or a “prison”—and certainly it was that. But Elder Brigham H. Roberts, in recording the history of the Church, spoke of the facility as a temple, or, more accurately, a “prison-temple.” Elder Neal A. Maxwell used the same phrasing in some of his writings. Certainly it
lacked the purity, the beauty, the comfort, and the cleanliness of our true temples, our dedicated temples. The speech and behavior of the guards and criminals who came there was anything but templelike. In fact, the restricting brutality and injustice of this experience at Liberty would make it seem the very antithesis of the liberating, merciful spirit of our temples and the ordinances that are performed in them. So in what sense could Liberty Jail be called a “temple”—or at least a kind of temple—in the development of Joseph Smith personally and in his role as a prophet? And what does such a title tell us about God’s love and teachings, including where and when that love and those teachings are made manifest?

As we think on these things, does it strike us that spiritual experience, revelatory experience, sacred experience can come to every one of us in all the many and varied stages and circumstances of our lives if we want it, if we hold on and pray on, and if we keep our faith strong through our difficulties? We love and cherish our dedicated temples and the essential, exalting ordinances that are performed there. We thank heaven and the presiding Brethren that more and more of them are being built, giving more and more of us greater access to them. They are truly the holiest, most sacred structures in the kingdom of God, to which we all ought to go as worthily and as often as possible.

But tonight’s message is that when you have to, you can have sacred, revelatory, profoundly instructive experience with the Lord in any situation you are in. Indeed, let me say that even a little stronger: You can have sacred, revelatory, profoundly instructive experience with the Lord in the most miserable experiences of your life—in the worst settings, while enduring the most painful injustices, when facing the most insurmountable odds and opposition you have ever faced.

Now let’s talk about those propositions for a moment. Every one of us, in one way or another, great or small, dramatic or incidental, is going to spend a little time in Liberty Jail—spiritually speaking. We will face things we do not want to face for reasons that may not have been our fault. Indeed, we may face difficult circumstances for reasons that were absolutely right and proper, reasons that came because we were trying to keep the commandments of the Lord. We may face persecution; we may endure heartache and separation from loved ones; we may be hungry and cold and forlorn. Yes, before our lives are over we may all be given a little taste of what the prophets faced often in their lives. But the lessons of the winter of 1838–39 teach us that every experience can become a redemptive experience if we remain bonded to our Father in Heaven through that difficulty. These difficult lessons teach us that
man’s extremity is God’s opportunity, and if we will be humble and faithful, if we will be believing and not curse God for our problems, He can turn the unfair and inhumane and debilitating prisons of our lives into temples—or at least into a circumstance that can bring comfort and revelation, divine companionship and peace.

Let me push this just a little further. I’ve just said that hard times can happen to us. President Joseph Fielding Smith, grandnephew of the Prophet Joseph and grandson of the incarcerated Hyrum, said something even stronger than that when he dedicated the Liberty Jail Visitors’ Center in 1963. Alluding to the kind of history we’ve reviewed tonight and looking on the scene where his grandfather and granduncle were so unjustly held, he said perhaps such things have to happen—not only can they happen, perhaps they have to. Said he: “As I have read the history of those days, the days that went before and days that came after, I have reached the conclusion that the hardships, the persecution, the almost universal opposition [toward the Church at that time] were necessary. At any rate they became school teachers to our people. They helped to make [them] strong.”

Lessons from Liberty Jail

Well, without trying to determine which of these kinds of experiences in our life are “mandatory” and which are “optional” but still good for us, may I suggest just a very few of the lessons learned at Liberty—those experiences that were “school teachers” to Joseph and can be to us, experiences that contribute so much to our education in mortality and our exaltation in eternity.

In selecting these lessons I note yet another kind of blessing that came out of this adversity. To make the points that I am now going to try to make in my message to you, I have drawn directly upon the revelatory words that came from the lips of Joseph Smith during this heartbreaking time, words that we now have canonized as sacred scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants. I guess we’re not supposed to have favorite scriptures, and I have enough of them that you won’t be able to pin me down to one or two, but certainly any list of my favorite scriptures would have to include those written from the darkness of Liberty Jail.

So what we instantly learn is that God was not only teaching Joseph Smith in that prison circumstance but He was teaching all of us, for generations yet to come. What a scriptural gift! And what a high price was paid for it! But how empty would our lives as Latter-day Saints be if we did not have sections 121, 122, and 123 of the
Doctrine and Covenants. If you have not read them recently, I want you to read them tonight, or tomorrow at the latest—no later. That is your homework assignment, and I will be checking on you! They are contained in total on a mere six pages of text, but those six pages will touch your heart with their beauty and their power. And they will remind you that God often “moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.”11 In any case, He certainly turned adversity into blessing in giving us those sacred writings and reflections, so pure, noble, and Christian in both tone and content, yet produced in such an impure, ignoble, and unchristian setting.

1. Everyone Faces Trying Times

Now then, three lessons from Liberty Jail: May I suggest that the first of these is inherent in what I’ve already said—that everyone, including (and perhaps especially) the righteous, will be called upon to face trying times. When that happens we can sometimes fear God has abandoned us, and we might be left, at least for a time, to wonder when our troubles will ever end. As individuals, as families, as communities, and as nations, probably everyone has had or will have an occasion to feel as Joseph Smith felt when he asked why such sorrow had to come and how long its darkness and damage would remain. We identify with him when he cries from the depth and discouragement of his confinement: “O God, where art thou? . . . How long shall thy hand be stayed . . . ? Yea, O Lord, how long shall [thy people] suffer . . . before . . . thy bowels be moved with compassion toward them?” (D&C 121:1–3).

That is a painful, personal cry—a cry from the heart, a spiritual loneliness we may all have occasion to feel at some time in our lives.

Perhaps you have had such moments already in your young lives. If so, I hope you have not had too many. But whenever these moments of our extremity come, we must not succumb to the fear that God has abandoned us or that He does not hear our prayers. He does hear us. He does see us. He does love us. When we are in dire circumstances and want to cry “Where art Thou?” it is imperative that we remember He is right there with us—where He has always been! We must continue to believe, continue to have faith, continue to pray and plead with heaven, even if we feel for a time our prayers are not heard and that God has somehow gone away. He is there. Our prayers are heard. And when we weep He and the angels of heaven weep with us.

When lonely, cold, hard times come, we have to endure, we have to continue, we have to persist. That was the Savior’s message in the
parable of the importuning widow (see Luke 18:1–8; see also Luke 11:5–10). Keep knocking on that door. Keep pleading. In the meantime, know that God hears your cries and knows your distress. He is your Father, and you are His child.

When what has to be has been and when what lessons to be learned have been learned, it will be for us as it was for the Prophet Joseph. Just at the time he felt most alone and distant from heaven’s ear was the very time he received the wonderful ministration of the Spirit and wonderful, glorious answers that came from his Father in Heaven. Into this dismal dungeon and this depressing time, the voice of God came, saying, “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes” (D&C 121:7–8).

Even though seemingly unjust circumstances may be heaped upon us and even though unkind and unmerited things may be done to us—perhaps by those we consider enemies but also, in some cases, by those who we thought were friends—nevertheless, through it all, God is with us. That is why we had our marvelous choir sing tonight Sarah Adams’s traditional, old Christian hymn “Nearer, My God, to Thee” with that seldom-sung fourth verse, which they sang so beautifully:

Out of my stony griefs
Bethel I’ll raise;
So by my woes to be
Nearer, my God, to thee.\(^{12}\)

We are not alone in our little prisons here. When suffering, we may in fact be nearer to God than we’ve ever been in our entire lives. That knowledge can turn every such situation into a would-be temple. Regarding our earthly journey, the Lord has promised: “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up” (D&C 84:88). That is an everlasting declaration of God’s love and care for us, including—and perhaps especially—in times of trouble.

2. Even the Worthy Will Suffer

Secondly, we need to realize that just because difficult things happen—sometimes unfair and seemingly unjustified things—it does not mean that we are unrighteous or that we are unworthy of blessings or that God is disappointed in us. Of course sinfulness does bring suffering, and the only answer to that behavior is repentance. But sometimes
suffering comes to the righteous, too. You will recall that from the depths of Liberty Jail when Joseph was reminded that he had indeed been “cast . . . into trouble,” had passed through tribulation and been falsely accused, had been torn away from his family and cast into a pit, into the hands of murderers, nevertheless, he was to remember that the same thing had happened to the Savior of the world, and because He was triumphant, so shall we be (see D&C 122:4–7). In giving us this sober reminder of what the Savior went through, the revelation from Liberty Jail records, “The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (D&C 122:8).

No. Joseph was not greater than the Savior, and neither are we. And when we promise to follow the Savior, to walk in His footsteps and be His disciples, we are promising to go where that divine path leads us. And the path of salvation has always led one way or another through Gethsemane. So if the Savior faced such injustices and discouragements, such persecutions, unrighteousness, and suffering, we cannot expect that we are not going to face some of that if we still intend to call ourselves His true disciples and faithful followers. And it certainly underscores the fact that the righteous—in the Savior’s case, the personification of righteousness—can be totally worthy before God and still suffer. In fact, it ought to be a matter of great doctrinal consolation to us that Jesus, in the course of the Atonement, experienced all of the heartache and sorrow, all of the disappointments and injustices that the entire family of man had experienced and would experience from Adam and Eve to the end of the world in order that we would not have to face them so severely or so deeply. However heavy our load might be, it would be a lot heavier if the Savior had not gone that way before us and carried that burden with us and for us.

Very early in the Prophet Joseph’s ministry, the Savior taught him this doctrine. After speaking of sufferings so exquisite to feel and so hard to bear, Jesus said, “I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they [and that means you and I and everyone] might not suffer if they would repent” (D&C 19:16). In our moments of pain and trial, I guess we would shudder to think it could be worse, but the answer to that is clearly that it could be worse and it would be worse. Only through our faith and repentance and obedience to the gospel that provided the sacred Atonement is it kept from being worse.

Furthermore, we note that not only has the Savior suffered, in His case entirely innocently, but so have most of the prophets and other great men and women recorded in the scriptures. Name an Old Testament or Book of Mormon prophet, name a New Testament
Apostle, name virtually any of the leaders in any dispensation, including our own, and you name someone who has had trouble.

My point? If you are having a bad day, you’ve got a lot of company—very, very good company. The best company that has ever lived.

Now, don’t misunderstand. We don’t have to look for sorrow. We don’t have to seek to be martyrs. Trouble has a way of finding us even without our looking for it. But when it is obvious that a little time in Liberty Jail waits before you (spiritually speaking), remember these first two truths taught to Joseph in that prison-temple. First, God has not forgotten you, and second, the Savior has been where you have been, allowing Him to provide for your deliverance and your comfort.

As the prophet Isaiah wrote, the Lord has “graven thee upon the palms of [His] hands,” permanently written right there in scar tissue with Roman nails as the writing instrument. Having paid that price in the suffering that They have paid for you, the Father and the Son will never forget nor forsake you in your suffering (see Isaiah 49:14–16; see also 1 Nephi 21:14–16). They have planned, prepared, and guaranteed your victory if you desire it, so be believing and “endure it well” (D&C 121:8). In the end it “shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7), and you will see “everlasting dominion” flow unto you forever and ever “without compulsory means” (D&C 121:46).

3. Remain Calm, Patient, Charitable, and Forgiving

Thirdly, and tonight lastly, may I remind us all that in the midst of these difficult feelings when one could justifiably be angry or reactionary or vengeful, wanting to return an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, the Lord reminds us from the Liberty Jail prison-temple that “the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only [or ‘except’] upon the principles of righteousness” (D&C 121:36). Therefore, even when we face such distressing circumstances in our life and there is something in us that wants to strike out at God or man or friend or foe, we must remember that “no power or influence can or ought to be maintained [except] by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; . . . without hypocrisy, and without guile” (D&C 121:41–42; emphasis added).

It has always been a wonderful testimony to me of the Prophet Joseph’s greatness and the greatness of all of our prophets, including and especially the Savior of the world in His magnificence, that in the midst of such distress and difficulty they could remain calm and patient, charitable and forgiving—that they could even talk that way, let alone
live that way. But they could, and they did. They remembered their covenants, they disciplined themselves, and they knew that we must live the gospel at all times, not just when it is convenient and not just when things are going well. Indeed, they knew that the real test of our faith and our Christian discipleship is when things are not going smoothly. That is when we get to see what we’re made of and how strong our commitment to the gospel really is.

Surely the classic example of this is that in the most painful hours of the Crucifixion the Savior could say, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). That is a hard thing to ask when we’re hurting. That is a hard thing to do when we’ve been offended or are tired or stressed out or suffering innocently. But that is when Christian behavior may matter the most. Remember, “the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled [except] upon the principles of righteousness.” And do we need the powers of heaven with us at such times! As Joseph was taught in this prison-temple, even in distress and sorrow we must “let [our] bowels . . . be full of charity towards all men . . . ; then [and only then] shall [our] confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and . . . the Holy Ghost shall be [our] constant companion” (D&C 121:45–46).

Remaining true to our Christian principles is the only way divine influence can help us. The Spirit has a near-impossible task to get through to a heart that is filled with hate or anger or vengeance or self-pity. Those are all antithetical to the Spirit of the Lord. On the other hand, the Spirit finds instant access to a heart striving to be charitable and forgiving, long-suffering and kind—principles of true discipleship. What a testimony that gospel principles are to apply at all times and in all situations and that if we strive to remain faithful, the triumph of a Christian life can never be vanquished, no matter how grim the circumstance might be. How I love the majesty of these elegant, celestial teachings taught, ironically, in such a despicable setting and time.

**Do All Things Cheerfully**

As a valedictory to the lessons from Liberty Jail, I refer to the last verse of the last section of these three we have been referring to tonight. In this final canonized statement of the Liberty Jail experience, the Lord says to us through His prophet, Joseph Smith, “Therefore, dearly beloved brethren [and sisters, when we are in even the most troubling of times], let us *cheerfully* do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed” (D&C 123:17; emphasis added).
What a tremendously optimistic and faithful concluding declaration to be issued from a prison-temple! When he wrote those lines, Joseph did not know when he would be released or if he would ever be released. There was every indication that his enemies were still planning to take his life. Furthermore, his wife and children were alone, frightened, often hungry, wondering how they would fend for themselves without their husband and father. The Saints, too, were without homes and without their prophet. They were leaving Missouri, heading for Illinois, but who knew what tragedies were awaiting them there? Surely, to say it again, it was the bleakest and darkest of times.

Yet in these cold, lonely hours, Joseph says let us do all we can and do it cheerfully. And then we can justifiably turn to the Lord, wait upon His mercy, and see His arm revealed in our behalf.

What a magnificent attitude to maintain in good times or bad, in sorrow or in joy!

Blessing and Testimony

My beloved young friends, as part of my concluding testimony to you tonight, I wish to give you a blessing. It seems to me that as our apostolic witnesses are taken into the world, we have two opportunities and, indeed, perhaps obligations. One is to testify and bear witness, as I have been trying to do and will conclude in doing. The other is to bless—as the ancient Apostles did when the Savior invited them to do as He had done, except that it would be in all the world.

So for every one of you in attendance tonight—here in this vast auditorium or in other locations around the world—I bless every one of you, each one of you in your individual circumstances, as if my hands were on your head. I offer that to you as honestly as I offer my testimony. I bless you in the name of the Lord that God does love you, does hear your prayers, is at your side, and will never leave you.

I bless the brethren that you—that we—will be worthy of the priesthood we bear, that we will live true to the discipleship to which we have been called, in that great order, the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God. I bless you that we will really be like the Master—that we will think more like He thinks, that we will talk more like He talks, and that we will do more of what He did. I bless you brethren as you strive to be faithful that you will have all the blessings of the priesthood, many of which we have quoted tonight from these very sections from the Doctrine and Covenants.

I bless the sisters within this audience and within the sound of my voice. I would have you know how much we cherish you, how much
God cherishes you, and how much the flag of faith has been flown by the sisters of this Church from the beginning. In every generation, it would seem, from the beginning of time down to the present hour and beyond, so often it has been the women in our lives—our grandmothers, our mothers, our wives, our daughters, our sisters, our granddaughters—who have taken that torch of faith and that banner of beautiful living and have carried gospel principles wherever it would take them, against whatever hardship, into their own little equivalent of Liberty Jails and difficult times. Sisters, we love you and honor you and bless you. We ask that every righteous desire of your heart, tonight and forever, be answered upon your head and that you will walk away from this devotional with the understanding and the knowledge firmly in your heart as to how much God and heaven and the presiding Brethren of this Church love you and honor you.

I salute you young adults of this Church in this great CES congregation and say that the future is in your hands. Those of us of my generation have to, in the very near future, pass the baton to you. God bless you to face those times with the valor, the honesty, and the integrity we have spoken of here tonight.

In closing, I testify that the Father and the Son do live. And I testify that They are close, perhaps even closest via the Holy Spirit, when we are experiencing difficult times. I testify (and as our closing musical number, “My Kindness Shall Not Depart from Thee,” will testify, quoting the prophet Isaiah) that heaven’s kindness will never depart from you, regardless of what happens (see Isaiah 54:7–10; see also 3 Nephi 22:7–10). I testify that bad days come to an end, that faith always triumphs, and that heavenly promises are always kept. I testify that God is our Father, that Jesus is the Christ, that this is the true and living gospel—found in this, the true and living Church. I testify that President Thomas S. Monson is a prophet of God, our prophet for this hour and this day. I love him and sustain him as I know you do. In the words of the Liberty Jail prison-temple experience, my young friends, “Hold on thy way. . . . Fear not . . . , for God shall be with you forever and ever” (D&C 122:9). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

7. Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, April 4, 1839, in *Personal Writings*, 463–64; spelling and capitalization standardized.
8. See Roberts, *Comprehensive History*, 1:521 chapter heading; see also 1:526.
Khirbet Beit Lei and the Book of Mormon: An Archaeologist’s Evaluation

Jeffrey R. Chadwick

In 1961, Israeli military engineers were constructing a security road on the Israeli side of the former West Bank border with Jordan, a few kilometers east of Moshav Lachish. As their bulldozer cut a path through the hilly countryside, it suddenly cracked into an ancient Judean tomb carved into the bedrock. The machine broke away the roof of the tomb’s entry chamber before the crew realized what had happened. But the tomb’s two burial chambers were spared, and on the benches of those chambers were eight ancient human skeletons. Tombs of this type are called burial caves by Israeli archaeologists. Several drawings and inscriptions in ancient Hebrew were crudely cut into the tomb’s entry chamber walls, including the divine name Jehovah (Yahuweh) and the ancient city name Jerusalem (Yerushalem). Because of this, the burial cave soon became known to archaeologists as the Jerusalem Cave. But a decade later some Latter-day Saints nicknamed it the “Lehi Cave.”

The term “Lehi Cave” was inspired by the abandoned ruins of a medieval Arab village called Khirbet Beit Lei located a few hundred meters from the tomb. The Arabic word khirbet means “ruin.” The name Beit Lei (بَيْتٌ لِي) is pronounced “bait lay” in Arabic; the term lei (لي) means “twisting.”\(^1\) But some Church members interested in the cave became convinced that the place must anciently have been known as Lehi. Theories developed about how the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi and his family might have been connected to the site. Since the
early 1970s many thousands of members have been told about a Lehi Cave and a place called Beit Lehi in classes and firesides, in commentaries and video presentations, and on the Internet. Hundreds of Latter-day Saint tourists to Israel have been taken to the ruins at Khirbet Beit Lei and told that a “city of Lehi” may have existed there, that the prophet Lehi himself had resided in the area, and that the family of Lehi had hidden themselves in the nearby burial cave. Eager to find archaeological support for Nephi’s account, many Church members accepted these claims as facts. But are they?

The questions surrounding the Khirbet Beit Lei site and discoveries are essentially issues of archaeology. Until now, however, none of the commentaries or media proposing connections between the Book of Mormon and Beit Lei have been evaluated by an archaeologist with expertise in the land of Israel. Accordingly, the Religious Studies Center and the Maxwell Institute at Brigham Young University asked if I would revisit, research, and evaluate Khirbet Beit Lei and the nearby Jerusalem Cave to address the claims made by parties who
attempt to connect the sites to the narrative in 1 Nephi. As this article proceeds, I will first relate those claims, quoting from the proponents’ own publications, video presentations, and Internet sites. Then I will survey the publications and remarks of professional archaeologists and epigraphers concerning the Jerusalem Cave and Khirbet Beit Lei. It will also be necessary to review all the existing Latter-day Saint literature concerning Beit Lehi and Lehi Cave issues, including views both pro and con. Finally, my own conclusions on these issues will be presented in a question-and-answer format.

Origin of the Lehi Cave and Beit Lehi Ideas

Virtually all commentaries promoting the idea of a Lehi Cave and a Beit Lehi area identify Israeli anthropologist Joseph Ginat as the source of these proposals. Ginat studied for his doctorate at the University of Utah in the early 1970s and received a PhD in cultural anthropology in 1975. He specialized in Arab culture and served in several capacities as an adviser on Arab affairs for various Israeli governments. He taught anthropology as a professor at the University of Haifa for many years. Since his first experience in Utah, Ginat has been a friend of the Latter-day Saint community. By all accounts, it was Ginat who, in the early 1970s, introduced his Latter-day Saint friends (including W. Cleon Skousen and Glenn J. Kimber) to the notion that Khirbet Beit Lei was to be identified with the biblical site called Lehi in the Old Testament story of Samson (see Judges 15:8–19) and that the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi and his family were also linked to the area. Referring to the Beit Lei area as “Lehi,” Skousen published the following concerning Ginat’s views:

Dr. Ginat pointed out that not only could the ruins of the ancient community of Lehi have been the residence of the prophet Lehi but the nearby cave very well could have been the hideout for Nephi, Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Zoram. Dr. Ginat feels that after the death of Laban the sons of Lehi would have felt compelled to go into hiding until the state of alarm had subsided. They would therefore have chosen some extremely obscure place with which they were familiar and where they knew they could obtain food and water. Dr. Ginat states that the cave of Beit Lehi fits all of these requirements in every respect.

He further emphasizes that the Book of Mormon says these men were gone so long that their own mother gave up hope of their ever returning and went into mourning, thinking they were dead. This circumstance confirms the idea that they were in hiding for a long time and could have written the inscriptions on the wall of the Beit Lehi cave indicating that eventually Jerusalem would be redeemed.2
A slightly different version of Ginat’s views appeared on beitlehi.org, a Web site that was maintained by Kimber (Skousen’s son-in-law), currently the most prominent of the Beit Lehi advocates. According to Kimber, Ginat “wondered if this cave could be the ‘cavity in a rock’ [sic] where Nephi said he and his brothers took refuge when they were being pursued by Laban as recorded in 1 Nephi 3:13–27.” The site referred to the tomb near Khirbet Beit Lei as a “treasure cave” but did not mention that it was constructed as a man-made sepulchre for the burial of human remains. Continuing the story of Ginat’s fascination with the site, Kimber’s account reports a meeting with a local Arab:

Joseph Ginat’s interest concerning the cave caused him to go back to Israel and investigate the site. While doing so he was surprised to meet a Bedouin who told him that just above this cave, about ¼ of a mile away, were the remains of an ancient oak tree. This was the place where, according to the traditions and the legends of the Bedouins, a Prophet named Lehi sat while he blessed and judged the people of Ishmael as well as the people of Judah. The Bedouin said that Lehi lived many years before Muhammad. The Arab people built a wall of large rocks around the remains of the tree to protect it as a sacred spot. Upon returning to Salt Lake City, Joseph excitedly shared this information with W. Cleon Skousen as well as others in the area.

Neither Kimber nor Skousen clarifies whether the Arab man used the Arabic name Lei (pronounced “lay”) or the Hebrew name Lehi (pronounced “lekhìj”). In Skousen’s commentary the name of the Arab man is given, along with his hometown: “Where does the origin of the name Beit Lehi come from? Bedouins, the nomad inhabitants of the area, whose traditions and legends are transmitted from generation to generation, have an interesting version. One of those settled Bedouins, Mahmoud Ali Hassan Jaouui, who lives in the neighboring village of Idna and who dwells with his flock during the spring months in a cave of a nearby hill, said that the place is called after an Israelite prophet by the name of Lehi who in ancient days was sitting under an old oak tree judging his people.”

The story of the “Lehi Cave” and the “ruin of the house of Lehi” spread quickly throughout the Latter-day Saint community during the 1970s and 1980s, mostly by word of mouth in fireside talks and classroom presentations, but also in seemingly authoritative publications. Skousen and Kimber eventually produced a high-quality film presentation entitled The Lehi Cave, released for sale to the public in 1986 as a VHS videocassette through Living Scriptures, Inc. Skousen stars in the thirty-minute film, teaching a group of tourists on-site at Khirbet Beit
Lei and the Jerusalem Cave; Joseph Ginat is featured on-site in the film as well. The fact that the cave is a man-made tomb is not mentioned at all in the presentation; only the cave’s inscriptions and drawings receive attention. The film suggests that while the prophet Lehi lived in Jerusalem, the Beit Lei area must have been his land of inheritance, that his ancestors had lived at the site, and that Lehi himself spent time there, prophesying to the people of the area. The film also implies that Lehi’s “treasure” was hidden in the Lehi Cave and speculates that Nephi and his brothers hid in the cave after the slaying of Laban (though neither of these notions is mentioned in the text of 1 Nephi). To provide background for these propositions, the film suggests that Lehi’s ancestors originally hailed from the ancient tribal area of Manasseh in the Northern Kingdom of Israel but had left Israel around 721 BC (incident to the Assyrian conquest of Samaria) if not earlier, moving to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and settling in the Beit Lei area, which, it is suggested, must have been called Lehi from the time of Samson centuries earlier. Lehi himself was born at Jerusalem, the film maintains, because his family suddenly left Beit Lehi to move to the capital at the time of the Assyrian attack on Judah (701 BC) when all other cities in Judah were destroyed. At Lehi’s birth he was given his name because of his family’s former residence at Beit Lehi, and the film compares this with Jesus being known as Jesus of Nazareth.

The film also features Joseph Ginat interviewing a local Arab gentlemen identified as “Shiekh [sic] Muhammad al-Asam,” who is asked for the origin of the name Khirbet Beit Lei. Speaking in Arabic, al-Asam answers that it is named for Nebi Lei, which means “the prophet Lei” (al-Asam pronounces the name as “lay,” but in the dubbed English translation Ginat renders it as “nabi lah-ee,” quite deliberately altering the vowels and pronouncing the name with two syllables). The film’s announcer adds that “Arabs believe the prophet Lehi brought his people here to teach them.” The film also reports that Skousen and Ginat felt that a church would have been built at the site anciently in order to honor the memory of the prophet Lehi and that the spot chosen was where Israeli archaeologists Joseph Patrich and Yoram Tsafrir discovered a Byzantine-era chapel during a brief excavation in 1983. Tsafrir is also featured in the film, discussing the significance of the chapel. Skousen is shown teaching a group of tourists at the site as they examine the chapel’s exquisite mosaic tile floor, which features Greek inscriptions and artistic renditions, including a ship with a mast and a sail.

A partial summary of the various claims made by Beit Lehi and Lehi Cave proponents includes the following:
1. The Arabic term Lei (pronounced “lay”) is the equivalent of the Hebrew term Lehi (לחי, pronounced “lêkhi”).
2. The Hebrew term Lehi (לחי) means “cheek” or “jaw,” and thus the Arabic term Lei must also mean “cheek” or “jaw.”
3. The place-name Khirbet Beit Lei means “ruin of Beit Lehi.” Since the word beit means “house,” the total English translation would be “ruin of the house of Lehi.”
4. The Khirbet Beit Lei area was so named because it was anciently called Lehi in the biblical story of Samson (see Judges 15).
5. An old well a short distance from the ruins of Khirbet Beit Lei is identified as En-hakkore (see Judges 15:19), a spring at the biblical site of Samson’s Lehi.
6. Khirbet Beit Lei and the wider surrounding area should more properly be referred to as Beit Lehi, or the House of Lehi.
7. The prophet Lehi’s ancestors had moved to Judah from Israel and lived at the Beit Lehi site, perhaps in a “city of Lehi” where the ruins at Khirbet Beit Lei now sit.
8. Lehi’s ancestors moved to Jerusalem from Beit Lehi at the time the Assyrians were destroying all the other cities of Judah (701 BC).
9. Lehi himself was named after the place Beit Lehi, just as some other biblical personalities carried the name of a place of origin (such as Jesus of Nazareth).
10. Though Lehi himself lived at Jerusalem, he spent time at Beit Lehi and had a residence there.
11. Some local Arabs assert that the origin of the name Khirbet Beit Lei is from an ancient prophet named Nebi Lei who judged his people at the site.
12. The prophet Lehi would have sat under an oak tree at Khirbet Beit Lei and judged his people and prophesied unto them.
13. The Beit Lei area was actually Lehi’s land of inheritance where he deposited his gold, silver, and other wealth in a treasure cave.
14. The burial cave near Khirbet Beit Lei was the specific location where Lehi hid his silver and gold.
15. Lehi’s family would have passed by Khirbet Beit Lei and the burial cave on their journey to the Red Sea.
16. Lehi’s sons, Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi, hid in the burial cave when pursued by Laban (see 1 Nephi 3:13–27).
17. Lehi’s four sons and Zoram hid in the burial cave after the death of Laban to avoid capture by Judean forces (an idea not reported in the text of 1 Nephi).
18. Someone in Lehi’s party, either himself or his son Nephi, was the source of the seemingly prophetic inscriptions found inside the burial cave.

19. The crude drawings of ships found in the burial cave were also made by Lehi’s party, perhaps in anticipation of their future travel by ship to a land of promise.

20. The Byzantine chapel at Khirbet Beit Lei, which also featured a mosaic picture of a ship, was built to honor the memory of the prophet Lehi.

21. Archaeological excavation will eventually reveal a City of Lehi or a settlement called Beit Lehi at the site of Khirbet Beit Lei, dating to 600 BC.

The Archaeological Discoveries at the Jerusalem Cave and Khirbet Beit Lei

A detailed description of the archaeological discoveries at Khirbet Beit Lei and the Jerusalem Cave is now in order. Khirbet Beit Lei is called Ḥorvat Beit Loya or simply Beit Loya (בית לויה) in Hebrew by Israelis, not “Beit Lehi.”¹ (As previously mentioned, the name Beit Laya [ّليّ] is pronounced “bait lay” in Arabic; the term lei [ّليّ] means “twisting.”)² The site is located in the southeastern Shephelah region (low hills) of Israel, about five kilometers southeast of the Beit Guvrin and Tel Mareshah area. Its elevation is about four hundred meters above sea level, and it is accessed by driving eight kilometers east from Lachish.

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¹ (As previously mentioned, the name Beit Laya [ّليّ] is pronounced “bait lay” in Arabic; the term lei [ّليّ] means “twisting.”)
² The site is located in the southeastern Shephelah region (low hills) of Israel, about five kilometers southeast of the Beit Guvrin and Tel Mareshah area. Its elevation is about four hundred meters above sea level, and it is accessed by driving eight kilometers east from Lachish.

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Fig. 2. Plan of the Jerusalem Cave tomb complex (after Naveh, 1963).
toward Amatzia, then turning north, leaving the paved highway, and travelling along a series of unpaved farm and security roads. The ruins at the site are typical of a medieval Arab village. The area lies in an Israeli military firing zone (for weapons training) and is consequently uninhabited. The Jerusalem Cave is a few hundred meters south of the ruins.

Shortly after its discovery in 1961, the tomb which came to be known by Israelis as the Jerusalem Cave (or the so-called Lehi Cave) was excavated by Joseph Naveh on behalf of the Israel Department of Antiquities. The tomb consisted of a rectangular entry chamber with vertical walls, high cornice decorations, and a floor that measured 2 × 3 meters. Two burial chambers branched off from the entry chamber, one to the south and one to the west (see fig. 2). Both burial chambers measured just under three meters square, and both featured a triple bench design.

Human bones of eight individuals were found intact in deposition on the benches, along with a bronze ring, a bronze earring, and a bronze clasp. No other grave goods were found in the cave. Three skeletons were found in the southern chamber: a young male on the right bench, an older individual of undetermined sex on the center bench, and a middle-aged female on the left bench. The bronze earring was found near this woman’s skull. Five skeletons were found in the western chamber: a young female and a child on the right bench, a middle-aged female and a child on the center bench (the bronze clasp was found near this woman’s skull), and an adolescent of undetermined sex on the left bench. A small juglet was found outside the tomb’s entry, and sherds of a cooking pot were found in the soil accumulated on the entry chamber floor; these ceramics dated to the early Persian Period (537–332 BC). The triple-bench style of the tomb is well recognized as a late Iron Age II design, dating in general from 722 BC to 586 BC. From the entry chamber into the two burial chambers were two high doorways. The outline of a high doorway for a planned third burial chamber (branching north) was found in the entry chamber’s north wall, but the planned chamber was never cut out and constructed.

A number of short Hebrew inscriptions were found on the walls of the entry chamber, including four variations of the word **a•r•r** (アッレ), meaning “cursed,” the implication being perhaps that robbers or intruders entering the tomb would be cursed. Three longer Hebrew inscriptions, designated by Naveh with the letters A, B, and C, became a major focus of interest. Inscription A, consisting of two lines, and Inscription B, consisting of a single line below Inscription A, were both
found on the west wall of the entry chamber (see fig. 3). Inscription C was found on the south wall of the entry chamber.

The three inscriptions were transcribed and translated by Naveh as follows:

A. יָהָוֶה יִלְיָהָאֵלְיָהֵל הָרָג הָרְג יִרְיַהָד לְוָלֵלֶה יֵרְשַלֶם

Yahveh (is) the God of the whole earth; the mountains of Judah belong to him, to the God of Jerusalem.9

B. הָמַרֵיה יָהָה הָנַעְנַה נֹה נֹה יִהָוֶה

The (Mount of) Moriah Thou hast favoured, the dwelling of Yah, Yahveh.10

C. הָרָשָע [י] הָוָה

[Ya]hveh deliver (us)!11

The italicized transliterations of Naveh’s Hebrew transcriptions above are based on those provided by Frank Moore Cross Jr. In 1970, Cross, an expert young epigrapher and professor of Hebrew and oriental languages and literature at Harvard University, offered transcriptions and translations of the three inscriptions. His were quite different from those of Naveh in the case of Inscriptions A and B. In his publication, Cross used only italic transliterations of the Hebrew
text he proposed, along with dot word dividers. He read and vocalized the two lines of Inscription A as three poetic elements, “a rubric and a parallelistic bicolon symmetrically balanced in syllable count.”\(^\text{12}\) He also rendered Inscription B into English in two parallel lines. Cross’s readings almost immediately became the authoritative version of the inscriptions throughout the scholarly community:

\[
\begin{align*}
A. & \quad [\text{?}\text{n}\text{y} . \text{y}h\text{w}b \text{[.]} \text{l}\text{hykh} . \text{r}\text{?} \text{h}} \\
& \quad \text{?r} . \text{y}h\text{d}b \text{w}\text{g}\text{l} \text{y} . \text{yr} \text{s}l\text{m}} \\
& \quad \text{’}\text{?}\text{n}\text{i} \text{y}a\text{h}w\text{e} \text{’}\text{?l}\text{h}\text{?}\text{h}k\text{?} \text{I am Yahweh thy God;} \\
& \quad \text{’}\text{e}\text{r}\text{s} \text{’}\text{?r}\text{e} \text{y}h\text{b}\text{d}\text{a} \text{I will accept the cities of Judah,} \\
& \quad \text{w}\text{g}\text{?’}\text{a}\text{l}\text{t}\text{?} \text{y}r\text{’}\text{s}l\text{?}l\text{?} \text{And will redeem Jerusalem.}^{\text{13}} \\
B. & \quad \text{nq}\text{h} \text{y}h \text{’}l \text{’}n\text{m} . \text{nq}\text{h} \text{y}h \text{y}h\text{w}b \text{Absolve (us) O merciful God!} \\
& \quad \text{Absolve (us) O Yahweh!}^{\text{14}} \\
C. & \quad \text{h}\text{w}\text{s} \text{[y]} \text{h}w\text{b} \text{Deliver (us) O Lord}^{\text{15}}
\end{align*}
\]

French scholar and expert epigrapher Andre Lemaire, professor at the Sorbonne in Paris, offered different transcriptions and translations of the Jerusalem Cave inscriptions in 1976. These appeared only in French and remained essentially unknown to Latter-day Saint parties interested in the Beit Lei area. Lemaire read the three inscriptions as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
A. & \quad \text{y}h\text{w}b \text{’l}\text{h}\text{y} \text{k}\text{l} \text{b}\text{’r}\text{s} \text{h} \text{YHWH is the God of all the earth;} \\
& \quad \text{r}\text{y} \text{y}h\text{w}\text{d}b \text{l’l}\text{h} \text{y} \text{y}r\text{s}l\text{m} \text{the moun}- \\
& \quad \text{t}\text{n}\text{i} \text{s of Judah belong to the God of Jerusalem.}^{\text{16}} \\
B. & \quad \text{pqd} \text{y}h\text{w}b \text{’n}\text{m} . \text{nq}\text{h} \text{y}h \text{y}h\text{w}b \text{Intervene, merciful YHWH; Absolve} \\
& \quad \text{Yh-YHWH.}^{\text{17}} \\
C. & \quad \text{h}\text{w}\text{s} \text{[y]} \text{h}w\text{b} \text{Save, YHWH.}^{\text{18}}
\end{align*}
\]

(Some twenty-five years after Lemaire’s contribution appeared, Ziony Zevit, professor of biblical literature and Northwest Semitic languages at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, offered a fourth set of transcriptions and translations of the burial cave inscriptions. Zevit’s)
readings and renderings, published in 2001, differed significantly from the earlier efforts:

A. $yboh\ 'lhy\ glb\ 'rsb$

YHWH, my god, exposed/laid bare his land.

$r\ ybd\ lw\ 'lyrslm$

A terror he led for his own sake to Jerusalem.\(^{19}\)

B. $hmqr\ yd\ byh\ nqh\ yd\ yboh$

The source smote the hand.
Absolve (from culpability) the hand, YHWH.\(^{20}\)

C. $hwsh\ 'bw$  

Save. Destruction.\(^{21}\)

In his 1963 assessment, Naveh dated the inscriptions to around 700 BC and attributed them to the period during the reign of King Hezekiah when Judah was attacked by the Assyrian forces of Sennacherib.\(^{22}\) In 1970, however, Cross dated the inscriptions to at least a century later than that, insisting that they could be no earlier than the sixth century BC.\(^{23}\) For a few years Cross’s dates prevailed over Naveh’s among the most scholarly observers, but this was changed in 1976 by Lemaire’s expert assessment, which dated the inscriptions on paleographic grounds to the 700 BC horizon, just as Naveh had originally proposed.\(^{24}\) Zevit’s in-depth analysis in 2001 took the same position, which is that the inscriptions must be dated to the period of the 701 BC Assyrian attack on Judah.\(^{25}\)

In addition to the inscriptions, six drawings were found on the walls of the entry chamber. These included depictions of three human figures, two ships, and a four-sided enclosure with intersecting lines abutted by a less-defined shape. The human figure on the west wall was the best drawn of the three. It is about 19 cm in height and seems to be depicted in a robe and some sort of headgear. The figure has been interpreted as a soldier, perhaps in a stance of prayer (see fig. 4).

The poorly drawn human figure on the north wall is about 32 cm in height and has been interpreted as holding or playing a lyre (see fig. 5).

The human figure on the east doorjamb of the south wall, the least describable of the drawings, is about 43 cm in height and has been interpreted as being in a stance of prayer (see fig. 6).

The two ships, depicted together in a single scene on the south wall, are each about 20 cm long and feature masts and square sails (see fig. 7).

In terms of dating the drawings, which were likely made at the same time as the inscriptions, no characteristic of the human figures or
the ships can be exclusively attributed to the period around 700 BC or to the period after 600 BC.

The drawing of the four-sided enclosure on the north wall measures roughly 25 cm square and features intersecting horizontal and vertical lines and a smaller four-sided figure at the intersection of those lines. The Hebrew word *orer* (אֹרֶר), meaning “cursed one,” was inscribed near the upper right rounded corner of the enclosure (see fig. 8).

The four-sided enclosure was referred to by Naveh as one of “various circles” among the drawings. In a 1963 footnote, he attributed to Yigael Yadin the suggestion that it might be a schematic depiction of an Assyrian camp. Cross and Lemaire offered no suggestions regarding the drawing. In 2001 Zevit offered a well-developed explanation that the four-sided enclosure was a schematic map of the Judean fortress city of Lachish, and the more rounded entity at the right was a depiction of the Assyrian siege ramp built against the southwest side of the tel on which the city sat. A number of aspects of the drawing support this conclusion. The smaller enclosure within the four-sided enclosure would very likely depict the large palace fortress of Lachish (Level III) at the time of the Assyrian attack in 701 BC. The perpendicular lines within the four-sided enclosure probably depict main streets in the Level III town, the western part of which has been partially revealed by excavation. And the orientation of the map, with east at the top, is in keeping with the well-known biblical idiom where east is the forward direction, while north and south are at the left and right respectively.
Zevit also noted that the depiction reflects a vista from the hill directly west of Lachish, a vantage from which the Assyrian reliefs of Lachish, which were discovered on the walls of Sennacherib's Nineveh palace, were probably also made. Given the close proximity of Lachish to the Jerusalem Cave, Zevit’s suggestions seem quite plausible.

The ruins of the ancient village at Khirbet Beit Lei are located just a few hundred meters north of the Jerusalem Cave. However, archaeological investigation has determined that there is no connection between the burial cave and the ancient village during the periods of its occupation. The ruin was surveyed by Israeli archaeologist Yehuda Dagan during the late 1970s as part of a general survey of the Judean hill country. Dagan’s survey determined that the village was first settled during the Hellenistic period (beginning 332 BC) and continued through the Roman and Byzantine periods and into the Early Arab period (seventh to eighth centuries AD), after which it was abandoned for several centuries. The village was reoccupied during the Mameluke period (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries AD), but was permanently abandoned thereafter. Dagan found no pottery samples which would suggest that the site had been a settlement during Iron Age II (the period to which the nearby burial cave is dated).

A Byzantine-period church complex was excavated at Khirbet Beit Lei in two short seasons (December 1983 and May 1986) by Joseph Patrich and Yoram Tsafrir of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Part of the financing for this operation was provided by a private Latter-day Saint group from the United States, organized by Skousen, who was very interested in seeing the excavation of the village ruins take place. The church building itself was 20.4 meters long and 13.9 meters wide and featured a spectacular mosaic floor with numerous geometric, floral, and animated artistic motifs. One of the depictions
was of a sail-driven ship with a single fisherman aboard. Human and animal depictions in the mosaics were disfigured, probably by order of Muslim rulers during the eighth century, following the Islamic conquest of the region. Greek inscriptions were also among the depictions in the mosaic floor. The dedicatory inscription, found within a mosaic circle, reads, “Azizos and Cyriacos, with their blessing, dedicated the sanctuary.” Another inscription states, “Epanagia dedicated the mosaic to the repose and memory of Aetius.” Yet another reads, “The Lord Jesus Christ, give repose to your maidservant Theclon.” A fourth, found near the baptismal font of the church, simply says, “Light of the righteous in all” (based on Proverbs 13:9), and a fifth reads, “The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in” (based on Psalm 121:8). An olive press, a wine press, and a Byzantine burial cave were also uncovered near the church.30

A project to excavate additional parts of the village began in 2005 under the direction of Israeli archaeologists Oren Gutfeld and Yakov
The project is heavily funded by the private Beit Lehi group, organized and directed by Glenn Kimber. Volunteer labor is provided by young Latter-day Saints who periodically travel to Israel with Kimber. As of this writing (late 2008), no publication of any of the findings of this project has occurred in any recognized archaeological journal, including the Israel Antiquities Authority’s *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* series. In the past, amateur descriptions of some of the excavation activities and findings at the site have appeared on two now-discontinued Web sites sponsored by Kimber (http://www.beitlehi.com and http://www.beitlehi.org). However, in November of 2008 a concise and professionally written report of the May and October 2008 excavation seasons at Khirbet Beit Lei written by Gutfeld and Michal Haber (an area supervisor at the excavation) appeared on another of Kimber’s Web sites, http://www.beitlehifoundation.org. The report details subterranean finds from the Hellenistic period (third and second centuries BC) as well as the early Roman period (first century BC and first century AD) and a building that may have been in use in the early Roman period. The main architectural components of the village ruins date from the Mameluke period (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries AD). Interestingly, Gutfeld and Haber suggest that the site came under ancient Jewish control shortly before 100 BC, during the time of John Hyrcanus’s rule over Judea, suggesting that the site, like nearby Mareshah, had been controlled by Hellenistic Gentiles prior to that time. No finds whatsoever were mentioned as dating to the Iron Age periods. The fact that no remains at the site date from the period of the kingdom of Judah (tenth to sixth centuries BC, Iron Age II), combined with the suggestion that the earliest Jewish control of the site only began around 100 BC (lasting only until the Roman war against Judea, which ended in AD 70), suggest that Jewish occupation of the site was relatively short lived.

In August of 2008, excavation codirector Yakov Kalman accompanied the author of this article on an extensive personal tour of the Khirbet Beit Lei excavation site, highlighting and explaining all of the project’s finds. These included an impressive subterranean olive oil pressing installation and a large subterranean columbarium (a man-made dovecote), both dating to the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The ruins visible above ground, both those excavated and those awaiting excavation, are dated to the Mameluke period (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries AD), and no pottery nor other finds of any kind date earlier than the Hellenistic period (which is to say that there are no remains and no evidence whatsoever that the site was a settlement prior
to 332 BC). When asked specifically about pottery or other remains from the Iron Age II periods, Kalman answered that not even a single sherd of Iron Age II pottery had been recovered anywhere on the site. His description paralleled that of Gutfeld and Haber’s 2008 report, as well as that of Dagan’s earlier survey at the site: “The survey revealed that the ruin had been inhabited from the Hellenistic to the Mameluke period. No remains of an Iron Age settlement were found.”

Latter-day Saint Publications and Media about Khirbet Beit Lei

Having covered the brief history and results of archaeological exploration at the Jerusalem Cave and Khirbet Beit Lei, let us return to what has been said in publications and media produced over the years by Latter-day Saint parties interested in the site.

The very first treatment on the subject of Beit Lehi for a Latter-day Saint audience was prepared by Israeli anthropologist Joseph Ginat. Entitled “The Cave at Khirbet Beit Lei,” it was delivered as a paper at a BYU symposium in October of 1971, then published in the Newsletter and Proceedings of the Society for Early Historical Archaeology in April of 1972. In the essay, Ginat specifically identified the Beit Lei site as the place called Lehi in the story of Samson, noting the account in Judges 15. He insisted that “‘Lei’ and ‘Lehi’ are equivalent,” asserting that “the word lehi (lei) means ‘cheek’ in both Hebrew and Arabic,” and concluded that “the name Khirbet Beit Lei means ‘Ruin of the House of Lehi.’”

With regard to the cave, however, Ginat did not discuss its primary function as a burial site, glossing over the issue by saying only that the site’s original excavator, Naveh, “concludes that this cave is a tomb.” Instead, Ginat’s focus was on the inscriptions and drawings found on the walls of the tomb’s entry chamber. Citing the translations offered in 1970 by Cross, who identified one of inscriptions as “the citation of a lost prophecy,” Ginat suggested they were “written there by someone fleeing before the Babylonian invaders who destroyed Judah and its capital city in 587 BC—perhaps even by a prophet or his secretary escaping from Jerusalem.” Ginat’s conclusion was that “if we add together the inscriptions, the praying figure, and the ships, the sum of them all indeed seems significant, especially in this particular cave, located down from Jerusalem and in the fields of the ancient House of Lehi (Lei).”

The obvious implication for Ginat’s Latter-day Saint audience, that the Beit Lei area must be connected with the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi, his family, “the land of his inheritance” (1 Nephi 2:4),
and his sons hiding themselves in “the cavity of a rock” (1 Nephi 3:27) is noted by the editor of the *Newsletter* (Ross T. Christensen) in a paragraph following Ginat’s essay.41

The account of the “treasure cave” at the “house of Lehi” and Ginat’s discovery of the Arab sage who spoke of an ancient prophet at the site spread throughout the Latter-day Saint community during the early 1970s. Within a year of the publication of Ginat’s essay, Latter-day Saint writers were spreading the word. In 1973, a two-page summary of issues surrounding the Lehi Cave and proposed Book of Mormon connections was included in LaMar C. Berrett’s impressive and groundbreaking volume entitled *Discovering the Biblical World*. Under the heading “Jerusalem Cave (Lehi Cave), *Khirbet Beit Lei (Bayt Layy)*,” Berrett clearly identified the cave as a burial site and summarized the analysis of its inscriptions from both Naveh and Cross. (The latter had used the spelling “Bayt Layy” in his 1970 article.)42 Berrett noted Cross’s “speculation that one inscription is the citation of a lost prophecy and that the companion inscriptions were written by a refugee fleeing the Chaldeans who conquered Judah and destroyed Jerusalem.” Berrett also included Cross’s specific suggestion “that we should suppress the temptation to consider the oracle and the petitions the work of a prophet or his scribe fleeing Jerusalem.” But Berrett also linked the site to Book of Mormon references about Lehi fleeing Jerusalem, Lehi’s sons fleeing from Laban, and his sons hiding in the cavity of a rock.43

In 1974, reports of Beit Lehi and the Lehi Cave found their way into the *Ensign*, the official magazine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.44 An article entitled “Archaeology Reveals Old Testament History” by Ross T. Christensen and Ruth R. Christensen, which surveyed a few biblically connected sites and finds in Israel, included a short description of the inscriptions and drawings from the tomb near Khirbet Beit Lei.45 The Christensens also equated Beit Lei with the biblical place Lehi in the Samson story (see Judges 15:9), and mentioned the idea of the Beit Lei area having been the prophet Lehi’s land of inheritance (see 1 Nephi 3:16) and the cave having been “the cavity of a rock” where Lehi’s sons hid from Laban (1 Nephi 3:27).46

In 1978, Vernon W. Mattson’s small book *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Important Discoveries* included a short chapter on Khirbet Beit Lei, repeating the earlier propositions.47

By 1982, however, Berrett had reconsidered the wisdom of linking Beit Lei to the story of Lehi in the Book of Mormon. Having spent a considerable amount of time and experience teaching and traveling in
Israel, he prepared a paper entitled “The So-Called Lehi Cave” which pointed out weaknesses he felt existed in the claims of Beit Lehi advocates. The seven-page, single-spaced paper circulated as a FARMS reprint and was the first genuine critique of the Lehi Cave theories. In it, Berrett reviewed the findings in the burial cave, including the skeletal remains and the drawings and inscriptions, citing the publications by both Naveh and Cross. Berrett then explored problems in linking the burial cave, its location, its drawings, and its inscriptions to the account of 1 Nephi. He reported his visits to the site in Israel and his conversations with two local Arab men (Mahmud Ali Hassan Giawi and Nimer Suleiman Bashir) who also believed that the ruins at Beit Lei were named for “an ancient prophet named ‘Lei’ [who] judged his people in that locality.” Though he seemed to accept the idea that the names Lei and Lehi were equivalent, Berrett concluded that the totality of his research caused him to regard “any connection between this burial cave and the Book of Mormon [as] highly unlikely.”

A 1985 essay published by William A. Johnson in Sunstone also took issue with much of what was being spread around the Latter-day Saint community regarding Beit Lei. Entitled “Lessons Learned from Lehi’s Cave,” Johnson’s amateur assessment briefly reviewed the discovery and findings connected with the Jerusalem Cave, as well as a variety of Mormon claims that were being made about the site by the mid-1980s. He accepted without objection the notion that the Arabic Lei was the equivalent of the Hebrew Lehi, but also contrasted some of the arguments of Ginat and Berrett. Johnson concluded that “whether or not Lehi stayed in a cave in Khirbet Beit Lei is arguable. What is not arguable, however, is that many of the claims made about Lehi’s Cave have been exaggerated.”

Lehi Cave advocates responded strongly and impressively in 1986 with the production and release of the previously mentioned thirty-minute video presentation entitled The Lehi Cave, which featured Skousen and Ginat and highlighted not only the burial cave but also the initial excavation finds at the Byzantine chapel. Thousands of copies of that video have been sold. But just two years after the film’s debut, a major scholarly figure in the story of the Jerusalem Cave responded.

In November of 1988 a number of letters about the Book of Mormon appeared in the “Queries and Comments” section of the widely circulated popular magazine Biblical Archaeology Review. Though BAR, as it is commonly called, is not a Latter-day Saint publication, the discussion was specifically Book of Mormon–oriented. One of the
letters inquired about “Beit Lehi” and the burial cave inscriptions. The response by editor Hershel Shanks was informational and cautious. In dealing with the place-name, he noted, “The name of the site is not Beit Lehi . . . but Beit Lei, or, in its older Arabic form, Bayt Layy.”

Shanks then added a response to the question prepared by Professor Cross himself, whose 1970 translation of the inscriptions had appeared in materials produced by Beit Lehi advocates. Cross was quite direct in his assessment of the name issue:

As you know, the site of Khirbet Beit Lei (older Layy) was connected by Mormon authors with Biblical Lehi (see Judges 15) and ultimately with the Mormon figure Lehi. The connection of the name Lei with Lehi is based on a linguistic blunder, however. The Arabic Lei, classical Arabic Layy, is based on a root lwy, and means “bend, twist,” etc. Hebrew Lehi, on the other hand, is based on the Semitic root lływ, meaning “jaw.” And lływ and lływ cannot be confused in Semitic. The h is a strong laryngeal spirant in Semitic, somewhat like ch in German Buch or ch in Scottish loch. Neither Naveh nor I would for a moment support the equation layy = leływ, any more than we would confuse (Robert E.) Lee with (John) Locke. I should add that when lecturing at Brigham Young University I discussed these issues in detail and made clear my name was not to be associated with such popular, unscholarly claims.

Several years later this information had not seemed to affect the discussion of the site in Latter-day Saint circles. In 1996, Berrett revised his book Discovering the World of the Bible with a new coauthor, D. Kelly Ogden. The title of their concise summary dropped the term “Lehi Cave” and simply read “Jerusalem Cave, Khirbet Beit Lei (Bayt Layy).” The short report is decidedly more skeptical than the 1973 version, more along the lines of Berrett’s 1982 FARMS report, and finds no evidence for any connection of the site with the story of Lehi in the Book of Mormon. But no mention is made of the fact that Arabic lei (lAway) is not the same as Hebrew lehi. The same is true for a short article by Berrett in the Journal of Book of Mormon Studies in 1999. Like the 1982 FARMS report, the 1999 article was entitled “The So-Called Lehi Cave” and covered most of the same issues as its earlier namesake, concluding that there was little chance of any relationship between the Jerusalem Cave area and the Book of Mormon. But again, the difference between Hebrew lehi and Arabic lei was not addressed.

Finally, in 2004 I published a chapter entitled “Lehi’s House at Jerusalem and the Land of His Inheritance” in the book Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem, in which I briefly explained why the “land of inheritance” cannot have been in the Beit Lei area. Then, in a 2006 response entitled “An Archaeologist’s View” that appeared in the
Journal of Book of Mormon Studies, I stated categorically that the term *lei* is not the same as the name Lehi and that the Beit Lei area could not have played any part in the 1 Nephi story. I gave further details in four endnotes to the article, including a citation of Cross’s 1988 remarks in *Biblical Archaeology Review* about the dissimilarity of the Arabic *lei* and Hebrew *lehi*.60 I noted there:

> Additionally, we can say with virtual certainty that certain areas in Israel, often presented to Latter-day Saint tourists as having been associated with Lehi and his family, were not connected with them at all. For example, the so-called *Beit Lei* area, located in the Judean hills about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem, cannot have been an area where Lehi owned land or lived. The Arabic term *lei* is not to be confused with the Hebrew name *Lehi*. *Beit Lei* is an Arabic toponym pronounced “bait lay.” But in Hebrew the site is known as *Beyt Loya*, and neither place-name is equivalent to the Hebrew name *Lehi*. Students of the Book of Mormon should be wary of claims about a so-called Lehi Cave or an alleged City of Lehi or Beit Lehi in the hills of Judah. These claims are entirely spurious.61

**Questions and Answers: An Archaeologist’s Evaluation**

The foregoing review of all pertinent facts and literature on the Jerusalem Cave and Khirbet Beit Lei, scholarly and otherwise, has been a lengthy but necessary exercise on the way to deal with the several questions that must be asked about the Lehi Cave and Beit Lehi claims. Finally, we are now in a position to both address and answer those questions:

**Question 1:** Is the term *Beit Lehi* a correct or legitimate translation or rendering of the Arabic place-name *Beit Lei*?

**Answer:** No. As previously explained, the Arabic term *lei* (pronounced “lay”) means “twisting” or “bending,” and it is not the same as the Hebrew term *lehi* (**לֵחי**, pronounced “le ˇkhi”) which means “jaw” or “cheek.” This was verified not only in the 1988 assessment of Cross, but also in 2008 by three Arabic language scholars, all professors at BYU.62 The original 1971 equation of *lei* with *lehi* by Ginat was, to use the description of Cross, a “linguistic blunder.” Its perpetuation by so many others for nearly four decades now has been an even bigger blunder.

**Question 2:** Even though the Arabic *lei* is not the same as the Hebrew *lehi*, could the area nonetheless have been the place of Lehi or the place Ramath-lehi mentioned in the story of Samson? (see Judges 15:9–19).
Answer: No. Samson’s Lehi was most likely located in the hills surrounding the Sorek Valley as it runs east of Beit Shemesh. Almost all of the action in the story of Samson prior to his battle at Lehi had occurred in the Sorek Valley area, some twenty kilometers (by air) north of Khirbet Beit Lei. Samson’s activities took place between Timnah (Timnath in Judges 14:1) at the west end of the Sorek Valley, and the Zorah/Eshtaol area near Beit Shemesh (“the camp of Dan” in Judges 13:25) further east in the Sorek Valley. The place called Etam, where Samson was located at the time the Philistines “spread themselves in Lehi” (Judges 15:8–9), is located by almost all historical geographers at Khirbet el-Khokh in the Judean hills near Bethlehem. Since Etam and Lehi must have been in reasonable proximity to each other in the context of the account in Judges 15, this means that the site of Lehi cannot have been as far south as Khirbet Beit Lei. It would have made no sense for Philistines to come to the Beit Lei area if they wished to challenge the men of Judah near Samson’s location at Etam. No Bible atlas in print places the Lehi of Judges 15 anywhere near Khirbet Beit Lei, and no historical geographer I know would do so either. The Beit Lei area simply cannot have been the place Lehi in the Samson story.

Question 3: Can an old well near Khirbet Beit Lei be the place called En-hakkore (see Judges 15:19), which the Samson story places at Lehi?

Answer: No. Since Beit Lei cannot have been Samson’s Lehi, the well near Beit Lei cannot have been involved in the story. Furthermore, the term En-hakkore means “the spring of him who calls” (Hebrew en or ein means “spring,” not “well”). The well near Beit Lei, which probably dates no earlier than the Roman period in any event, cannot properly be characterized as a spring.

Question 4: Was there any ancient Israelite or Jewish settlement at Khirbet Beit Lei during the time of biblical Samson (ca. 1100 BC; Iron Age I) or during the time of the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi (ca. 600 BC; Iron Age II)?

Answer: No. The archaeological survey of Khirbet Beit Lei carried out by Yehuda Dagan in the 1970s revealed no evidence of any Iron Age I or Iron Age II settlement at the site. This was confirmed by the archaeological excavations of Joseph Patrich and Yoram Tsafrir in the 1980s and by the current excavations being carried out by Oren Gutfeld and Yakov Kalman. Not even a single sherd of Iron Age I or II pottery has been found at Khirbet Beit Lei, nor any architectural component from those periods. There was no city, nor town, nor village,
nor private estate at Khirbet Beit Lei during the time of Samson or of the prophet Lehi.

**Question 5:** So could there have been any kind of settlement at Khirbet Beit Lei around 600 BC that could be called a city of Lehi or Beit Lehi, or was there any community at the site around 600 BC in which Lehi might have prophesied or served as a judge?

**Answer:** No city or town; no community at all. No one lived at the site in 600 BC.

**Question 6:** Although there was no Iron Age II architecture, pottery, or remains of any kind and no sign of human habitation prior to 300 BC, is there a chance that Khirbet Beit Lei could have been the “land of . . . inheritance” (1 Nephi 2:4; 3:16, 22) of Lehi and his sons?

**Answer:** It is extremely unlikely. In addition to the fact that no sign of Iron Age II occupation exists at the site, the Assyrian attack on Judah in 701 BC with its accompanying destruction and deportation of every community outside Jerusalem, combined with the (Assyrian-mandated) Philistine occupation of the Judean Shephelah (low hills) during most of the seventh century BC, simply makes any case for Lehi having owned land anywhere in Judah outside Jerusalem quite weak. As noted in a previous study, the location of Lehi’s land of inheritance was probably in the ancient tribal region of western Manasseh (that is to say, in Manasseh on the west side of the Jordan River).  

**Question 7:** When was the village at Khirbet Beit Lei an active community?

**Answer:** All of the archaeologists above affirm that the site was first utilized as an oil-pressing complex during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods (ca. 300 BC to AD 70). Underground oil presses and dovecotes have been excavated at the site by Gutfeld and Kalman. Later, during the Byzantine period (fourth to sixth centuries AD), the site was used as a Christian monastic complex with an elaborately decorated chapel, which was excavated by Patrich and Tsafrir. The site seems to have been abandoned thereafter until it was resettled and built up as an Arab village during the Mameluke period (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries AD). The ruins of houses and public buildings from this era have been cleared by Gutfeld and Kalman; pottery remains from the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Mameluke periods have been recovered from all over the site.

**Question 8:** Was Khirbet Beit Lei ever a Jewish site?

**Answer:** Possibly. According to Gutfeld, the site seems to have been taken over by Jewish forces during the time of John Hyrcanus, around 100 BC. The site may have been used by Jews of Judea from
that time until the Roman war against Judea, which culminated in AD 70. However, there would be no connection between that Jewish complex and the Book of Mormon story.

**Question 9:** What about the local Arab legend that the site was named after a man called Nebi Lei?

**Answer:** In Arabic, the term *Nebi Lei* means “the prophet Layy.” But since *Lei* (properly *Layy*) is not the same as the Hebrew term *le∑hi* (properly pronounced “lēkhy”) there is no way that the name *Nebi Lei* refers to the Book of Mormon prophet Lehi. Although Beit Lehi proponents have claimed that Nebi Lei was an ancient Israelite prophet, in the Arabic language interview aired in *The Lehi Cave* video, no mention was made of Nebi Lei being either an ancient prophet or an Israelite prophet. The name *Nebi Lei* most probably refers to a legend about a local Muslim saint who lived in the area around Idna, probably in the early Islamic period (ca. AD 640–1100), prior to the Crusades. The name *Lei* seems to have become associated with the village of Beit Lei only after the Crusader period, since the village itself dates only from the Mameluke period. Local Muslim saints were known by such titles as *nebi* in various places around the Middle East—the most prominent of these west of the Jordan River was Nebi Salah, also known as Sheikh Salah, for whom there was also a village named.66

**Question 10:** Was the tomb known as the Jerusalem Cave a treasure cave as some Beit Lehi sources have suggested?

**Answer:** No treasure was found in the cave, and no evidence was found that the cave had ever been the repository of any treasure, silver and gold or otherwise. A ring, an earring, and a clasp, all of bronze, were the only items found with the skeletal remains, and these were simple and inexpensive. There is no sense in which it could be claimed that archaeologists had found a treasure cave at the tomb site.

**Question 11:** Could the tomb known as the Jerusalem Cave have been a place where Jews from Jerusalem (Lehi’s sons or otherwise) would have hidden themselves around 600 BC?

**Answer:** It’s possible, but not very likely. The tomb’s distance from Jerusalem, over thirty kilometers direct walking distance, would make it about a seven-hour walk. The fact that it was a tomb would also probably have hindered Jews from hiding inside it. By 600 BC the prohibitions in the law of Moses regarding corpses and burial sites were generally known among the Jewish population. These prohibited contact with human corpses, bones, and tombs. Those who merely touched a corpse, bone, or tomb, even for necessary activities involved with burial of the dead, were considered unclean for a seven-day period
(see Numbers 19:10–19). For persons who observed the law of Moses, such as Lehi and Nephi, the idea of hiding themselves (or even hiding treasure) inside a tomb seems highly unlikely.

**Question 12:** Is the tomb known as the Jerusalem Cave located in a wilderness area, as was “the cavity of a rock” in which Nephi and his brothers hid in the Book of Mormon narrative?

**Answer:** No. The Jerusalem cave is located southwest of Jerusalem in the Shephelah (low hills) of Judah, an area of rich soil and arable land that supported agriculture. The wilderness (Hebrew *midbar*) of Judah, in the geographical context of both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, was the desert area located to the east and southeast of Jerusalem. No native Judean would characterize the Jerusalem Cave as being in the wilderness.

**Question 13:** Could the tomb known as the Jerusalem Cave qualify in any sense as the cavity of a rock in which Nephi and his brothers hid?

**Answer:** No. The term “cavity of a rock” suggests a natural hollow or fissure, not an artificially carved burial cave such as the tomb in question. Indeed, the fact that Nephi’s text does not even use the word *cave,* but rather the very specific term “cavity of a rock,” is quite interesting. If we were to conjecture what ancient Hebrew term was behind the English translation of 1 Nephi 3:27, it would probably not be *מַעֲרָה* (*me’arah*), which means “cave” (as in 1 Samuel 24:3), but *סִלָּא סֵיב* (*sif sela*), which means “cleft of a rock.” In the story of Samson (Judges 15:8–10), the term *sif sela* is used in the phrase *sif sela etam,* which is oddly rendered as “top of the rock of Etam” in the King James Version of the Bible, but which is translated as “cleft of the rock of Etam” in more modern translations (the NKJV, the RSV, the NRSV, the ASV, and the NASV, to name a few). A *sif* or cleft is a narrow, often deep cavity, and it is thus entirely plausible that *sif sela* was the Hebrew term behind the “cavity of a rock” in Nephi’s account. In any case, the term “cavity” surely indicates a natural fissure, not a man-made burial cave such as the Jerusalem Cave.

**Question 14:** Could the sons of Lehi have hidden in the Jerusalem Cave after the death of Laban, as suggested by Ginat and reported by Skousen?

**Answer:** The account in 1 Nephi makes no mention whatsoever of Lehi’s sons hiding in a cave, or hiding anywhere else, after the death of Laban. Indeed, the text indicates that following Laban’s death, the sons of Lehi took their new companion Zoram and departed into the wilderness (the desert) to return to the camp of Lehi. They certainly did not travel through the fertile Shephelah area in which the Jerusalem
Cave tomb was located. In fact, in all of Lehi’s and Nephi’s reported travels, their trail was into and through the desert wilderness, not the fertile hill country of Judah. There is no textual evidence in the Book of Mormon account which accords with Ginat’s ideas.

**Question 15:** Could Lehi or his sons have written the inscriptions found on the walls of the entry chamber of the Jerusalem Cave?

**Answer:** Almost certainly not. Here is why: Of the four expert epigraphers who expressed opinions dating the Jerusalem Cave inscriptions, three (Naveh, LeMaire, and Zevit) have dated them to around 700 BC, specifically to the horizon of the 701 BC Assyrian attack on Judah. Zevit’s analysis connecting one of the drawings (see fig. 8) to the Assyrian attack on Lachish is quite convincing. Only Cross dates the inscriptions to the 600 BC horizon (actually to a little later than 600 BC). Thus three of four experts believe the inscriptions and drawings to have been created a full century prior to the story of Lehi and his sons. If the majority scholarly opinion is at all correct, it is virtually certain that neither Lehi nor any of his sons had anything to do with these inscriptions and drawings.

**Question 16:** Were the inscriptions written by a prophet or the associate of a prophet?

**Answer:** Again, probably not. Even Cross, whom Beit Lehi advocates have often quoted to support their case (which Cross categorically repudiates), resists the idea that the inscriptions were the work of a prophet or his associate: “At all events we shall suppress the temptation to suggest that the oracle and the petitions may have been the work of a prophet or his amanuensis fleeing Jerusalem.”

**Question 17:** Does the presence of ship drawings in the Jerusalem Cave have any connection with the story of Nephi building a ship in the Book of Mormon?

**Answer:** Certainly not. First of all, the drawings are probably to be dated to the same period as the inscriptions, which three of the four expert epigraphers involved maintain was around 701 BC, far too early for the story of Nephi. But secondly, even if Cross’s dating of 600 BC or later is accepted, the text of the Book of Mormon would not support the idea that Nephi or any of his family knew anything about their building of a ship while they were still in Judah or even while Lehi was encamped at the Valley of Lemuel. The text of 1 Nephi is very specific—Nephi learned of his shipbuilding assignment only after the party had arrived at the Bountiful shore (see 1 Nephi 17:5–8). And while both Nephi and his father Lehi understood early on that they would
eventually gain a “land of promise” (1 Nephi 4:14, 5:5), they seem to have been under the impression that they would arrive there simply by traveling through the wilderness (see 1 Nephi 5:22). Only later, after the journeys back to Jerusalem were behind them, did Nephi learn in his vision that the land of promise was across the sea (see 1 Nephi 13:12). But again, no hint of Nephi’s shipbuilding involvement occurs until much later (see 1 Nephi 17:8). In the context of 1 Nephi, when the sons of Lehi confronted Laban, they were unaware of their family’s future involvement with a ship. They would have had no motivation to draw ships in a cave.

Question 18: Is there any connection between the ship drawings in the Jerusalem Cave and the mosaic renditions of ships and fishermen found in the Byzantine church at Khirbet Beit Lei?

Answer: No. The ships depicted in the burial cave seem to be seagoing vessels, whereas the boats depicted in the mosaic floor of the Byzantine church are similar in form to ancient fishing vessels used at Lake Kinneret (the Sea of Galilee). Additionally, the burial cave, though located only a few hundred yards from the church, would have been unknown to the Byzantine monks of the church complex. The tomb’s entrance was completely covered over with naturally deposited soil and vegetation centuries prior to the Byzantine period. Neither the Hellenistic Gentiles nor the Roman-period Jews who raised doves and produced olive oil at the site would have been aware of the old Iron Age II tomb nearby. Like the Byzantine monks, the Arab villagers of the Mameluke period were unaware of that ancient Judean burial cave. Only in 1961, because of an Israeli road project, was the Jerusalem Cave again brought to light. The Byzantine Christians of the region had no knowledge of the tomb, its inscriptions, or its ship drawings.

Question 19: Even if there is no connection between the burial cave ship drawings and the mosaic renditions of fishing boats found in the Byzantine church at Khirbet Beit Lei, could the church mosaics still somehow be connected with the story of Nephi’s shipbuilding?

Answer: No. The church was a Christian edifice dating to the fourth to seventh centuries AD, over a thousand years later than the 1 Nephi story. No Iron Age II community, Jewish or otherwise, had existed at the site in the 600 BC time period of 1 Nephi. The Greek language mosaic inscriptions of the church make no mention of any prophet, nor person named Lehi, nor person named Lei. (The Arabic name Lei most likely became connected with the site only following the Byzantine period.) Nothing in the art or inscriptions of the church hints at any connection with ancient Judah, ancient Jews, or any event,
person, or motif mentioned in the account of 1 Nephi. The suggestion that the church somehow commemorates the prophet Lehi or anything connected with him is fanciful and unsupported. Nothing about the ruins of the Byzantine church suggests that it was built to commemorate anything in the Old Testament period or any event or person connected with the Book of Mormon.

**Question 20:** What should we think of the archaeological excavations that are taking place at Khirbet Beit Lei?

**Answer:** All of the archaeological activities that have taken place at the site to date have been professional and legitimate, carried out by qualified and licensed Israeli archaeologists. Naveh’s excavation of the Jerusalem Cave in 1961, Patrich’s and Tsafrir’s excavation of the Byzantine chapel in the 1980s, and Gutfeld’s and Kalman’s current excavation of the Arab village and the Hellenistic/Roman period oil presses and dovecotes have all been carried out with skill and according to accepted archaeological methodology of their day. The fact that Beit Lehi advocates have provided funding and volunteer labor for the current excavation project has not unduly affected the findings made by the project nor the interpretation of the findings by the Israeli excavators. A concern I have is that Gutfeld has begun using the term *Beit Lehi* when speaking of Khirbet Beit Lei (at least for Latter-day Saint audiences). If he is doing this to pander to the sponsors who provide financing and labor for his excavations, it is understandable, albeit inaccurate. If he is doing so because he is convinced that the Beit Lei area really is connected to the story of Samson’s Lehi, then a serious study and reconsideration of the biblical text and the systematic historical geography of the Samson story is warranted on his part. That said, however, Gutfeld is a talented and respected archaeologist.

**Conclusion**

There is no such thing as a Lehi Cave or Beit Lehi. These terms are the unfortunate product of linguistic misinformation, faulty scriptural interpretation, and too-fertile imagination. They are not supported by the finds of any archaeological excavation. It is stunning to me that the original linguistic blunder identifying Khirbet Beit Lei as Samson’s Lehi in 1971 has gone too long unchallenged in Latter-day Saint circles. On the other hand, the flawed use of both Bible and Book of Mormon passages to connect the prophet Lehi and his sons to both Khirbet Beit Lei and the Jerusalem Cave has not gone unchallenged. But the warnings of the challengers were not widely spread among the Latter-day Saint community and were ignored by those of too-fertile imagination.
The Jerusalem Cave will remain a site of interest to students of archaeology, historical geography, and the scriptures, since its inscriptions and drawings seem connected to that drama described in Isaiah 36–37 and 2 Kings 18–19, namely the Assyrian attack on Judah in 701 BC, and the subsequent salvation of Jerusalem. That the inscriptions in the burial cave contain the earliest written occurrence of the Hebrew place name Jerusalem (Yerushalem) is a fact of great importance. The oracles in the Jerusalem Cave seem to concord with the prophecies spoken by the prophet Isaiah concerning the kingdom of Judah and its capital.

The ruins at Khirbet Beit Lei, from its Hellenistic and Roman agricultural installations to its Byzantine chapel to its medieval Arab village, are of significant interest in understanding the overall history and archaeology of the land of Israel. The excavations now taking place at Khirbet Beit Lei are a worthy effort and need not be connected with the Old Testament or the Book of Mormon in order to be considered a significant archaeological project. If Latter-day Saint volunteers and donors wish to devote a portion of their time and treasure to forward those excavations, the results will be rewarding regardless of the fact that they are not connected with the Book of Mormon account.

Notes

1. The Arabic place name Beit Lei (بيت ليّ) pronounced “bait lay”—first appeared in published form in two places in The Survey of Western Palestine, published by the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) during the nineteenth century. The Arabic spelling above occurs in Conder and Kitchener, The Survey of Western Palestine: Arabic and English Name Lists, transliterated by E. H. Palmer (1881), 365, with the note that the proper name means “twisting,” alongside the English spelling “Beit Leyi,” with the y-i syllable representing the doubled Arabic letter ya (y). The name is translated “The house of Leyi.” The same English spelling occurs in Conder and Kitchener, The Survey of Western Palestine: Memoirs of the Topography, Orography, Hydrography, and Archaeology, vol. 3, Judaea (1883), 274, noting the site’s features as “foundations, ruined walls, and caves and cisterns.”


6. Skousen, Treasures from the Book of Mormon, 43.
8. See note 1 above.
17. Lemaire, “Prières en temps de crise,” 558–60; translation from Zevit, Religions of Ancient Israel, 419.
18. Lemaire, “Prières en temps de crise,” 561; translation from Zevit, Religions of Ancient Israel, 430.
27. Zevit, Religions of Ancient Israel, 410.
28. Zevit, Religions of Ancient Israel, 410. Ancient maps, such as the Medeba Map of Byzantine period Palestine, are also generally east oriented, and even though such maps are from periods later than the Iron Age, they also reflect the east-as-forward idiom of the biblical literature.
31. Oren Gutfeld is usually referred to as the director of the excavation, and Yakov Kalman as codirector. According to Kalman, the names of both men appear on the excavation license issued by the Israel Antiquities Authority, which officially designates both men as excavators of the site.
32. A search of *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* (2005 through 2008), the Israel Antiquities Authority publication (now on the Internet), for immediate preliminary reporting of archaeological excavation activity in Israel did not offer even a summary paragraph on excavation activities at Khirbet Beit Lei from 2005 through 2008.

33. Beitlehi.com was operating in 2006 and 2007 but was out of commission when checked in 2008. Beitlehi.org was operating in August and September of 2008, but by October of 2008 was no longer in service. (However, in October of 2008, beitlehifoundation.org had begun to operate.)


36. The paper was read at the Twenty-First Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, held at Brigham Young University on October 16, 1971.

37. Joseph Ginat, “The Cave at Khirbet Beit Lei,” in *Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.* no. 129 (April 1972), 3. It should be noted that Professor Ginat is not recognized as an archaeologist nor an expert in ancient Hebrew or other ancient languages, in historical geography, or in the comparison of Arabic place-names to ancient place-names.


41. Ginat, “Cave at Khirbet Beit Lei,” 5, “editor’s notes” following bibliography.

42. Cross, “Cave Inscriptions,” 299.


45. The acknowledgment for the article describes Ross T. Christensen as a professor of archaeology at Brigham Young University and his wife Ruth R. Christensen as a graduate student in the same field. However, the two were neither specialists nor experts in the archaeology of the land of Israel, nor did they excavate or work there.

46. The Christensens made a fundamental error in saying that Lehi’s sons “on their way . . . back to their encampment beside the Red Sea hid for a time in ‘the cavity of a rock’ (1 Nephi 3:27)” (“Archaeology Reveals Old Testament History,” 66). It was not on their return to the Red Sea that Nephi and his brothers secreted themselves in this manner; rather it was after having fled from Laban’s house and Jerusalem into the wilderness, where they hid for a time before returning to Jerusalem, where Nephi slew Laban and obtained the plates of brass. Only then did Lehi’s sons return to the Red Sea and the camp of Lehi (see 1 Nephi 3:24–4:38).


52. William A. Johnson, “Lessons Learned from Lehi’s Cave,” *Sunstone*, July 1985, 27–30. The author, an amateur in terms of ancient studies and archaeology, was identified as president of a consulting firm specializing in the oil and gas industry, holding a PhD in economics from Harvard University.


54. See note 7 above.


62. Author’s private correspondence with three experts in Arabic language at Brigham Young University: Daniel C. Peterson, professor of Arabic and Islamic studies (September 8, 2008); S. Dilworth Parkinson, professor of Arabic (September 10, 2008); and Brian M. Hauglid, professor of ancient scripture (September 10, 2008). All confirmed the reading of Beit Lei offered by Frank Moore Cross and affirmed that the term lei means “twisting” or “bending” and is not linguistically equivalent in any way to the Hebrew term leîh.

63. The site of Etam is generally identified with Khirbet el-Khokh, just southwest of Bethlehem in the hills of Judea. See Student Map Manual: Historical Geography of the Bible Lands (Jerusalem: Pictoral Archive, 1979), section 6–4 (map of Samson story) and section 15-2 #339 (index of main names). The “top of the rock of Etam” (Judges 15:8) is better translated “cleft of the rock of Etam” (from סֵפֶּחֶט סֶלֶ֣ע עֶיֶֽתָּם—Hebrew *sif sela etam*), and was probably a natural cave in the hills just west of the community of Etam.

64. The suggestion that the old well near Khirbet Beit Lei should be regarded as En-hakkore was made at beitlehifoundation.org, under the heading “Name History”; http://www.beitlehifoundation.org/?page_id=54, accessed November 24, 2008.

65. See the discussion by Chadwick in “Lehi’s House at Jerusalem,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, 87–113, especially 105.

66. The traditional tomb of Nebi Salah, also known as Sheikh Salah, is located near Saint Katherine’s Monastery in the southern Sinai peninsula. (The town of Nebi Salah is located northwest of Jerusalem, west of Ramallah.)

67. For the translation of סֵפֶּחֶט סֶלֶ֣ע עֶיֶֽתָּם (*sif sela etam*) as “cleft of the rock of Etam,” see Judges 15:8–10 in the NKJV (New King James Version), in the RSV (Revised Standard Version), in the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version), in the ASV (American Standard Version), and in the NASV (New American Standard Version).

68. Cross, “Cave Inscriptions,” 304.
69. Gutfeld used the term *Beit Lehi* in “Report—2008 Excavation Season” which appeared at beitlehifoundation.org (see note 34). He also used the term “Beit Lehi” in his recorded lecture to a Latter-day Saint audience in September 2007—the video recording of that lecture appeared on beitlehi.org until September of 2008.
The Rod of Iron in Lehi’s Dream

Zachary Nelson

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The rod of iron is one of the most widely known images from the Book of Mormon. It is frequently mentioned during general conference, referenced in books, and used in articles to help Latter-day Saints remember the importance of the word of God. Yet there is more to this symbol than most members realize.

We recall that the prophet Lehi, under the direction of God, led his family into the wilderness from Jerusalem. However, this journey was not a happy family camping trip, but a migration away from a spiritual wasteland, to the lament of two of his sons, Laman and Lemuel. Then, God commanded Lehi to have his children return to Jerusalem, first for a copy of the scriptures and later for Ishmael’s family to join them in their exodus. After these successful journeys, Lehi was perhaps wondering how he could lead these people to the promised land when he did not know where it was and when the people rebelled at every turn. Then Lehi received a vision in the night (see 1 Nephi 8).

In Lehi’s dream, an angelic visitor led him through a wilderness “for the space of many hours in darkness” (1 Nephi 8:8).1 Lehi prayed for mercy, and immediately light flooded the vista, and he saw various items. Here, the important elements included a tree with desirable fruit (which Nephi identified as the tree of life), a path leading to the tree, a river, and a “rod of iron” between the path and the river (v. 19; see also vv. 10, 13). Lehi also noted that there was “on the other side of the river . . . a great and spacious building” (v. 26).
In the dream, people found the path in a spacious field and walked on it toward the tree. However, when the path paralleled the river bank, there arose eddying mists of darkness that caused many to lose their way. This was where the rod of iron came into use: “And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree” (v. 24).

Thus, the rod of iron led toward the tree. Nephi wrote in detail about two groups of rod holders Lehi described. One was the “cling-ons” mentioned in the verse just quoted. The other Lehi identified as “other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree” (v. 30). Note that the latter group held fast to the rod.

The rod helped both groups make it to the tree. The difference was that the “cling-ons” did not stay at the tree (see v. 28). They fell away under the scoffing looks of the inhabitants of the great and spacious building. Without laboring the point unduly, it may be that the “cling-ons” had difficulties staying loyal to the course. They progressed to the tree of life, they successfully passed through the temptations of the devil, but they could not endure at the end. A possible reason was that the gospel was not the purpose of their lives, but merely a passing concern or even a hobby. Their clinging to the rod suggests they had made but a part of the gospel their goal. Those who held fast to the rod seem to have used it as the guide that brought them to the fulness of the gospel blessings; and thereby they were able to stay true to the end.

Nephi’s brief account of his father’s explanation of the vision does not include everything. He omitted items his father saw, ignored the discussion afterward, and skipped over the prophecies that Lehi made at that time (see vv. 29–30, 36–38). Doubtless these presented no problem to him, and we will receive more understanding from the book of Lehi at some future date. What interested Nephi, as the author of his own book of scripture, was his own response to Lehi’s dream. Nephi, a son of a prophet and a prophet in his own right, inquired of the Lord to understand Lehi’s vision. He then received his own vision. It is mainly on Nephi’s account that the common interpretation of Lehi’s dream is based (see 1 Nephi 10–15).

Nephi saw in his vision the birth of Christ, his ministry and crucifixion, and events leading up to the end of the world. After this
instruction, he encountered his apostate brothers arguing about the meaning of Lehi’s dream and instructed them in the imagery of the iron rod: “And I said unto them that [the rod of iron] was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction” (1 Nephi 15:24).

Most of the iron rod associations used in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have arisen from this single verse. The formula is straightforward: iron rod = word of God = scriptures. There are additional nuances associated with the iron rod imagery, however, which add depth to this formula. Nephi’s declaration to his brothers was not the only possible representation of the iron rod, but it was the one best suited to his audience. The intent here is to unpack the symbolic imagery of the rod and offer another more inclusive interpretation.

Physical Rod

First, consider the rod. The description of the rod of iron indicates that it was a rod of finite length. It was approached on one end, grasped by its end, and released before or upon arrival at the tree of life. Its purpose was to conduct people to the tree of life. It was not the goal of the journey but an aid. It was also a physical barrier to the destruction that the river represented. Because it occurred in a dream setting, there is no need to suppose that the rod was held up or sustained by other supports. In other words, it is not necessary to see it as a railing, something seldom seen in ancient architecture. Also neither its height above the ground nor its diameter is important.

Though railings were rare in Lehi’s world, rods or staffs were not. Rods were common and necessary accouterments to a nomadic life. Rods were used to steer the flock by day and to count them at day’s end. The additional attribute of iron made the rod formidable (see Numbers 35:16). The shepherd’s rod “was a weapon, normally a piece of wood with a knob at one end. With it, he could defend the flock from predators” or, in the case of Laman and Lemuel, even beat up siblings (see 1 Nephi 3:28).

Rods also served as supports or walking sticks. Although Lehi’s rod appears to have been horizontal and, therefore, had the semblance of a railing, the nuance of the rod’s connotations should not be overlooked. Rods were extended to those in need so that they could grasp the end and be assisted out of danger. Hugh Nibley mentioned an iron rod leading up to the temple at Jerusalem. Lehi’s rod was placed between
the river bank and the path and thus acted as a guard rail. In this way, its physical presence aided those on the path. Rather than a handrail, it may have been a universal aid that each traveler could grasp and use.

**Rod as Scriptures or Book**

As mentioned previously, the rod of iron as a metaphor for the scriptures is common in Latter-day Saint writings. Of the 625 references to “rod” and “iron” in GospeLink 2001, nearly all refer to the iron rod as equivalent to the scriptures. This usage is canonized in modern scripture via the eighth article of faith: “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” Here “word of God” equals the Bible and Book of Mormon (see also D&C 19:26). Remember that Nephi equated “word of God” with “rod of iron.”

**Rod as Measuring Stick**

There are, however, a few times when the iron rod is referred to as a measuring stick. This use refers to the rod as the scriptures, as they become a measuring stick along the route to the tree of life. Incidentally, the word *canon* is ultimately derived from the reed measuring rod of ancient Israel. This usage is also reminiscent of the angel measuring the New Jerusalem with a golden rod (see Revelation 21:15–17) and John measuring the temple and the Saints with another rod (see Revelation 11:1–2).

**Rod as Scepter**

Rods were also important symbols of authority or rule. Legend has it that Adam’s rod was cut from the tree of life, making it appropriate that the rod of iron directs Lehi’s descendants back to the rod’s ultimate origin, the tree of life. Hugh Nibley noted: “The rods of Adam, Enoch, Elijah, Moses, Aaron, David, Judah, etc., were actually thought of as one and the same scepter, loaned by God to his earthly representative from time to time as a badge of authority and an instrument of miracles, proving to the world that its holder was God’s messenger. But such a thing is also the law, and the Rabbis spoke of the law as God’s staff, to lead and discipline his people.” Further, Nibley explained, “For the ancients it was quite possible for a piece of wood to be at one and the same time a scepter, a rod of identification (which was only a private scepter), and a book (with a message written on or attached to the sender’s staff).”
Of course, in Lehi’s vision, the rod was made of iron rather than wood, but the meaning is similar, as other scriptures clarify. The only Old Testament reference to a “rod of iron” comes from Psalm 2:9. To the Son of God, the Lord declared, “Thou shalt break [the heathen] with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” (Further references come from the book of Revelation: 2:27; 12:5; 19:15.) Here we learn that Christ shall rule with a “rod of iron.” President Joseph F. Smith clarified this passage: “Which rod is the Gospel and the Priesthood.” The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible changes the verse to read “word of God” rather than “rod of iron” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 2:27), furthering their interchangeable use.

Iron Rod as Christ

Thus there is more than one interpretation of what the rod of iron could be. Each explains part of the symbolism, but does not quite reach the mark. What does make the symbolism complete is if Jesus Christ is the rod of iron. Consider the following verses from Nephi’s account: “And after [the angel] had said these words, he said unto me: Look! And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him. And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God” (1 Nephi 11:24–25).

Nephi saw Christ in vision, then made the connection between what he was seeing and his father’s symbolism. Nephi saw the word of God in action. This connection was explained in a recent article by Matthew Bowen. He wrote: “We note that the Egyptian word mdw means not only ‘a staff [or] rod’ but also ‘to speak’ a ‘word.’ The derived word md.t, or mt.t, probably pronounced *mateh in Lehi’s day, was common in the Egyptian dialect of that time and would have sounded very much like a common Hebrew word for rod or staff, matteh.” Nephi realized, while watching Jesus Christ’s ministry and puzzling over the symbolism of the iron rod, that Lehi’s symbolism in the dream required a Hebrew-Egyptian pun!

Jesus Christ has many titles in the scriptures. “There are many ways in which the Lord is described as Ruler. He is the Potentate, Prince, Sceptre, Rod and Staff, Captain, Commander, Deliverer, Governor,
Guide, King, Lawgiver, and Master.”

In addition, Christ is, as John told us, the consummate Word of God (see John 1:1).

The phrase *word of God* is used in the King James Bible forty-nine times. In the Old Testament it refers to prophesy (see 1 Samuel 9:27; 1 Kings 12:22; 1 Chronicles 17:3). In the New Testament, it refers to scriptures in general (see Mark 7:13 and Luke 4:4), but mainly to the gospel of Jesus Christ (thirty-plus references). John and Paul both used this phrase to refer specifically to Jesus Christ (see Romans 10:17; Hebrews 4:12; 11:3; 1 Peter 1:23; 2 Peter 3:5; Revelation 1:2; 19:13).

Jesus Christ as the iron rod embodies the various interpretations of this symbol. He is the source of scripture. He is the ultimate measuring stick. He is the ruler, user, and giver of scepters, power, authority, and priesthood. Christ is the ultimate Iron Rod.

Returning to Lehi’s dream, imagine Christ in place of the rod of iron: “And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of [Christ]; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the [Savior], even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree” (1 Nephi 8:24).

The problem with the “cling-ons” was that they fell away after crossing the finish line because they left Christ spiritually behind. They knew of Christ but did not know Christ.

**The Path**

A note of caution is necessary. The iron rod, in this aspect of Christ’s mission, was a helper, not the end of the journey. In fact, focusing on the iron rod does a disservice to Lehi’s dream. The focus of the dream was on partaking of the fruit of the tree of life as individuals and as a family. The rod of iron was, in fact, only a secondary aid in arriving there. The real guide in the dream was the much-overlooked path.

The relationship between the “strait and narrow path” and the “rod of iron” needs to be noted. The path ended at the tree of life. Its beginning lay somewhere in the “large and spacious field” (1 Nephi 8:20). Lehi noticed the path after he saw the tree, the river, the head of the river, and the rod of iron. This observation indicates that the path was not obtrusive. It was thin and narrow. Nephi did not ask about the path’s symbolism, nor did the angel overtly discuss it with him. His brothers also did not inquire about the path. Paths were common and their symbolism clear.

For desert dwellers, paths are paramount. Especially in the era before paved roads, street signs, and GPS devices, marked paths were
necessary even to the point of assuring one’s life. If a traveler missed a turn on the correct path, he might follow a “forbidden” path for days before noticing his mistake. Mistakes like these could be fatal in a land where water is scarce.

Paths are often marked with stone cairns. These piles of rocks can be seen across valleys, making reassuring vistas for weary eyes. Well-traveled paths become ruts and cut through the topsoil to a depth of several meters. They even become visible from space. Such caravan routes are easy to follow once you get into a rut.

The most difficult paths to follow are the less-traveled ones. These paths appear as a slight bruising on the land. A few stalks of bent grass herald the direction. In rocky earth, just a faint impression of an occasional footprint or shifted earth may be seen. Indeed, a faint path must be felt more than seen. Deviance from a less-traveled path is easy, especially if it is largely unmarked or intertwined with a broad path for a distance.

Nephi explained a little about the path at the end of his writings. He noted that baptism is the gate by which all enter into the path, even Christ: “For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive” (2 Nephi 31:17–18).

This passage suggests that the first test began in the field where Lehi saw “numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which [he] stood” (1 Nephi 8:21). Presumably, the people not pressing forward had not entered into the gate. They had not humbled themselves as little children. They did not have the Holy Ghost identifying the correct path through the field amidst the many other paths available.

The people who entered in at the gate identified the correct path through the field. They “commence[d] in the path” (1 Nephi 8:22) and made progress to the tree of life. They left the world behind, walking uprightly towards the tree, but they were not yet at the destination. There were additional hazards along the journey. Mists of darkness blinded the travelers. In the dream, these mists came from the river, perhaps creating a dense fog. At the onset of the mists, many lost their
way. Their eyes were not on the path, so they lost it as the fog rolled in. They were blinded by the fog and seemed to have hardened their hearts against asking for directions.

Those who were watching the path, hunched a little to observe it well, saw an iron rod along the path. They grasped it and used it to help them through the darkness. It is tempting to identify those who were grasping the rod as symbolizing people whose calling and election are made sure—people who have such a tight relationship with Christ that he walks hand in hand with them to the tree of life. But that is probably wrong. More likely, they are the active members of the Church who follow the path and ask Christ for help each time the mists of darkness come upon them. They are faithful members who, like the Israelites of old, follow the iron rod up to the temple and eat the fruit of eternity. Many do not realize how close they are to Christ (see 3 Nephi 9:20) as they follow the path and hold his hand. Luckily, he does and aids them against temptations, depositing them at the foot of the tree of life.

For those of us still on the path, and even for those further up the rod: “I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:19–20).

Notes


8. Tvedtnes, “Rod and Sword as the Word of God,” 149.


16. Joseph Fielding Smith, Church History and Modern Revelation (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946–49), 140.


Some Mayan writings were composed of pictographs and phonetic or syllabic elements and were recorded as inscriptions on stone and used within the architecture. Mayan carvings have survived quite well in places like Tulum, Mexico (pictured here).

Photo courtesy of Brent R. Nordgren.
Internal Evidence of Widespread Literacy in the Book of Mormon

Deanna Draper Buck

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Some Latter-day Saint scholars argue that literacy in the Book of Mormon was limited to elite classes and that the Book of Mormon people as a whole functioned as an oral society. In addition, for years Mesoamerican scholars held that the ancient Mayans (a civilization concurrent with that of the Book of Mormon) did not even have a written language before the Classic period (about AD 300–900). The lack of evidence of Mayan writing during the Preclassic period (600 BC–AD 200, which corresponds to Book of Mormon dates) may have influenced some Latter-day Saint scholars’ opinions about the extent of literacy during that era.

An examination of the Book of Mormon, however, shows evidence that the ability to read may have been more widespread than sometimes perceived and that it transcended class distinctions. As we read the Book of Mormon and find multiple commands to search the scriptures, we see clear evidence of the ability to read, write, and keep records among the Book of Mormon people, common and privileged alike.

Previous Arguments for an Oral Society

The following examples represent those who feel that literacy was limited and that Book of Mormon society was largely oral. John L. Sorenson, a Latter-day Saint sociocultural anthropologist, has argued that literacy was very limited in the Nephite culture. He wrote:
Another thing is important about the nature of the Nephite record. All those who kept it were from the powerful and wealthy level of society. We must keep in mind that in archaic civilizations like those of Egypt or the Nephites in America, most people were not literate. The difficulty of becoming competent in the difficult writing system employed on the plates is emphasized. King Benjamin pointedly “caused that [his princely sons] should be taught in all the language of his fathers, that thereby they might become men of understanding” (Mosiah 1:3). It was clearly a notable, uncommon accomplishment to master the system of writing.  

William G. Eggington, a Latter-day Saint scholar in linguistics and English language, has analyzed language in the Book of Mormon that seems to support Sorenson’s theory and contrast the oral and literate dimensions of Nephite and Lamanite cultures. He argues that orality was predominant and that writing was reserved for specific kinds of activities, which custom was typical throughout the world in similar social and historical situations.  

However, coupled with the most recent scholarship concerning literacy among concurrent civilizations, both in Mesoamerica and pre–600 BC Jerusalem, the Book of Mormon provides substantial internal evidence that these conclusions may be too restrictive.

Spiritual Context of Literacy

Reading and writing have been distinguishing characteristics of God’s people from the Creation. God gave a commandment to Adam to keep records and teach his children to read and write so that they would be able to read, remember, and keep the commandments. “And a book of remembrance was kept, in the which was recorded, in the language of Adam, for it was given unto as many as called upon God to write by the spirit of inspiration; And by them their children were taught to read and write” (Moses 6:5–6; emphasis added). We do not know what technology Adam had at his disposal, but we do know that he was obedient to the Lord by keeping a book of remembrance and teaching his children to read and write.

God commanded Adam and Eve to teach their children to read and write so that they could learn and remember the commandments. The Old Testament and scholarship on ancient Israel indicate that, as a result, literacy continued with Adam’s posterity. It stands to reason that God would want the Book of Mormon people to read too.

Clearly, the ability to read the scriptures helps create righteous societies. The people in 4 Nephi maintained a righteous society for more than two hundred years. To bring this about, they had the
Savior’s personal teaching and, as will be shown later, a directive from him to search the scriptures.

Furthermore, there is a direct connection between reading the scriptures and personal conversion. Having the scriptures available to read enhances conversion. King Benjamin pointed out to his sons that it was necessary to read the scriptures and not merely be taught about them. His words show the power of being able to read the word of God for oneself: “I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have dwindled in unbelief, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct” (Mosiah 1:5; emphasis added). Apparently, the Lamanites mentioned by King Benjamin had been taught, but not from written records.

By contrast, after Amulon and his brethren had introduced literacy into the society of the Lamanites (see Mosiah 24:4–6), the written records played a vital role in the conversion of the people that the sons of Mosiah taught (see Alma 22:12–13; 23:5). Alma commented to his son Helaman on the importance of the scriptures in bringing about this miracle: “Were it not for these things that these records do contain, which are on these plates, Ammon and his brethren could not have convinced so many thousands of the Lamanites of the incorrect tradition of their fathers; yea, these records and their words brought them unto repentance” (Alma 37:9; emphasis added). It required both the written records and the missionaries’ words working together to bring about change and conversion among the Lamanites.

In perhaps the starkest illustration of the spiritual danger of illiteracy, the Book of Mormon includes information about the people of Zarahemla. These descendants of Mulek did not have scriptures; all they had were their oral traditions. When Mosiah first came to Zarahemla, he was unable to communicate with them because they had not brought written records with them when they left Jerusalem. The people of Zarahemla had to be taught the language of Mosiah before they could converse with Mosiah’s people. Even though the people of Zarahemla had oral traditions and were able to give a history of leaving Jerusalem as well as a genealogy of their leader, they had lost their religion and denied the being of their Creator. Without written records,
they had not been able to maintain their language or their religion (see Omni 1:17–18).

In contrast, when Zeniff led his expedition out of the land of Zarahemla to inherit the land of Nephi, it is evident from the many references made to the scriptures that they took the scriptures with them (see Mosiah 7:19–20, 29–32; 12:20–37; 13:11). They may have remembered the fate of the Mulekites in Zarahemla who did not have the scriptures with them when they left Jerusalem. Zeniff would have known that they would need the scriptures to maintain their language and teach their families about God.

Many of the illustrations that have been referred to in this section will be more fully discussed throughout this paper. Their brief inclusion at this point introduces the idea that literacy has always been a defining characteristic of God’s people, regardless of the time period in which they lived. Lack of modern technological sophistication did not prevent Adam from establishing literacy among his posterity. The Book of Mormon provides ample internal evidence that the society it chronicles also achieved a significant level of literacy.

**Literacy in Israel Prior to 600 BC**

As was mentioned earlier, literacy continued from the time of Adam through the Old Testament. One scholar has noted, “The commandment of Dt 6:9 [to write scripture on their door posts] . . . presumed that every head of a family could write.”

Having the words of the scriptures written on the door would remind everyone who entered the house of the importance of recorded scriptures.

Furthermore, on the subject of literacy in pre-exilic Israel and Judah, the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* says:

> The majority of the people would have encountered writing on some occasion and would be aware of the power and possibilities it possessed. . . .

In the light of the evidence from all sources it appears that literacy reached beyond the palaces and temples of Israel and Judah to quite small settlements. This means prophetic oracles, hymns, laws could have circulated in written form from an early time to offer an authority and a control on oral tradition. In discussion of the history of the books of the OT the role of Israelite literacy deserves to be given greater prominence.

Having a written form of the scriptures available in the small settlements would help ensure that the oral traditions were taught correctly.
Aaron P. Schade, a Latter-day Saint scholar, found evidence of a tradition of writing in early Israelite history, especially in the tribe of Joseph. In addition, reporting on the level of literacy in ancient Israel, Brigham Young University scholar Dana M. Pike stated,

Clearly, the evidence of inscriptions indicates that people could write and read. The evidence also indicates that Israelites, like other West Semites, utilized a twenty-two-character alphabet developed by Canaanites about eight hundred years before Jeremiah and Lehi, which made literacy a seemingly simple attainment in contrast to the complex and cumbersome writing systems of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and Hittites; their systems required years to master and essentially limited literacy to professional scribes.

John W. Welch and Robert D. Hunt of Brigham Young University agreed that the people of Jerusalem at the time Lehi and his family left spoke an archaic form of Hebrew and that many Israelites, not just the wealthy, knew how to write. The educational values of the society Lehi’s family had left—in which literacy was the norm—would have undoubtedly influenced their newly created society in the Americas.

**Literacy in Concurrent Civilizations of the Preclassic Mayan Era**

Some scholars, like Sorenson, believe that the Book of Mormon civilization was in Mesoamerica: “Nearly all qualified scholars who have dealt with that question have come to agree on Mesoamerica, that is, the area of high civilization in central and southern Mexico and northern Central America.”

Although we cannot identify a specific location for the Book of Mormon, from historical and archaeological evidence we do know that the ancient Mayans were a civilization living during the same time frame as the Book of Mormon people. Consequently, research done on literacy among the Mayans becomes a useful resource in studying Book of Mormon literacy during a comparable time period.

Mesoamerica is the land the ancient Mayans inhabited. While there is evidence of high levels of literacy during the classic era in this area, many researchers did not include the Preclassic Maya among the literate until 2003, when writing was discovered in a newly excavated temple in San Bartolo, Guatemala. The discoverers were surprised to find writing in San Bartolo since it is in a small, remote area of Guatemala. This discovery of early Maya writing provides evidence that writing was more widespread and began much earlier than had been thought previously.
Referring to four codices that survived the Spanish Conquest, Mayan scholar Michael Coe stated, “Our knowledge of ancient Maya thought must represent only a tiny fraction of the whole picture, for of the thousands of books in which the full extent of their learning and ritual was recorded, only four have survived to modern times.”

There is evidence that many more written records existed. Coe further commented:

How widespread was literacy among the ancient Maya? Although this question is very difficult to answer, it is usually assumed that this was confined to a very select few. However, one should keep in mind that in all known writing systems, especially those with a logophonic basis (based on both meaning signs and sound signs, as is the case with the Mayan, Egyptian, and Chinese), it is far easier to read such a script than to write it. In fact, most of the great Classic carved monuments were displayed in public places, and were obviously meant to be read by more than a narrow group of elite scribes and bureaucrats. And, finally, as the success of various Maya workshops held in recent years in several American cities has proved, a rough-and-ready reading knowledge of the script may be gained by relative neophytes within the space of a single week!

This observation opens up new avenues in regard to literacy for the ancient inhabitants of America.

Continuity of Written Language from Nephi to Moroni

The Book of Mormon begins with Nephi declaring that he understood the writing of both the Jews and the Egyptians. He declared, “Therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days. Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 1:1–2). Moroni ended his portion of the gold plates by explaining, “We have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech. And if our plates had been sufficiently large we should have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record” (Mormon 9:32–33). Consequently, it appears that their modified Hebrew was the easier of the two languages to write. During the thousand years that transpired between these two statements, both reformed Egyptian and Hebrew were available to Mormon and Moroni as they finished their record.
The Pattern for Keeping Records

From the outset of the Book of Mormon, Lehi encouraged his family to read and search the scriptures. Nephi and his brothers were sent back to Jerusalem to get the brass plates because they would need to have the scriptures available to them in the promised land. As soon as Lehi had the plates in his possession, he thanked God and then immediately started reading (see 1 Nephi 5:10–21).

Both Lehi and Nephi set an example to their posterity as they read and studied the brass plates while they were still in the wilderness. Nephi explained, “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26; emphasis added). This passage references oral communication, but in the end, Nephi and Lehi wrote their teachings. Nephi produced a written record so that his children, including his unborn posterity, would be able to read the scriptures. Knowing that he would not always be there to teach his posterity, Nephi wrote his words and created an expectation for keeping records so that everyone would be able to read of Christ (see 1 Nephi 6:6). The written record would help keep their oral teachings correct.

When Jacob took possession of the plates of Nephi, he mentioned the difficulty of writing on the plates. He then explained that even though it was very time consuming, they had a good reason to take the time and put forth the effort required to write on metal: “Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently to engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren and our children will receive them with thankful hearts” (Jacob 4:3). Jacob had previously said that if they wrote on other material, it would perish (see vv. 1–2). He evidently intended that his brethren, his children, and his posterity would have his testimony of Christ for generations to come, which is why he chose to use metal plates. Lehi and Nephi would have been familiar with other writing media, such as papyrus, wood, or leather, all of which were in use in Jerusalem at the time Lehi’s family left.13

Mesoamerican anthropologist William L. Fash noted that in addition to thousands of inscriptions carved in stone, there were “countless other texts and images painted or carved on more perishable media (e.g. cloth, wood, stucco, or bark-paper books).”14

The Nephites might have already written on other materials but knew that if they wanted their record to be permanent, they would need to write on metal. This strategy would give them a record as
permanent as the brass plates. In order for the scriptures to be searched and pondered, they would need to be accessible to others, not just the keeper of the records. Perhaps copies of the scriptures at this time were written on other media that would ultimately perish, making it possible for more than one person at a time to read and search the scriptures. As early as Jacob 5:1, Jacob asked his listeners if they remembered to have read the words of Zenos, a prophet mentioned in the brass plates. He asked the question as a way of prompting their memory, as though he expected his audience to have read Zenos.

Following Nephi and Jacob, many of Jacob’s descendants kept the record—beginning with Enos, Jarom, and Omni, and ending with Amaleki. These writers faithfully, though briefly, kept the record from generation to generation. We learn little doctrine or history in the books of Jarom and Omni; nevertheless, they do provide proof that the ability to read and write, along with knowledge of the scriptures, continued unbroken during this time. The fact that the small plates of Nephi exist indicates that the writers valued and were dedicated to preserving the records. If they had not continued writing and handing down the record from generation to generation, they would not have been able to give the plates ultimately to Mosiah. In that case, neither we nor they would have had the important teachings that were recorded on the small plates of Nephi.

The people of Limhi kept records when they left Zarahemla to go to the land of Nephi. When Ammon found the people of Limhi, he was able to read the record they had kept, presumably with no difficulty, even though the people in Nephi and the people in Zarahemla had been separated for about eighty years. King Mosiah was also able to read the record of the people of Limhi when they reunited in the land of Zarahemla (see Mosiah 7:19–33; 8:6; 25:5–7). Perhaps their language did not change after being apart for so many years because they had taken the scriptures with them.

When Jesus was among the Nephites, he commanded them to “write these sayings after [he was] gone” so that a record would be kept to bring the Gentiles to the “knowledge of [him], their Redeemer” (3 Nephi 16:4). Jesus also commanded them to bring their records to him. After reading them, he identified other prophecies that should be added to their written record, including words of Malachi that compare to Malachi 3–4 in the Bible (see 3 Nephi 24–25). Jesus explained the importance of adding these verses: “These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations. . . .
And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people; but behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people” (3 Nephi 26:2, 6–7). Jesus knew that the writings of Malachi would be in our Bible and gave the Malachi chapters to the Nephites for their own benefit. We have a condensed version of Christ’s teachings in the Book of Mormon, while the Nephites had a more complete record. Some of the scripture kept by the Nephites was intended for them, and some for future readers. For example, Nephi expected his written words to reach his people as well as later readers as he said, “Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write” (2 Nephi 25:3).

**Searching the Scriptures**

The following references show examples of people, both elite and common, being commanded to search the scriptures. King Benjamin commanded his sons to “search them diligently, that ye may profit thereby” (Mosiah 1:7; emphasis added). While Jesus was speaking to the multitude in Bountiful following his resurrection, he spoke of the prophecies of Isaiah and said, “Behold they are written, ye have them before you, therefore search them” (3 Nephi 20:11; emphasis added). A little later, Jesus again admonished the multitude to search the scriptures relating to Isaiah: “And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah” (3 Nephi 23:1; emphasis added).

From these statements, we know Jesus expected the Nephites to take the time to search the scriptures to learn more of the prophecies. As Jesus finished his visit with the Nephites, he commanded the people to write his words, and then he admonished them again to search the prophets: “Therefore give heed to my words; write the things which I have told you. . . . Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things” (3 Nephi 23:4–5; emphasis added). The multitude he was teaching would need to have the scriptures available in order to search them. In order to fulfill this commandment to search the scriptures, the ability to read and the possession of copies of scriptures needed to extend into their communities, as not all of the Nephites could gather around the prophet in one single location to be taught.

The commandment to search the scriptures and keep records was given to Lehi and Nephi and continued through Jacob, Benjamin, and Alma. Even the Savior himself commanded the members of his Church
to search the scriptures. It is easy to think that this command to search the scriptures was addressed to us, forgetting that the command was initially addressed to the Nephites.

**Literacy throughout Book of Mormon Society**

From the following examples, which include the poor, the Lamanites, apostates, and just ordinary people, we can see that the ability and the expectation to read transcended time, place, and class distinctions. There might never have been a period of time in the Book of Mormon when the people were not expected to be able to read and obey the scriptures. It seems that the records were primarily kept by the leaders of either the government or the Church. It is also possible, however, that many, if not most, of the people could read them.

When Alma and Amulek were on their mission to the Zoramites, some of the poor people who had been cast out of the synagogues because of their poverty and coarse apparel came to Alma with the question of how they could worship. Alma started teaching and then asked them, “Do ye remember to have *read* what Zenos, the prophet of old, has said concerning prayer . . . ?” He then reminded them of the teachings of Zenock and Moses, asking if they remembered having *read* their words also: “Behold, if ye do, ye must believe what Zenos said. . . . Now behold, my brethren, I would ask if ye have *read* the scriptures? If ye have, how can ye disbelieve on the Son of God?” (Alma 33:3, 13–14; emphasis added). Even though they were poor, Alma not only expected them to know how to read, but he also expected them to have the scriptures available and to have studied them.

Zeniff did not mention any difficulty communicating with the Lamanites in the land of Nephi when the group of Nephites he led from Zarahemla arrived there; apparently the spoken language was the same. However, the written aspect of the language was missing. Years later, Amulon and the other priests of King Noah were invited to teach the “language” of the Nephites to the Lamanites under the rule of King Laman. Evidently it was the written, not the spoken, language of the Nephites that they were assigned to teach. “They taught them that they should keep their record, and that they might write one to another” (Mosiah 24:6). When the Lamanites learned to read and write, they began writing to each other and prospering through the increase of commerce that resulted from their ability to correspond (see Mosiah 24:7). While the priests were willing to teach the language, they did not teach the Lamanites about God or the scriptures (see Mosiah 24:1–7). Even though they did not teach the scriptures,
they unwittingly did a great service to the Church, because the ability to read and write proved to be a blessing. Later, when Ammon and his brethren entered the land of Nephi, they were able to teach the gospel to a literate people.

While Ammon was teaching King Lamoni, he “laid before [the king] the records and the holy scriptures of the people, which had been spoken by the prophets, even down to the time that their father, Lehi, left Jerusalem” (Alma 18:36). Apparently Ammon brought scriptures with him on his mission to the Lamanites, and Lamoni was able to read them. Some converted Lamanites, who were friendly with the Nephites, opened a correspondence with the Nephites (see Alma 23:18; 24:8–9).

Other examples that illustrate literacy throughout Book of Mormon society include the accounts of Alma’s experiences with the people in Ammonihah and with Korihor. After the wicked people in the city of Ammonihah cast out the men who believed the teachings of Alma and Amulek, they threw believing women and children into the fire. Then they collected all of the “records which contained the holy scriptures, and cast them into the fire also” (Alma 14:8). These flammable scriptures could have been in the synagogues or perhaps even the homes of the inhabitants of Ammonihah.

Korihor, who had been teaching false doctrine throughout the land, was ultimately brought before Alma. Korihor was a skilled speaker, but there is no evidence that he was a lawyer or a government leader. It is evident, however, that Alma expected Korihor to be familiar with the scriptures. In spite of the testimony Alma bore of the reality of God, Korihor continued to deny his existence. Finally Alma offered Korihor irrefutable evidence from the scriptures: “Will ye say, Show unto me a sign, when ye have the testimony of all these thy brethren, and also all the holy prophets? The scriptures are laid before thee” (Alma 30:44). When Korihor insisted on a sign, one was finally given, and Korihor was struck dumb. “And now when the chief judge saw this, he put forth his hand and wrote unto Korihor, saying: Art thou convinced of the power of God? . . . And Korihor put forth his hand and wrote” (Alma 30:51–52; emphasis added). That both of them put forth their hands to write provides evidence that Korihor was literate and that writing material was readily available to them. Korihor’s fate was immediately published, and a proclamation was sent throughout the land informing those who had believed Korihor’s words that they must speedily repent. The people were convinced by reading or having the proclamation read to them, and they repented (see Alma 30:44–57).
In 3 Nephi, there is a change in the society: it is the first time literacy or learning has a definite connection with the wealth of the people. “And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches” (3 Nephi 6:12). There was great inequality and wickedness among the people of the land and in the Church at this point; in fact, the Church was on the verge of collapse because of the pride of its members. During this time of wickedness, it appears that class distinctions were made according to their riches, which affected the amount of education and learning some people were able to achieve. Nonetheless, when Christ appeared after his resurrection, he expected the multitude to be able to read and search the scriptures.

**Geographical Distribution of Scriptures**

There is evidence that the scriptures were available in places other than just the large population centers like Zarahemla and Bountiful. For example, the people of Zeniff in the land of Nephi had the scriptures with them. From the many references made to the scriptures, it is apparent that Zeniff’s people took the scriptures with them when they left the land of Zarahemla to inherit the land of Nephi. Because of the experience of the people of Zarahemla, Zeniff would have known that they would need to have the scriptures if they were to maintain their language and their religion in their new land. A generation later, under King Noah, the people of Zeniff seemed to have forgotten the importance of the scriptures, and they needed to be called to repentance.

When Abinadi came among the people of King Noah to call them to repentance, there is no indication that he was either a priest or royal; however, he was well versed in the scriptures. The priests of King Noah knew the scriptures well enough to find a passage they could use to challenge Abinadi. “And it came to pass that one of them said unto him: What meaneth the words which are written, and which have been taught by our fathers” (Mosiah 12:20). Abinadi easily answered their question and challenged their effectiveness as priests since they had not applied themselves to understand the scriptures (see Mosiah 12:20–36). While he was being questioned, Abinadi taught the priests by reading directly from the scriptures, saying, “And now I read unto you the remainder of the commandments of God, for I perceive that they are not written in your hearts” (Mosiah 13:11; emphasis added). During his exchange with King Noah’s court, Abinadi taught from the law of Moses and Isaiah (see Mosiah 12–14).
When Helaman, the son of Helaman, took possession of the sacred records and commissioned “all those engravings [to be] written and sent forth among the children of men throughout all the land,” he made a point of saying that he did not include any of “those parts which had been commanded by Alma should not go forth” (Alma 63:12). Helaman did not want to take the chance that those reading the scriptures would read the parts that were forbidden. This distribution made the scriptures more accessible to the general population.

Following the distribution of the scriptures, two interesting things took place in their society. First, over the next fourteen years, the Church grew at such a phenomenal rate that even the Church leaders were amazed. This growth could be a direct result of having scriptures more available. Second, an exceedingly large number of people moved northward. This migration included many of the people of Ammon, who were Lamanites by birth. In addition to building homes, these emigrants built temples, sanctuaries, and synagogues.

Those who moved north had a literate society in their new land. Many records were kept by these people, not just Church or government records. They embraced the pattern of literacy that existed while living in the land of Zarahemla. These records were handed down from generation to generation, perhaps so that individual families would have a record of their particular family. In addition to the Church and government records, they included records of their shipping and building. “But behold, there are many books and many records of every kind, and they have been kept chiefly by the Nephites” (Helaman 3:15). The fact that the records were kept chiefly by the Nephites indicates that at least some of the records were kept by the Lamanites who were living among them.

**Availability of Writing Materials**

Another area to consider is the availability of writing materials for everyday writing. As mentioned earlier, Jacob made it clear that writing on metal was difficult. In order for reading and writing to become widespread, a more convenient way to write was needed. There are at least three instances in the Book of Mormon where evidence suggests that other writing materials were used.

When Alma the Elder fled from King Noah’s servants, he “hid himself that they found him not. And he being concealed for many days did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken” (Mosiah 17:4). Even though Alma was a fugitive in hiding, he apparently had ready access to writing materials and recorded Abinadi’s teachings. The other
instances were discussed earlier in this paper—the ability of Korihor and the judge to simply put forth their hands and write, and the records that were burned in Ammonihah.

Use of Scriptures in Gospel Teaching

King Benjamin, while teaching from his tower, caused his words to be written (see Mosiah 2:8) and sent to the people who were unable to hear his speech. He desired that the people “receive” his words. King Benjamin said, “There are not any among you, except it be your little children that have not been taught concerning these things... and also have been taught concerning the records which contain the prophecies which have been spoken by the holy prophets, even down to the time our father, Lehi, left Jerusalem; and also, all that has been spoken by our fathers until now” (Mosiah 2:34–35; emphasis added). King Benjamin also taught his sons, saying, “My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these commandments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God” (Mosiah 1:3). In both cases, he gave credit to the written record rather than their oral traditions for their knowledge of God and the commandments.

King Benjamin pointed out that without the written scriptures, it was “not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time” (Mosiah 1:4; emphasis added). Here again the written record helped to preserve the purity of oral teaching.

Alma and Amulek were good examples of using the scriptures as they taught the people in Ammonihah. Alma capably used the scriptures in his teaching and then turned the responsibility of learning back to the people: “Now I need not rehearse the matter; what I have said may suffice. Behold, the scriptures are before you; if ye will wrest them it shall be to your own destruction” (Alma 13:20; emphasis added). Many people accepted this invitation to read the scriptures for themselves: “And it came to pass after he had made an end of speaking unto the people many of them did believe on his words, and began to repent, and to search the scriptures” (Alma 14:1; emphasis added).

Jesus expected the people to be able to answer doctrinal questions from their study of the scriptures. After Christ’s Church was
established, the disciples prayed for guidance to know what the name of the Church should be. In response, the Lord said to them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing? Have they not read the scriptures?” (3 Nephi 27:4–5; emphasis added). While the disciples were the ones who prayed for guidance, Jesus expected all the people to have read the scriptures.

**Conclusion**

It seems evident that literacy was widespread among the Book of Mormon people. These people had the scriptures available, and many could read them; thus they were able to keep the commandments. Whether they were able to read for themselves or had a reader share the written word, they were blessed as they took the time to search, ponder, and implement the words of the prophets and the Savior.

Knowing more about the Book of Mormon people and how they depended upon the written word to learn of God helps us understand them better and feel closer to them as we search and ponder the scriptures and liken the scriptures unto ourselves.

President Ezra Taft Benson said, “We must make the Book of Mormon a center focus of study. . . . It was written for our day. The Nephites never had the book; neither did the Lamanites of ancient times. It was meant for us.” Even though the ancient inhabitants of America did not have the Book of Mormon as we have it, the people who lived in Book of Mormon times did have scriptures of the ancient prophets recorded on the brass plates and the writings of their own prophets. The scriptures were widely available for people to read, search, and ponder to bring them to their own testimonies of Jesus Christ.

When we teach our classes, it behooves us to heed King Benjamin’s counsel to have the scriptures “before our students’ eyes” (see Mosiah 1:5). This counsel was critical for the conversion of the Lamanites, and it is also critically important for our students as they read for themselves directly out of the scriptures so the Holy Ghost can testify of the truthfulness of what they read. They too will be able to recognize the false teachings that surround them and will have the blessing of receiving pure doctrine directly from the source. Just as in the days of Adam, God’s people are still commanded to learn to read and write as a safeguard against personal and collective apostasy. Those who cannot read cannot receive the blessings associated with reading the scriptures; therefore gospel literacy materials, entitled *Ye Shall Have My Words*, address the problem of illiteracy in the Church today. God
wants his children to read his words so they can “begin to learn and feel the power of his words.” When people are able to read, they can immerse themselves in the scriptures and prayerfully receive personal revelation to know the meaning of the scriptures for themselves.

Notes

Active Learning and the Savior’s Nephite Ministry

Anthony R. Sweat

In October 2002, Elder M. Russell Ballard called for the preparation of “the greatest generation of missionaries in the history of the Church.”¹ This call for “raising the bar”² has had a significant effect on gospel teachers within the Church, and especially those within the Church Educational System (CES). As a result of increased expectations for Church youth, the standards of teaching for religious educators who instruct the youth have also risen. These higher teaching standards call for increased student participation in the learning process.

This heightened focus on student participation has, however, left some religious educators frustrated as they have struggled to understand how student participation is defined and how to best implement it in their classrooms. As student participation has been promoted, some teachers have felt that direct instructional methods, such as lecture, have been discouraged. These religious educators have interpreted student participation to be synonymous with students’ physical and verbal involvement, and therefore inconsistent with teacher lecture. As a result, some teachers have begun to wonder both privately and publicly, “If we aren’t supposed to lecture, then why did the Savior do it so much? Did the Master Teacher use active learning in his teaching? Did he use anything like group work, peer-to-peer instruction, or experiential learning exercises? If so, how? If not, then why are we being asked to?” Seeking understanding and answers to these questions is valuable for the success of today’s CES classroom.
In this paper, the following terms and definitions will be used as follows:

1. **Physical involvement.** When students become involved in the learning process by using one or more of the five physical senses.

2. **Active learning.** When a teacher provides opportunities in the classroom for students to become physically, mentally, and spiritually engaged.

3. **Student participation.** When students exercise agency and choose to become physically, mentally, or spiritually engaged.

**Raising Our Sights: The Development of the Teaching Emphasis**

To understand why increased student participation has recently become a standard of teaching excellence in CES, it is necessary to examine some of the events that precipitated this change. In 2001, Elder Henry B. Eyring called for a newly elevated standard for CES teachers, saying that we needed to “raise our sights” by seeking to have students “become truly converted to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ while they are with us.” In 2003 Elder Eyring repeated a similar theme to CES religious educators when he said, “I have felt as many of you have felt that what we have done and are doing will not be enough. We need greater power to get the gospel down into the hearts and lives of our students.” In conjunction with raising the bar regarding missionary worthiness and preparation, Seminaries and Institutes of Religion assistant administrator Randall L. Hall explained that at that time there also “came a request from the Missionary Executive Committee to the Church Educational System: What can CES do to help us better prepare missionaries?”

Motivated by these combined events, in 2003 the Teaching Emphasis was released to seminary and institute personnel in an effort to meet the call for better-prepared missionaries and to “deepen [the] faith, testimony, and conversion” of the youth they teach. Brother Hall affirmed that the Teaching Emphasis received approbation from the Missionary Executive Committee and that the Church Board of Education called it “very timely.”

While many principles of the Teaching Emphasis—such as encouraging the students to develop habits of daily scripture study, applying gospel principles from the scriptures, and mastering key scriptural passages—are not new, it has a heightened emphasis on increased student participation in the learning process. The document directly refers to students teaching, explaining, sharing, and testifying, and provides
direction to the teacher to “give [students] opportunities to do so with each other in class.” The Teaching Emphasis also speaks of *students* understanding, identifying, and applying gospel doctrines and principles, with the emphasis on the student doing the work, not the teacher doing the work for them. To emphasize this point of student-directed learning, the Teaching Emphasis uses the phrase “help students” in five of the six areas of emphasis when referring to the teacher’s role. Overall, there is a definite and deliberate focus on active learning in the Teaching Emphasis.

**Additional Developments toward Active Learning**

Following the creation and implementation of the teaching emphasis for seminaries and institutes, CES religious educators received back-to-back instruction during two landmark addresses on teaching and learning—one from Elder Richard G. Scott in 2005 and the other from Elder David A. Bednar in 2006. As in Elder Eyring’s 2001 address, both spoke of the need to get the gospel into the hearts of youth and deepen their conversion, and both leaned heavily on the idea of student participation as a key factor in helping this happen. Elder Scott’s words were direct and unequivocal when he instructed, “Never, and I mean never, give a lecture where there is no student participation. A ‘talking head’ is the weakest form of class instruction.” Elder Scott encouraged the use of peer-to-peer teaching and one-on-one interaction as means of involving students more in the learning process. He stressed: “Assure that there is abundant participation because that use of agency by a student authorizes the Holy Ghost to instruct. It also helps the student retain your message. As students verbalize truths, they are confirmed in their souls and strengthen their personal testimonies.”

The following year, Elder Bednar expounded on the scriptural invitation to “seek learning . . . by faith” (D&C 88:118). Again, active learning was a primary focus. Elder Bednar explained that as faith is the principle of action in all intelligent beings, students must act in order to learn by faith: “Are the students we serve acting and seeking to learn by faith, or are they waiting to be taught and acted upon? . . . A learner exercising agency by acting in accordance with correct principles opens his or her heart to the Holy Ghost—and invites His teaching, testifying power, and confirming witness. Learning by faith requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception.”

This spotlight on participatory learning has been evident not only in CES classrooms but also in other areas of religious instruction in
the Church. The Church’s 2007 worldwide leadership broadcast was aimed at addressing teaching and learning in all Church classrooms, with suggestions from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland regarding how to get participants more involved in asking and answering questions. On the university level, BYU–Idaho has recently implemented the Learning Model, which emphasizes student participation in all its classes of higher learning, not just religion courses. One section of the Learning Model, intended for teachers, states, “Teachers organize class discussions and assignments so students have opportunities to act rather than just be passive participants in the learning process.”

This emphasis on active learning has led to some confusion and controversy among religious educators: does this mean that a teacher who doesn’t use physical involvement methods is an ineffective teacher? If students are not paired off in groups discussing doctrines or principles with one another, does that mean they are not learning? If the teacher expounds on a point for more than twenty minutes without student comments or questions, has the teacher violated some sort of new teaching commandment? If there is an abundance of student verbalization and other physical activity, does that mean the teacher got it right and that the Spirit is present?

Although the answers to a few of these questions may seem obvious, they are in fact real and heartfelt concerns for some CES teachers who are struggling to understand and implement these new teaching directives from their leaders. The root of this confusion may be a misunderstanding of the definition of “student participation” and its ultimate purpose in spiritual learning.

Experience: The Best Teacher

Before the definition of student participation can be explored, it must be clarified that the purpose of active learning is to provide the student with spiritual experiences so that conversion may take place. Being involved in learning is a means, not an end. An important insight from both of the aforementioned statements by Elders Scott and Bednar is that it is the students’ use of agency that opens their hearts to have an experience with the Holy Ghost. If students do not have the opportunity to act physically, mentally, or spiritually during the learning process (the means), they usually will not have a spiritual experience (the end). It is proverbially said that experience is the best teacher, and from a gospel perspective, we know that we are here on earth to gain experience. Metaphorically speaking, we can see life as a large participatory classroom where we can learn through experience
to choose good from evil (see 2 Nephi 2:27) and gain attributes that will enable us to become like God. To the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said, “All these things shall give thee experience” (D&C 122:7). The Lord told the Saints in Missouri to wait for the redemption of Zion until they could “be taught more perfectly, and have experience” (D&C 105:10). At times, we even learn in this life “by sad experience” (D&C 121:39). Acting in this mortal sphere (the means) is what provides us with experience and enables us to learn, grow, and become like God (the end).

This principle of action is also true for acquiring spiritual knowledge. For this reason Alma tells us that in order to increase our faith we must “experiment upon [his] words, and exercise a particle of faith” (Alma 32:27). The action words experiment and exercise are keys for obtaining spiritual experience. Similarly, the Lord promised, “If any man will do [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). President Howard W. Hunter taught: “Action is one of the chief foundations of personal testimony. The surest witness is that which comes firsthand out of personal experience. . . . This, then, is the finest source of personal testimony. One knows because he has experienced. He does not have to say, ‘Brother Jones says it is true, and I believe him.’ He can say, ‘I have lived this principle in my own life, and I know through personal experience that it works. I have felt its influence, tested its practical usefulness, and know that it is good. I can testify of my own knowledge that it is a true principle.”

For religious educators, the question becomes whether or not a student’s participation in the classroom fosters deeper spiritual experiences than listening to a teacher who lectures. Or are we confusing the issue altogether if we separate religious instruction into two seemingly opposing categories of student participation versus lecture? Is it possible to do both, having students participate while the teacher lectures?

**Spiritual, Mental, and Physical Exertion**

One idea causing misunderstanding is the belief that active learning is synonymous with physical involvement, and that student participation is something that can be seen or heard by the casual onlooker. Some teachers have concluded that if a teacher is lecturing and students are not verbally participating, then they are not participating at all. Elder Bednar, however, used an expanded definition of student participation that broadens our understanding of the term and opens new possibilities. He said, “Learning by faith requires spiritual, mental, and
physical exertion and not just passive reception.” While each of these three elements constitutes a form of active learning, neither mental nor spiritual exertion is discernible to an outside observer. A learner may have a profound experience in the classroom and be fully engaged in mind or spirit but not necessarily in body. In this case, student participation happens even though the student is silent and appears less physically active in class. This realization calls for a philosophical shift among religious educators who measure student participation only by physical or verbal involvement. In a sincere effort to understand and implement principles of active learning, some of these teachers have overreacted in the very ways that Randall L. Hall warned about in his talk “The Importance of Maintaining Balance,” adopting a distorted view of what student participation means.

Let us closely analyze and not misinterpret Elder Scott’s statement on lecturing. This statement has been used to wrongfully disparage excellent teachers who are branded as “lecturers” (and therefore are now assumed to be ineffective teachers). Elder Scott told religious educators never to give a lecture “where there is no student participation.” He didn’t say, “Never give a lecture.” In fact, a teacher could be doing much of the talking and the students primarily listening, and the students could still be actively involved. Students listening to a lecture could simultaneously be participating physically (looking at a visual aid or handling an item), mentally (following along in the scriptures, taking notes, analyzing rhetorical questions, and pondering points), and spiritually (having ideas come to their minds and feelings come to their hearts as they reflect on what is being said). This is why effective learning can still take place in large-audience formats such as general conference and devotionals, where verbal or physical participation is limited due to logistics and appropriateness. What Elder Scott taught is consistent with the principle of “learning by faith” in that it is indeed possible to give a lecture and have abundant student participation at the same time.

This expanded definition of participatory learning does not give us as religious educators license to drone on hour after hour as a “talking head.” We are responsible for providing active learning opportunities for the students that stimulate and invite them to become physically, mentally, and spiritually involved. Effective teaching most often happens when the teacher encourages involvement in all three of these areas, regardless of the methods employed to facilitate them. The Teaching the Gospel handbook emphasizes that teachers should “stay focused on the learner and not just on teaching. The difference between focusing
on the learner and focusing on teaching or on the teacher is illustrated by the difference in a teacher who says, ‘What shall I do in class today?’ and one who says, ‘What will my students do in class today?’ This principle of remaining focused on the learner and facilitating spiritual, mental, and physical exertion holds true even when giving a lecture.

To further validate this expanded definition of physical, mental, and spiritual involvement in student participation, let us follow President Boyd K. Packer’s counsel and “analyze our ideals and goals and methods [of teaching] and compare them with those of Jesus Christ” as he ministered to the Nephites.

Jesus Expounds and Involves

The Lord’s ministry among the Nephites presents an excellent case study of Jesus’ teaching methods. While there are limitations in its comparison to daily classroom teaching (such as the events surrounding his appearance and the size of the multitude he taught), it is nonetheless a worthy study. The Lord’s personal Nephite ministry has a definite beginning and end, similar to that of a class period or a semester of teaching. He had definite purposes in mind and, apparently, a time frame in which to accomplish them (see 3 Nephi 17:1). Viewing these sacred chapters as a lesson in effective teaching is inspiring and enlightening, especially when seen through the lens of the Savior’s use of active learning methods in his teaching. In his ministry to the Nephites, the Lord demonstrated a wonderful pattern of teaching that facilitates and invites physical, mental, and spiritual effort on the part of each of his learners. For the purposes of this study, we will define Jesus’ personal Nephite ministry as beginning with his resurrected appearance in 3 Nephi 11 and ending with his second ascension from the multitude in 3 Nephi 26.

Jesus’ teaching methods among the Nephites can be broken down into two categories: (1) *group involvement* and (2) *Jesus expounding*. “Group involvement” is defined as any time the multitude physically participated in something together. “Jesus expounding” (see 3 Nephi 26:1) is defined as any time the Savior verbally taught and explained truths of the gospel as the multitude listened. When his teaching methods are separated into these two categories, an interesting pattern emerges regarding the Savior’s ability to incorporate lecture with physical, mental, and spiritual participation:

- 3 Nephi 11. Group involvement (all feel the Savior’s wounded side and the prints in his hands and feet)
• 3 Nephi 12–16. Jesus expounds (the Nephite Sermon on the Mount)
• 3 Nephi 17. Group involvement (Jesus heals the sick; angels minister to children)
• 3 Nephi 18. Group involvement (sacrament administered)
• 3 Nephi 18. Jesus expounds (teachings on the sacrament)
• 3 Nephi 19. Group involvement (disciples’ baptisms, ministering angels, marvelous prayer with Jesus)
• 3 Nephi 20. Group involvement (second sacrament, Jesus provides bread and wine miraculously)
• 3 Nephi 20–23. Jesus expounds (words of Isaiah)
• 3 Nephi 24–25. Jesus expounds (words of Malachi)
• 3 Nephi 26. Jesus expounds (all things from the beginning)
• 3 Nephi 26. Group involvement (tongues of babes and children loosed and they utter marvelous things)

In all, there are six times the group was physically involved and five times the Master expounded doctrine to the Nephites. This is a wonderful blend, incorporating both physical involvement and “lecture.”

The Lord encouraged physical, mental, and spiritual exertion as he taught, both while he expounded and as the multitude was physically active. The following are categorized examples of the means the Savior employed that could fall under the headings of physical, mental, and spiritual participation. (Note: Although each method falls under only one heading, many of them could be classified into two or all three categories of involvement.)

Physical Participation (Sight, Sound, Touch, Taste, and Smell)

• 3 Nephi 11:15. The multitude touches, sees, and feels Christ’s wounded side and prints in his hands and feet.
• 3 Nephi 11:16–17. The multitude cries out “Hosanna!” and worships Jesus.
• 3 Nephi 17:9–10. The sick and afflicted are healed, and some bathe Christ’s feet with their tears.
• 3 Nephi 17:24. The multitude sees and hears angels minister to their children.
• 3 Nephi 18:1–4. The multitude partakes of the sacrament.
• 3 Nephi 19:2–3. The multitude goes home and tells others that Jesus will minister again tomorrow.
• 3 Nephi 19:18. The multitude and disciples pray out loud.
• 3 Nephi 20:1–9. The multitude partakes of the sacrament and witnesses Jesus’ miraculous provision of bread and wine.
• 3 Nephi 20:9. The multitude cries out and gives glory to Jesus.
• 3 Nephi 26:14. Children and babes open their mouths and speak marvelous things to their fathers.

Mental Participation

• 3 Nephi 12–14. Jesus asks twelve analysis-type questions of those he taught.
• 3 Nephi 17:3. The multitude ponders on Christ’s words at home and prepares their minds for the morrow.
• 3 Nephi 23:11–13. The disciples are commanded to write Samuel’s words according to Jesus’ reproof.
• 3 Nephi 24:1. The disciples are commanded to write the words of Malachi that Jesus quotes.

Spiritual Participation

• 3 Nephi 17:2–3. The multitude is told to pray in their homes to understand Christ’s words.
• 3 Nephi 17:9. Jesus heals all the sick and afflicted.
• 3 Nephi 17:16–17. The people’s souls are filled with joy as they see and hear Jesus pray for them.
• 3 Nephi 19:15–36. Jesus prays with and for the disciples; the people’s hearts are opened.
• 3 Nephi 20:9. The multitude is filled with the Spirit after the sacrament.

These are merely a few examples of the diverse methods used by the Savior to invite physical, mental, and spiritual exertion. The Lord utilized a variety of involvement methods in these chapters, such as peer-to-peer teaching, tactile experiences, student verbal expression, silent pondering, question analysis, visual stimuli, auditory experiences, writing and note taking, and prayer. These are all methods we can employ in our daily classes. This variety of involvement methods not only appeals to different learning styles and helps keep students attentive, but more importantly it provides multiple opportunities for students to exercise their agency in the learning process.

Perhaps more exemplary than Jesus’ teaching methods is his ability to invite individual participation on all levels of physical, mental, and spiritual exertion. A wonderful example of this is found in Jesus’ initial
appearance to the Nephites in 3 Nephi 11. In this example, it appears that Jesus purposely chose to individually involve the Nephites when more passive involvement might have sufficed. That the first thing the Savior did upon his appearance was allow the entire multitude to individually feel his wounds is a testament to the power of individual engagement in the learning process. Notice the words that imply individual involvement in these verses:

> Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands. (3 Nephi 11:14–15; emphasis added)

Providing this sacred, intimate, and individually involved experience was no small task, as the record indicates that there were 2,500 men, women, and children present (see 3 Nephi 17:25). Why, then, did the Savior take the time to engage them individually, when he could have simply held up his hands and shown the multitude that he was the Redeemer? Perhaps it is because his invitation to “arise and come forth” (3 Nephi 11:14) allowed each Nephite to employ exertion physically (to walk up to him to see and touch the prints), mentally (to think about the meaning of the prints), and spiritually (to feel reverence for and sense the spiritual significance of the prints while in his resurrected presence). Although this individual involvement took more time and effort, note the result for each person involved: “And [they] did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him” (3 Nephi 11:15–17; emphasis added). It is quite possible that this sacred experience resulted in increased testimony because it was an individual experience that combined all three areas of participation: physical, mental, and spiritual.

Although we cannot recreate in our daily classes many of the miraculous experiences the Savior provided during his Nephite ministry, we can nevertheless learn from and seek to emulate the principles of effective teaching the Savior employed. His masterful ability to facilitate and
invite physical, mental, and spiritual effort on the part of all his learners is a pattern we can following to make our teaching spiritually effective.

Broadening Active Learning

As CES continues to discuss and promote active learning, perhaps we should expand our definition of the term. Active learning is more than just physical or verbal involvement. It is, as Elder Bednar taught, physical, mental, and spiritual exertion. Those three elements all constitute forms of student participation and can promote “learning by faith.” Two of the three areas of involvement are not always discernible to an outside observer. A student may be fully engaged mentally and spiritually and participatory learning may be happening even though physically the student does not appear active. We might also remember that it is possible to give a lecture with abundant student participation, as the Savior demonstrated so effectively and as Elder Scott suggested. As religious educators, we do ourselves and our colleagues a great disservice if we think student participation is limited only to physical or verbal involvement, thus disparaging the idea of any teacher lecture. In the same way, we also do our students a great disservice if, thinking that the Savior did not involve his learners as active participants in a variety of ways, we decide that neither should we.

It is clear from studying the Savior’s ministry and teaching methods among the Nephites that his students were abundantly involved, physically, mentally, and spiritually. This type of student participation is what the Teaching Emphasis, the Learning Model, Elder Scott, Elder Bednar, and other Brethren have encouraged us to implement, regardless of the methods employed, because it helps foster spiritual experiences. The more we model our teaching after the Master Teacher, the more our students will be able to exercise their agency in learning, thus opening their hearts to the Holy Ghost and becoming “converted unto the Lord” (4 Nephi 1:2).

Notes


“Peaceable Followers of Christ” in Days of War and Contention

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From the Book of Mormon we learn how disciples of Christ live in times of war.¹

—President Ezra Taft Benson

How will wars flooding the earth today impact the future of our students’ lives? What state of mind and condition of heart is acceptable to the Lord in war? What brings inner peace in times of war and contention? As religious educators, we can help students recognize and develop the godlike attributes of exemplary individuals in the Book of Mormon who faced war and contention in their day. We can develop the same spiritual reservoir and degree of sanctification that many individuals in the Book of Mormon developed while living in wartime.

Living in mortality presents two options, two camps, in which we can enlist—the camp of the hard-hearted or the camp of the soft-hearted (see Alma 62:41). Elder Dallin H. Oaks, speaking of adversity stemming from war, said, “Wars seem to be inherent in the mortal experience. We cannot entirely prevent them, but we can determine how we will react to them. For example, the adversities of war and military service, which have been the spiritual destruction of some, have been the spiritual awakening of others.”²

We live in a day when those we teach may find themselves fighting either by choice or by the invitation of their government. Some of our students may have already experienced a tour of duty in which they saw
battles firsthand. It is a day when some we teach may be separated from loved ones in conflict or, in some instances, actually live in countries in which the blood of war has come to their neighborhoods. Many of our students know that war and carnage are taking place because of what they read in newspapers and hear and watch on television.

We are a people of peace and are commanded to “renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children” (D&C 98:16). However, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “There are times when we must stand up for right and decency, for freedom and civilization, just as Moroni rallied his people in his day to the defense of their wives, their children, and the cause of liberty.”

RIGHTEOUS Nephites went to war for similar reasons: “to support their lands, . . . houses, . . . wives, and their children, . . . their rights and their privileges, . . . and also their liberty, that they may worship God according to their desires” (Alma 43:9; see also vv. 30, 45, 47–49).

Nevertheless, Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Second Quorum of the Seventy, a retired general, soberly reminded all of us, “War has a frightening ability to numb our Christian sensitivities.” As teachers, we have the privilege of inspiring students to avoid influences and behaviors that will numb their Christian sensitivities. We also have the privilege of helping them understand their role when faced with aggressive and confrontational forces. We can help students discover how disciples of Jesus Christ live in times of war and in moments of contention.

Coping with opposition at home or contending with an enemy in an armed battle, our students can still become men and women of righteousness. They can be right with the Lord at the same time they face the wrongs of a formidable enemy. They can be “peaceable followers of Christ . . . that have obtained a sufficient hope by which [they] can enter into the rest of the Lord” (Moroni 7:3). This article addresses a few principles that relate to becoming “peaceable followers of Christ.”

Enduring in Righteousness

Shortly after his father’s death, Moroni recorded, “And no one knoweth the end of the war” (Mormon 8:8). Students of the Book of Mormon recognize that Mormon and Moroni lived in some of the most disheartening days ever lived in and written about. Mormon and Moroni witnessed the entire destruction of their people. Mormon taught in places of worship on faith, hope, and charity, even though he lived among a people “strong in their perversion; . . . brutal, sparing
none,” “without principle,” a people continually “seeking for blood and revenge” (Moroni 9:19–20, 23). It may be helpful to point out to students some characteristics about Mormon’s ability to endure in righteousness during a time of war and conflict.

Ammaron discerned the spiritual characteristics of Mormon and that he was “a sober child, . . . quick to observe” (Mormon 1:2). This disposition helped him with his unique and challenging experiences later in life. The word sober as used in the context of Mormon chapter 1 might include restrained, serious, solemn, and calm. Elder David A. Bednar commented on Mormon’s spiritual capacity: “Your future success and happiness will in large measure be determined by this spiritual capacity. . . . When we are quick to observe, we promptly look or notice and obey. Both of these fundamental elements—looking and obeying—are essential to being quick to observe. And the prophet Mormon is an impressive example of this gift in action.”

Mormon learned in his youth to keep the commandments of God. His ability to differentiate between right and wrong and his moral courage to choose the right led him to become not only a young general but also a trustworthy representative of the Lord. It was the custom of the Nephites to appoint “some one that had the spirit of revelation and also prophecy” (3 Nephi 3:19).

As prophet-historians, Moroni and his father knew the ramifications when their people indulged in iniquity and forgot their God, both individually and as a nation. Their physical and spiritual endurance, knowing the end result for an unrepentant people, are fine examples of those who endured in righteousness. Mormon wrote to Moroni after an intense and difficult loss to the Lamanites: “And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God” (Moroni 9:6).

Notwithstanding the difficulties of their ministry, Mormon and Moroni never lost an understanding of Satan’s destructive desires. Peaceable followers of Jesus Christ distinguish the brotherhood of men (our brethren) from the motives of Satan (our enemy). Satan “maketh war with the saints of God” (D&C 76:29), a hauntingly pervasive truth that needs to be remembered as man prepares to fight man. Mormon and Moroni knew that if their people conquered Satan’s temptations individually, then peace would prevail, and contention would subside for the entire nation. Previous generations (see 4 Nephi) confirmed
their hope in the possibility of lasting peace, thus strengthening their spiritual endurance. As our students become sober like Mormon, quick to observe, obedient, trustworthy, and diligent, they will be able to endure in righteousness in days of conflict. They can experience, as Elder Oaks suggested, a “spiritual awakening” rather than “spiritual destruction.”

**Praying Mightily**

To successfully handle the contention and aggressions of war requires a heart and mind dependent upon God. There are several examples in the Book of Mormon of men relying upon God for support rather than putting their “trust in the arm of flesh” (2 Nephi 4:34). Helaman, in physical distress during war and unable to obtain sufficient food and men, turned to the Lord in mighty prayer for support: “We did pour out our souls in prayer to God, that he would strengthen us and deliver us. . . . And it came to pass that the Lord our God did visit us with assurances that he would deliver us; . . . he did speak peace to our souls, and did grant unto us great faith, and did cause us that we should hope for our deliverance in him” (Alma 58:10–11).

Alma was “a man of God” (Alma 2:30) who sought earnestly to defend his people from Lamanite violence and hostility. Alma was also a man who had to “contend mightily” (Alma 2:29) with a bloodthirsty Nephite dissident and slay him with the sword. The intention and condition of his heart and mind were manifested in the battle. Alma desired to “preserve his people from being destroyed” (Alma 2:21). He sought to defend his people, their rights, and their moral agency. This great prophet-leader also encouraged mighty prayer in which “the Lord did hear their cries, and did strengthen them” (Alma 2:28).

Naturally, the scene of the approaching enemy and the vastness of their numbers transformed the urgency of the Nephite situation and their individual and collective reliance upon God for deliverance. Alma also turned to the Lord in mighty prayer. Note the language of peace and the depth of sincerity in the prayer uttered by Alma in this difficult position: “O Lord, have mercy and spare my life, that I may be an instrument in thy hands to save and preserve this people” (Alma 2:30). Fighting face to face with an enemy who was trying to destroy his life, Alma pleaded to save the lives of others, demonstrating a pure instinct of one converted to the Lord’s gospel.

Captain Moroni was “a man that did not delight in bloodshed” (Alma 48:11) yet saw much of it. He was “a man who was firm in the faith of Christ” (v. 13), manifesting his dependence on the Lord. He
also prayed for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his people. After hoisting the title of liberty, “he bowed himself to the earth, and he prayed mightily unto his God” (v. 13). “He was a man of a perfect understanding” who “did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country” and “whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed” (vv. 11–12).

Grounded in the faith of Jesus Christ, Captain Moroni defended his people, their rights, and their religion. He sustained the Nephite tradition to never give offense and to raise the sword only against aggressive enemies (see vv. 13–14) after having approached the Lord in fervent prayer for his help and guidance. Under such gospel-principled leadership, the Nephites experienced happiness. His example resonated with his son Moronihah and the rising generation who “did pray unto the Lord their God continually,” remembering “how great things the Lord had done for them . . . [delivering] them out of the hands of their enemies” (Alma 62:50–51).

Nephi, who lived with opposing and contentious family members (later to become war-driven), described “[waxing] bold in mighty prayer before [the Lord]” (2 Nephi 4:24), having learned at an early age to call upon him (see 1 Nephi 2:16). He confronted his two unbelieving brothers, who had been disputing over their father’s teachings, with the simple inquiry, “Have ye inquired of the Lord?” (1 Nephi 15:8). Nephi understood that disputations with one another and the hardness of men’s hearts were a direct result of failing to inquire of the Lord (see 1 Nephi 15:2–3). His brothers, never learning the lesson, became “past feeling” (1 Nephi 17:45), and “did seek to take away [Nephi’s] life” (2 Nephi 5:2), for which Nephi “did cry much unto the Lord my God, because of the anger of [his] brethren” (2 Nephi 5:1).

Praying mightily may have as much reference to frequency as to sincerity (see Ether 2:13–15). While engaged in building a ship to cross a mighty ocean, Nephi “did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto [him] great things” (1 Nephi 18:3). The sons of Mosiah “had given themselves to much prayer, . . . therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation” (Alma 17:3).11 Joseph Smith said, “If you . . . exercise fervent prayer and faith in the sight of God always, He shall give unto you knowledge by His Holy Spirit, yea by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now.”12

Our students must take responsibility for what they pray for and how frequently they address Father in Heaven. Mormon warned it is “counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of
heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such” (Moroni 7:9). The examples of Helaman, Alma, Captain Moroni, Nephi, and the sons of Mosiah reflect an unflinching dependency upon the Lord. Identify with students the descriptive words of those who pray with a heart and mind dependent upon the Lord (e.g., “pour out,” “bowed himself . . . praying mightily,” “waxing bold,” “oft,” “much prayer,” “cried unto,” “kneeled down”). Encourage them to discover the blessings and assurances God had granted unto these men and their people in times of war as well as personal distress and family disputations.

Our students today can also have blessings and assurances granted as they “[cry] unto him in mighty prayer” (Enos 1:4). Praying mightily to him in moments of urgency will largely reflect having prayed sincerely to him in moments of solitude. Establishing a pattern of persistent and purposeful prayer will further instill the attitudes and behaviors representative of a peaceable follower of Christ, even when our students are face to face with an enemy or find themselves in a contentious situation.

Lay Hold upon the Word of God

One result of war and contention is misery. One way to ensure our safe “course across that everlasting gulf of misery” is to “lay hold upon the word of God” (Helaman 3:29). Mormon credited the Church’s prosperity in days of conflict and political turmoil to “their heed and diligence which they gave unto the word of God” (Alma 49:30). No wonder conspiring Lamanites and apostate Nephites who attempted to subjugate faithful Nephites held the word of God in disdain and sought to destroy the records “which contained the holy scriptures” (Alma 14:8; see also Enos 1:14).

Power and happiness are granted unto those who lay hold upon the word of God. Captain Moroni acknowledged to Zerahemnah that the Nephites had been strengthened in their cause to defend themselves because of the “maintenance of the sacred word of God, to which [they] owe[d] all [their] happiness” (Alma 44:5). So it is today. Great effort is made in maintaining and disseminating the word of God. Latter-day Saints have imperatives regarding the word of God: to rely on or trust in the word of God, to know the word of God, and to preach the word of God.

A particular example of relying upon the word of the Lord is Captain Moroni. As the responsibilities of the Nephite army fell upon Moroni’s shoulders when he was twenty-five (see Alma 43:17), he met
a degenerate and ferocious Lamanite army led by Nephite dissenters. To locate the whereabouts of this debased army, Moroni appealed to the prophet Alma and asked him to “inquire of the Lord whither the armies of the Nephites should go to defend themselves.” Moroni responded promptly to “the word of the Lord [that] came unto Alma” (Alma 43:23–24). Moroni had the spiritual characteristics of not only seeking the word of the Lord but also trusting it, as given by the Lord’s servant (see D&C 1:38). This is a spiritual characteristic essential for disciples today.

Mormon and Abinadi are examples of knowing the word of God. Mormon was familiar with the prophecies and teachings of Abinadi and Samuel the Lamanite (see Mormon 1:19). Through the records of previous prophets and the influence of his father, Ammaron, and others not mentioned, Mormon prepared and placed himself in a position to be familiar with the dealings of God in previous generations. Not only was he an instrumental record keeper, but he was influenced by the content.

Abinadi’s knowledge of the word of God is evident when he was before wicked King Noah and his pretended priests. Their contentious and murderous spirits did not disrupt him. He was bold and direct, courageous and specific in what the Lord needed him to do—call the people of Noah to repentance. In many teaching situations his delivery and setting often overshadowed what he specifically taught, but Abinadi is an example of one who knew the word of God, both written and revelatory. Remarkably, he extensively quoted scriptures from the writings and prophecies of Moses and Isaiah, especially the Ten Commandments and the messianic prophecies.

Abinadi had a purpose, a people, and a message. He was placed among a specific group of people at an appointed time that he might reclaim them and teach them the plan of salvation. Our students also have a purpose, a people, and a message. They will be placed in a variety of situations and locations throughout their lives. To what extent they influence the minds and hearts of their fellow men in those situations and locations will largely rest on how the word of God has influenced their hearts and minds.

It is our charge as religious instructors to help students understand the gospel so they can identify doctrines and principles, explain them, and testify of them. Elder Lance B. Wickman of the Seventy reminded Latter-day Saints, “Seasons of conflict do not change the message of the gospel.”14 If anything, seasons of conflict should instill a greater urgency to share the gospel.
A particular example of preaching the word of God in a season of conflict is Alma. Though he had military experience—including hand-to-hand combat—Alma knew that the power of the word fostered real change. Alma gave up the judgment seat to “preach the word of God [to his people] . . . , seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them” (Alma 4:19). In this way, he represented the Savior as a peaceable follower and honorable bearer of the standards of heaven. His labors bore fruit. He went from standing face-to-face and sword-to-sword with Amlici near the river of Sidon during a battle to standing face-to-face and hand-in-hand in the river Sidon with those who had repented (see Alma 2:29, 34–35; 3:3; 4:4). The river Sidon was a scene of bloodshed, later to become a place of baptism.

Alma spent the rest of his life preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ among a people shrouded in war and contention (see Alma 36:24). “The sons of Alma did go forth among the people, to declare the word unto them. And Alma, also, himself, could not rest, and he also went forth” (Alma 43:1). Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said, “By preaching righteousness, our missionaries seek to treat the causes of war.” Alma and his sons likewise attempted to ease the ramifications of war by preaching the word of God. Mormon recognized that Alma, “being grieved for the iniquity of his people, yea for the wars, and the bloodsheds, and the contentions which were among them” (Alma 35:15), gathered his sons “separately” to address “things pertaining unto righteousness” (Alma 35:16). This they did at a time when war and contention were flooding their civilization.

Mormon interposed accounts of Alma’s words to his sons—Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton—before returning to the “account of the wars between the Nephites and the Lamanites” (Alma 43:3). Notwithstanding their level of spiritual maturity or past behaviors, all three sons were told to go forth and declare the word—soberly, boldly, and truly—that they may “bring souls unto repentance, that the great plan of mercy may have claim upon them” (Alma 42:31; see also 37:47; 38:10–15).

Our missionary labors directed by prophets and apostles parallel Alma’s charge to his sons. In Alma’s day, as in our day, youth and single adults may serve in both fields of labor—as servants devoted to the ministry and as servants protecting the ministers. Captain Moroni was supported by the Lord physically while facing a fearsome enemy with weapons, while “Helaman and his brethren . . . did preach the word of God, and . . . baptize[d] unto repentance” (Alma 48:19).
As teachers, we would not want to draw a polar distinction between Alma, Captain Moroni, and Helaman. They relied upon the revelations of God and left an exemplary legacy of gospel living and gospel preaching in days of war and contention (see Alma 48:17–19). There is only one field of labor—“to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). This labor was accomplished as they wielded both the sword of truth and the sword of war.

Unprincipled men and the ravages of war destroy the souls of men, while the labors of gospel-oriented military personnel and missionaries save souls. There are times to bury weapons and times to wield the sword in honorable defense (see note 4). We should remember, however, that the sword of truth is never buried.

As our students rely upon the word of God, know the word of God, and preach the word of God, they will be assured and strengthened in times of conflict. They can be “clasped in the arms of Jesus” (Mormon 5:11) when others are throwing their arms up in chaos and confusion. Defining moments with the Savior will fortify them in their confrontations with the adversary. Such moments in coming to know the goodness of the Savior and his word, in private and in class, will strengthen them as they live in a war-driven and contentious generation.

**Self-Control and Long-Suffering**

Enduring suffering with patience increases one’s degree of self-control. The victory is not subjecting our fellow brother to our will or giving into the enticing of the evil one, but rather submitting our will to the will of the Savior. The victory may be best defined in Captain Moroni, who did not glory in “shedding of blood but in doing good, in preserving his people, yea, in keeping the commandments of God, yea, in resisting iniquity” (Alma 48:16).

Peaceable followers of Jesus Christ do not desire others to be destroyed or brought into subjection—they desire for themselves and for others an opportunity to repent and be free. Growing in degrees of self-control and long-suffering positively affects our thoughts, words, and actions as we work out our own salvation and help extend the message of salvation to others. This is a lesson learned by Ammon and Alma but not understood by individuals such as Amlici and Amalickiah.

“Much pleased” with Ammon, King Lamoni desired Ammon to “take one of his daughters to wife” (Alma 17:24). Although not against marriage, Ammon declined. He submitted to the timing and will of the Lord. He labored for the souls of men. As he did so, aggressive
and murderous enemies of the king challenged him. Courageously he defended the king’s flocks and servants with the sword. Nonetheless, Mormon describes this valiant missionary as being “wise, yet harmless” (Alma 18:22). This is an interesting description, as he had to physically confront an enemy.

Ammon’s self-control and long-suffering became even more apparent when he came before a silent and stunned king. In a second opportunity to gratify a “natural man” tendency, Ammon told the king, “Whatsoever thou desirest which is right, that will I do” (Alma 18:17). He was submissive in a situation where it would have been very easy to be manipulative. They knew he had great power; some were even convinced he was “the Great Spirit” (Alma 18:3). Ammon understood his purpose for living among the Lamanites was to “be an instrument in the hands of God to bring [them], if it were possible . . . to the knowledge of the truth” (Alma 17:9). Evidence that Ammon understood his purpose is further illustrated, by the story of when he met Lamoni’s father. His exemplary level of self-control is directly correlated with his love of the truth and long-suffering toward the children of God.

Alma also developed this striking characteristic of self-control. After years of war, Alma (along with Amulek) witnessed the dreadful scene of innocent women and children being thrown into the fire in Ammoniah. Alma’s response to the awful event reveals his long-suffering and his love as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Amulek represented the reaction many believers would have: “Let us stretch forth our hands, and exercise the power of God which is in us, and save them from the flames” (Alma 14:10). Alma responded, “The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand” (Alma 14:11).

There was nothing inherently wrong with Amulek’s desire. He wanted to save people from the flames. In a very difficult position, however, Alma followed the will of the Lord instead of the natural instincts of man (see Alma 14:17–19). His discipline and spiritual maturity, his heed to spiritual promptings, and his acceptance of the will of the Lord are exemplary of the character and nature of God himself. When threatened and tortured physically and emotionally by the chief judge and officers of Ammoniah, Alma and Amulek nobly “answered them nothing” (Alma 14:18). Here they followed the composure of the Savior, who would years later stand before the mocking Herod, who questioned the Savior “in many words,” but our Lord “answered him nothing” (Luke 23:9).
Alma faced Korihor approximately eight years later. Here again, Alma showed great self-control in dealing with a man who had a provocative and sign-seeking spirit. He did not want the power of God to condemn Korihor but rather to change Korihor. Alma desired Korihor to repent, not to be struck dumb. He patiently bore Korihor’s “swelling words” and false accusations by trying to help him understand that “all things denote there is a God” (Alma 30:31, 44). Only after an honest attempt to redeem the anti-Christ did Alma exercise the condemning judgment by the power of God.

Godly patience and long-suffering became qualities of Ammon and Alma and complemented their peaceable walk among the children of men. Their example of self-control is pertinent to our growth as representatives of the Savior in a day of horrible tragedies and alarming injustice. Their example is pertinent in a day of lust and lying, in a day of individuals seeking power, position, and prestige. Peaceable followers of Jesus Christ do not seek to get gain or take advantage of their brethren. They seek to be “instruments in the hands of God” (Alma 35:14). They know personally that self-control and long-suffering give them true freedom—freedom from the natural man—and makes them a blessing to their fellow man.

**Spiritual Preparation to Make and Honor Covenants Brings Happiness**

Spiritual preparation helps our students “make and keep sacred covenants.” Honoring covenants not only brings the protecting power of the Lord but genuine happiness. Happiness is a theme throughout the Book of Mormon. Nephi, after leaving his angry and murderous brothers, declared, “We lived after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27).

The reasons for Nephi’s declaration may be summarized in the following: they “believed in the warnings and the revelations of God” (2 Nephi 5:6), they “did observe to keep the . . . commandments of the Lord in all things” (2 Nephi 5:10), they “did build a temple” (2 Nephi 5:16). The temple is a symbol of a covenant people and prepares one to meet the challenges of mortality, such as contention and war. Nephi had “wars and contentions with [his] brethren,” though living in a state of happiness (2 Nephi 5:34). Their covenants fortified them when they were confronted by their hostile brethren.

The phrase “there never was a happier time” (Alma 50:23) is tucked in the middle of the Book of Mormon war chapters. Why would Mormon insert such a comment when the record clearly describes
rebellion, death, and terror in the past, present, and future? Drawing from recorded history and personal experience, Mormon recorded two reasons this happiness was possible.

First, in the war’s respite, while Amalickiah was “obtaining power by fraud and deceit,” Captain Moroni was “preparing the minds of the people to be faithful unto the Lord their God” (Alma 48:7). He understood that faithfulness brought deliverance (see Alma 50:22). Captain Moroni was planting in the hearts of his countrymen the principle of freedom, hoisting the title of liberty “upon every tower which was in all the land” and inviting them to “come forth in the strength of the Lord” (Alma 46:36, 20). Every time the Nephites prepared for an attack “in the strength of the Lord,” they prevailed (see 3 Nephi 4:10).

Captain Moroni’s true legacy is in his effort to prepare the minds and hearts of his people to be faithful to God so they could meet the challenges of war and contention before them. His relentless efforts in “preparations for war” (Alma 50:1) further strengthened the people’s confidence in having physical advantages over their enemies. Captain Moroni’s armies “did increase daily because of the assurance of protection which his works did bring forth unto them” (Alma 50:12). Likewise, by not neglecting spiritual and physical preparations to face the adversary, we gain assurance of the Lord’s protection in times of war and contention. Today, leaders of nations emphasize physical preparation while neglecting spiritual preparation of the heart and mind and failing to enter into a covenant with God.21

Second, “those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called” by “their enemies” (Alma 46:15; 48:10). Here Moroni had an experience similar to that of King Benjamin and his people. He invited the people to enter into a covenant with the Savior and take his name upon them (see Alma 46:20–21). They “came running together with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that they would not forsake the Lord their God” (Alma 46:21). Moroni’s people covenanted not to forsake God.22 Contrast the covenant not to forsake God with the oath of Amalickiah, who “was exceedingly wroth, and he did curse God, and also Moroni, swearing with an oath that he would drink his blood.” This ungodly man was angry “because Moroni had kept the commandments of God in preparing for the safety of his people” (Alma 49:27). By entering into covenants with the Lord, we receive his power and protection. Ordinances and their associated covenants prepare and sustain our minds and hearts as we
face the vicissitudes of mortality. We cannot overstate to our students the importance of entering into covenants with the Lord and then honorably keeping those covenants.

Perhaps Amalickiah’s initial attacks humbled the Nephites. “The people of Nephi did thank the Lord their God, because of his matchless power in delivering them” (Alma 49:28). Through their humility and gratitude, they were reminded of the power of their covenants and of Moroni’s prophetic statement: “Surely God shall not suffer that we, who are despised because we take upon us the name of Christ, shall be trodden down and destroyed, until we bring it upon us by our own transgressions” (Alma 46:18).

As religious educators, we can help our students understand the importance of fortifying their homes and nations by establishing defenses against enemies of sword and enemies of spirituality. Peace and joy are possible in times of ominous political and social forecasts. Interrupters to peace and joy are conquered individually and collectively by keeping the commandments of the Lord and entering into sacred covenants. As these interrupters are conquered, happier times prevail.

**Remembering the Brotherhood of Man**

War and contention in any situation, at any level, is an engagement against *our brethren*. No matter how cold and degenerate a people may become, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man remain eternal truths. Mormon, speaking of Captain Moroni and his people having to shed the blood of their brethren, interjected this significant attribute of all peaceable followers of Jesus Christ: “Now, they were sorry to take up arms against the Lamanites, because they did not delight in the shedding of blood; yea, and this was not all—they were sorry to be the means of sending so many of their brethren out of this world into an eternal world, unprepared to meet their God” (Alma 48:23; emphasis added; see also Mosiah 28:3). Peaceable followers of Jesus Christ contend “with their brethren” (Alma 48:21).

Converted Lamanites declared, “If *our brethren* seek to destroy us, behold, we will hide away our swords . . . ; and if *our brethren* destroy us, behold, we shall go to our God and shall be saved” (Alma 24:16; emphasis added). Pahoran, under the difficulty of an insurrection and in answering Captain Moroni’s censure, proclaimed: “We would not shed the blood of *our brethren* if they would not rise up in rebellion and take the sword against us” (Alma 61:11; emphasis added). The sons of Helaman, in preparing to enter a “terrible battle,” reminded
their leader, “We would not slay our brethren if they would let us alone” (Alma 56:49, 46; emphasis added).

The term enemy or a variation is used over fifty times in the Book of Mormon. We cannot ignore a formidable enemy undermining the truth, mercy, and justice of the plan of redemption. Nor can we excuse the wicked deeds of tyrants, dictators, and terrorists. However, we can be judicious in how we use the term enemy and in what context. Satan, of course, is the “enemy to all righteousness” (Alma 34:23) who seeks to gain “possession of the hearts of the people” (3 Nephi 2:2; emphasis added). He is “the author of all sin,” not just of a particular nation or people. “And behold, he doth carry on his works of darkness . . . from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men” (Helaman 6:30). President Hinckley reiterated: “Treachery and terrorism began with [Satan]. And they will continue until the Son of God returns to rule and reign.”

Conclusion

Our students can face the terrors of war with peace of mind and heart if they acknowledge the influence of the evil one and develop greater understanding of God as our Father. They can be worthy representatives of the Savior in times of war and contention. They too will experience a spiritual awakening, endure in righteousness, pray mightily, trust in the word of the Lord, gain self-control with long-suffering, and prepare to make and honor sacred covenants. Help students understand that amid wars and conflicts, such as those recorded in the Book of Mormon, men and women on both sides can change and recognize a need for a Redeemer. Help them discover that even in events of bloodshed and chaos, people can be awakened to the love of God.

In Alma 24 the Lamanites came against the people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi. In this account, the evil hearts and intentions of men were softened, “swollen in them . . . ; and they came down even as their brethren, relying upon the mercies” of Jesus Christ (vv. 24–25; emphasis added). As our students rely upon the Lord’s mercies, they will valiantly meet the conflicts before them. This they will do with an attitude, state of mind, and condition of heart acceptable to the Lord. They will better see and understand that each of us is “a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents,” which will influence their “peaceable walk with the children of men” (Moroni 7:4).
Notes

4. The primary purpose of this paper is not to detail when it is appropriate to kill. The author suggests the following references regarding these topics: Gordon B. Hinckley, “War and Peace,” Ensign, May 2003, 78–81; Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Times in Which We Live,” Ensign, November 2001, 72–74. In addition, it may be helpful to consider the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith: “God said, ‘Thou shalt not kill;’ at another time He said, ‘Thou shalt utterly destroy.’ This is the principle on which the government of heaven is conducted—by revelation adapted to the circumstances in which the children of the kingdom are placed. Whatever God requires is right, no matter what it is, although we may not see the reason thereof till long after the events transpire” (History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957], 5:135). Two days before his martyrdom, Joseph Smith declared: “There is one principle which is eternal; it is the duty of all men to protect their lives and the lives of the household, whenever necessity requires, and no power has a right to forbid it” (History of the Church, 6:605). Book of Mormon verses that justify when to go to war are Alma 43:9; 44:5; 46:12. See also President Boyd K. Packer’s account of knowing through the Book of Mormon that he could serve in World War II “willingly and with honor” (in Conference Report, April 2005, 6).
6. Joseph Smith declared, “The shedding of blood is entirely foreign to our feelings” (History of the Church, 2:122). Therefore, it will take great fortitude for us and our students to live in the last days. Mormon stood as a witness to the culmination of prophetic utterances by inspired men of the Nephite nation, prophets who knew and saw in vision the destruction of the covenant seed (see Mormon 3:16; 1 Nephi 12:19–23).
7. See also devotional address by Elder David A. Bednar given at Brigham Young University on May 10, 2005. (The address was adapted into an Ensign article, “Quick to Observe,” December 2006, 30–36). Elder Bednar discusses Mormon’s temperament and the importance of being “quick to observe.”
10. See 2 Nephi 2:3–4; Alma 37:35; 38:2.
11. In further discussing this principle with your students, you may wish to use Alma 37:37.
13. This is an endorsement of Nephi’s counsel to his wayward brothers: “Whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction” (1 Nephi 15:24).
15. Alma preached to a people who “had fallen into great errors” and who held his authority to preach the gospel in contempt (Alma 31:9). He preached earnestly “the virtue of the word of God” trusting that “the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else” (Alma 31:5).


17. Alma chapter 35 explains the buildup that led to the Lamanite–Nephite war comprising chapters 43–62. Often we fail to put Alma’s counsel to his sons in context with what we call the “war chapters.” It may be helpful to address the war chapters (recounting approximately a seventeen-year war) as beginning in chapter 35, not excluding the seven chapters of Alma’s counsel to his three sons (36–42). Using these chapters, we may direct our students to discover additional principles in becoming peaceable followers of Jesus Christ.

18. Alma 20:8–27 describes Ammon’s calm courage in facing an angry and murderous man. Ammon boldly persuaded Lamoni’s father with skillful use of the sword, but did not seek to kill him or gain political power.


20. The term happiness appears twenty-three times in the Book of Mormon and is found in seven out of the fifteen major books that comprise the record.

21. Political and military commentary on war stresses the physical conditions of personnel along with the power and preciseness of weaponry, but neglects the condition of the hearts and minds of the people. President Spencer W. Kimball pointed out this tendency: “When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become antienemy instead of pro-kingdom of God” (“The False Gods We Worship,” Ensign, June 1976, 6).

22. King Benjamin’s people covenanted “to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things” (Mosiah 5:5).


In a 2001 address to religious educators, Elder Henry B. Eyring, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, prophetically announced that if our youth are going to have the “spiritual strength sufficient” to negotiate a culture increasingly tolerant of wickedness, then “the pure gospel of Jesus Christ must go down into the hearts of young people by the power of the Holy Ghost . . . while they are with us.”

Teaching that penetrates deep into the heart and empowers students to detect and withstand wicked influences necessitates a conversion. Of conversion, Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught, “This process requires far more than acquiring knowledge. It is not even enough for us to be convinced of the gospel; we must act and think so we are converted by it.” Faith, as a principle of action, drives the conversion process.

Elder David A. Bednar explained that faith-inspired action, which opens a student’s heart to the converting influence of the Spirit, “requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception.” Hence, when students act in faith, they indicate their “willingness to learn and receive instruction from the Holy Ghost.” Such effort constitutes the “tuition of diligence” that must be paid personally if there is to be a true transformation of the heart. When students internalize such an attitude, they become “less concerned about a teacher or speaker holding [their] attention and more concerned about giving [their] attention to the Spirit.”
The miracle of students who have learned how to receive the Holy Ghost through the exercise of faith is that they are in a position to become spiritually self-reliant. With the Holy Ghost as their companion, they will not only be directed to the “personal changes [they will] need to make for full conversion,” but they will also receive the sanctification that comes through the “baptism of fire” (2 Nephi 31:14). Accordingly, one way we can assist our students in the conversion process is to help them identify specific faith-inspired actions that they can apply and practice while they are with us.

**Actions to Identify, Apply, and Practice**

Significantly, the *Teaching Emphasis for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* encourages active and meaningful student participation. Students are to teach, read, study, identify, apply, explain, share, testify, and memorize (see appendix). More to the point, if approached thoughtfully, the teaching emphasis encourages actions that not only foster conversion but also elevate student participation from the level of a discretionary teaching technique to that of a necessary principle of sound gospel instruction. These actions may entail public sharing or private pondering, but either way they always encourage interaction with the Holy Ghost. With this in mind, we will now consider some specific faith-inspired actions that students can apply and practice both in and out of the classroom.

*Ask, seek, and knock.* Students arrive in our classrooms under the stress and strain of daily life. Some may come primed to interact with the Holy Ghost, but others come with distracted minds, heavy hearts, or even defiant attitudes. Until their minds are focused and their hearts are softened, the Holy Ghost can have little converting impact on them. Upfront, simple teaching that clarifies personal responsibility for learning is imperative. When students willingly seek the Lord by choosing to focus their minds and hearts on the doctrines being discussed, then they are manifesting genuine faith. In the language of scripture, they have commenced the process of spiritual learning by *asking, seeking, and knocking.*

The scriptural mandate to ask underscores the importance of personal initiative in regard to receiving heavenly direction. In short, students who ask, seek, and knock are students who have internalized an “attitude of inquiry” and are positioned to experience revelation as a “personalized, dialogic exchange” with their Heavenly Father. In harmony with the Restoration’s pattern of prayer as a dialogue, we are not simply encouraging students to ask but to receive; not simply to speak
to God but to speak *with* God. Consequently, a “major part of teaching
the gospel of Jesus Christ is teaching students this principle [of seeking]
and encouraging them to use it throughout their lifetime.”

In order to encourage in students an attitude of asking, seeking, and
knocking, a teacher must resist the temptation to be the focal point of
a class. A teacher’s knowledge, experience, pedagogical skills, and tes-
timony can be important means to inspire students to seek interaction
with the Holy Ghost, but should not be used to draw undue attention
to the teacher’s abilities. Moreover, it simply is not good enough for
students to be convinced that their teacher delights in the gospel feast.
Teaching that leads to abiding conversion convinces students that they
should come to the table of truth seeking to “feast upon the words of
Christ” for themselves (2 Nephi 32:3). From the beginning of the year
and with constant reminders throughout, students should understand
that no one in our classes needs to be a passive spectator—all can be
active participants.

As teachers, we can “raise our sights” by not merely helping
students identify the need to ask, seek, and knock, but by providing
them meaningful opportunities to do so. Elder Richard G. Scott has
instructed, “Assure that there is abundant participation because that
use of agency by a student authorizes the Holy Ghost to instruct.”

We need not assume students will respond at our bidding or on our
timetable, but we should approach each class with the confidence that
if they are provided opportunities, in due time the majority will act in a
manner that initiates meaningful interaction with the Holy Ghost.

*Foster reverence.* President Boyd K. Packer has taught that “rever-
ence is essential to revelation.” A reverent student embraces sacred
truths with respect, wonder, and awe. In the words of Elder D. Todd
Christofferson, only as we nurture a “sense of the sacred” can the
“Holy Spirit [become our] frequent and then constant companion.”

In our noisy, fast-paced, secular culture, reverence is all but a forgotten
virtue. Hence, it is critical that our students identify a reverent mindset
as a manifestation of faith.

When reverent students approach “holy ground,” they sense the
need to “put off [their] shoes” (Exodus 3:5). Their outward behaviors
manifest an inward respect for sacred things. It is important to remem-
ber, however, that outward acts can tutor inward feelings when those
feelings are insufficient. In other words, the relationship between inner
feelings and behavior is interactive. Any student on any given day may
come to class preoccupied or unmotivated to learn spiritual things.
Nevertheless, if students will perform simple faith-inspired actions with

reverence, they will find that their inner feelings adjust in short order. We must help our students understand that faith moves us to righteous actions, especially when we are not feeling inclined to do so. Such simple actions as singing the hymns, bowing our heads in prayer, opening our scriptures, and showing respect to class members can become faith-inspired actions to prepare us to receive instruction from the Holy Ghost. How many times have we each entered a Church meeting weighed down with the daily demands of life only to be imbued with “a feeling of reverence” by singing a hymn?

Encouraging reverence as an act of faith has unlimited applications. Take, for instance, the ever-present distraction of the cell phone. We can tell students to be polite and put them away, or we can even confiscate them when they are misused. Both may be appropriate responses. Even so, at some time we must help students understand that the simple act of voluntarily turning off a cell phone when they enter a religious setting is a faith-inspired action that indicates their desire to show respect and reverence for sacred things. Our students will be greatly blessed if they see such seemingly “small and simple things” (Alma 37:6) as a means to send a clear signal to the Holy Ghost that they desire to receive instruction from him.

Meditate. The Holy Ghost most often communicates to us through a still, small voice. He whispers and “caresses so gently that if we are preoccupied we may not feel it at all.” Students who seek moments of quiet reflection in which they ponder precious principles of truth are more likely to hear the Spirit’s gentle whisperings. Meditating, reflecting, and pondering are all faith-inspired actions. They require mental effort and intellectual discipline. For example, the ancient Israelites were commanded to meditate upon the scriptures (see Joshua 1:8); after the Lord had expounded doctrine to the Nephites, he invited them to “ponder upon the things” he had taught (3 Nephi 17:3); before Joseph Smith experienced the First Vision, he engaged in “serious reflection” (Joseph Smith—History 1:8).

We can help students practice meditating, reflecting, and pondering by providing them moments of silence during class. Certainly there are precious moments in which the spoken word—from either teacher or student—is an irreverent intrusion to inspiration. Interludes of silence manifest a deep respect for both gospel truth and the Holy Ghost. Indeed, we need “not be afraid of silence,” but in those treasured moments of tranquility, heed the Lord’s injunction: “Be still and know that I am God” (D&C 101:16). Successful pondering moments in class can spill over into actual patterns for pondering in a student’s personal
life. As one young woman recounted, “I love having questions I don’t know the answer to and being able to ponder and search to draw my own conclusions. I find myself pondering about the gospel’s doctrine during my free time and it’s great!” Truly, when students ponder gospel truths in their “free time,” they are on the path of conversion.

**Thoughtfully prepare for class.** When students thoughtfully study assigned material before class begins, they indicate their thirst for gospel truth. Such previous preparation serves as a primer for heaven-sent inspiration. Studying and pondering assigned material before a class is persuasive evidence that one desires spiritual deepening.

Unfortunately, we may have students who have become accustomed to approaching their religion class as laid-back bystanders. They come to class as if they were attending a movie, passively waiting for a teacher’s wisdom and charisma to capture and keep their attention. Teachers with a talent for entertainment may find it all too easy to oblige this attitude, especially when students provide lavish praise for such a “fun” class. Furthermore, passive attitudes may have been unwittingly reinforced by the well-meaning and oft-repeated teaching cliché, “I will get a lot more out of this lesson than you will because I prepared for this class.” The principle, as applied to the teacher, is true; the implied expectation of student inaction is regrettable.

President Eyring has said to religious educators, “Your choices of what you expect will have powerful effect on their choices of what to expect of themselves.” If students come to class expecting a teacher to do all the work and their teacher willingly fulfills this expectation, then he or she may unwisely promote a class of teacher-dependent students who are satisfied to simply repeat what they think the teacher wants them to say. Such students may enthusiastically parrot the “right answers” but fail to recognize that intellectual effort is not optional for students who wish to receive revelation (see D&C 9:7–9). As BYU law professor John W. Welch noted, God commands us to not only love him with our hearts but also with our minds. Thus our students “don’t need to check [their] brains at the door” but should be encouraged to “treasure up in [their] minds continually the words of life” (D&C 84:85). Through thoughtful preparation our students can experientially verify that those who expend intellectual effort to obtain the Lord’s word are then positioned to explain, share, and testify of gospel truths by the power of the Holy Ghost within our classes (see D&C 11:21).

**Faithfully attend class.** Students attend religion classes for a variety of reasons. The motives may range from parental compulsion in seminary to increasing the opportunity of meeting a future spouse in
institute. Regardless of the reason, once students are enrolled, teachers legitimately use a variety of techniques to keep students attending class. And yet in all of this, if students are to move toward conversion, the time must come when they attend class willingly and with the primary intent to interact with the Holy Ghost.

Contemporary culture does not help in this matter. There seems to be a pervasive mentality that education must yield some type of tangible, pecuniary benefit to be worth pursuing. In the current educational climate, students are inundated with talk about credit, grades, graduation, and marketable job skills. Hence, the utilitarian attitude, “If this does not provide me school credit or improve my transcript or résumé, then it is not really worth my time.” Viewing education through this lens, religion classes can be dismissed as an unnecessary waste of time. To battle such worldly attitudes, we cannot stand on the world’s turf or rely on secular reasons for religious education.

As we address attendance, the principle of sacrifice could be discussed. The decision to attend a religion class when a sacrifice is required can be a clear signal to the Holy Ghost that students are taking their spiritual education seriously. The allotment of our time reveals our real priorities. Surely it is a demonstration of faith when a student sacrifices sleep and willingly gets up at 5:00 a.m. to attend an early-morning seminary class. Likewise, when a young adult makes time for an institute class between work and class commitments, his or her sacrifice constitutes an authentic manifestation of faith.

Sacrifice is essential to salvation. It may be helpful to have meaningful discussion time with students to establish in their minds a clear connection between faith, sacrifice, and their attendance in a religion class. They need to understand that each time they come, especially when there is a persuasive reason not to come, it is an application of faith that sends a clear message to the Holy Ghost that they are committed to spiritual learning. One returned missionary articulated this principle clearly when he confessed, “Before my mission and in high school, I never took seminary or institute serious enough. Now, it’s a whole new ballgame. I’m excited to come and I am disappointed when we don’t have class. . . . I learn more and more every time I come, and I love it.”

Meekly listen. The importance of listening with genuine interest to the comments of class members is a dimension of learning that is often overlooked. True listening requires both effort and focused attention. Active listeners assume that others have something of value to contribute in a class discussion and therefore pay attention to what is being
said. They listen to learn and not to refute. They accept the doctrine that when someone shares a comment by the power of the Holy Ghost and they receive it by that same Spirit, then they “understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together” (D&C 50:22).

In our efforts to solicit students’ comments, we must be careful, we do not inadvertently undermine the importance of listening to each other. What good will come of students who can speak but who cannot hear? We might well consider the proposition that without a listening heart, an open mouth tends toward pretentious and self-serving comments. Furthermore, in our laudable efforts to encourage speaking by the Spirit, a simultaneous emphasis should be placed on listening to the Spirit. Clearly, there is a qualitative difference between those who speak to be heard and those who speak because they hear the Holy Ghost.

The importance of listening is powerfully articulated in the following student testimony: “Never before in my life have I had more promptings—well, I take that back—more promptings that I am actually listening to. I have acquired a habit of actively listening, and that has made more difference than any shattering story or testimony. Because of the truths I have learned, I want to live the gospel, rather than just using it as a lifestyle.”

_A raised hand._ A raised hand signals to a teacher that a student is ready to verbally participate in class. In an educational setting, sincere student questions and comments are essential avenues of learning. In a gospel setting a raised hand can imply much more. Elder Richard G. Scott observed, “When you encourage students to raise their hand to respond to a question, they signify to the Holy Ghost their willingness to learn. That use of moral agency will allow the Spirit to motivate them and give them more powerful guidance during your time together.”

The nature of this guidance is at least twofold. For instance, a raised hand may signal an honest desire to receive instruction from the Spirit, but it also may signal a readiness to instruct others through the Spirit. Consequently, students may be prompted to ask inspired questions, but also they can be inspired to answer their peers’ questions. When both teacher and students trust the promptings of the Holy Ghost to the point that they heed them _straightway_, then the Holy Ghost orchestrates the comments within a class that, quite frankly, transcend anything a teacher can say or do. Such classes become enclaves of edification that nurture true conversion.

With the Holy Ghost at the helm directing classroom discussion, students gain confidence that their inspired comments matter. They
realize they have unique experiences to share and inspired insights to contribute. In such classes, students come to view their testimony as a gift to be revealed through their faith and not concealed by their fears. And yet, the prospect of raising a hand in response to a prompting of the Holy Ghost can be a daunting act for a shy student. The prompting to speak up may come and be quickly followed by a surge of rationalizations of why he or she should remain silent. We must gently and repeatedly encourage such students to not “take counsel from [their] fears” and courageously raise their hands and share their impressions. Ironically, for the outgoing vivacious student given to much verbal expression, there may be moments the Holy Ghost invites restraint in order to provide the timely opportunity for others to explain, share, or testify.

**Record revelation.** Students witness their desire to receive and remember revelation when they record inspired insights in writing. Revelations that are recorded and remembered become catalysts for further revelation. A young man noted: “Recording my learning has been like keeping track of what I’ve eaten all semester. I can go back and remember how good things tasted . . . and how I got to be spiritually healthy.”

Students need to understand that when they come to class, open their notebooks, and have a pen handy, they are saying to the Holy Ghost, “I am ready to be instructed and trust you will share something with me today.” A student’s Church experience can be transformed when they attend their meetings expecting to receive revelation and are prepared to record it as it comes. Furthermore, their personal scripture study will take on rich revelatory dimensions when they expect to receive and record personal revelation.

To encourage this faith-inspired action, teachers could regularly provide time during class for students to record inspired feelings and impressions. They could also provide time for students to review and reread what they have recorded. In the process, forgotten feelings will be revived, precious truths recollected, and the spiritual memory enlarged.

**Personal scripture study.** According to the teaching emphasis, teachers “are to help students develop a habit of daily scripture study” (see appendix). Students who develop this habit invite the Holy Ghost to become their personal tutor. Elder Bruce R. McConkie testified of this truth when he said, “One of the best-kept secrets of the kingdom is that the scriptures open the door to the receipt of revelation.”

In this light, we must do all in our power to encourage scripture study beyond the walls of a classroom. Of course we should reinforce
that studying the scriptures in a religion class or at church is a good thing. But it must be clear to our students that it is even better to seek personal revelation through private scripture study. One student made this point succinctly when she shared the following experience. While attending an institute class, which she very much enjoyed, a peer suggested to her, “If you just go to institute and don’t study your scriptures, you are lazy and want others to do the work for you.” Her friend was right. The faith-inspired act of personal scripture study is key to continual and deepening conversion.

*Treasure the word of God through memorization.* Personal revelation is preceded by thoughtful contemplation (see D&C 138:1–11). Students can practice pondering the word of God by memorizing scriptural passages and “inspired one-liners which will be remembered and retained” for continued edification. Students who have paid the price to memorize the words of scripture can have the truths embodied in those references brought to their remembrance by the Holy Ghost precisely when they are most needed. As one student noted, “I can read this scripture in my head and feel comforted.”

*Write a ponder paper.* Inspired writing requires reflecting, pondering, analyzing, organizing, and articulating thoughts and feelings of heaven-sent impressions. It is an act of discipleship that does not require the skills of scholarship. The action and effort writing requires have the potential to focus the mind on spiritual things and thereby open the way for further revelation. Thus, as students articulate principles of truth and associated feelings in a coherent manner, they are more apt to see the hand of the Lord in their lives.

This particular act of faith can have a significant impact on timid students. When a paper is shared with a trusted teacher, it provides to the socially apprehensive soul a low-key and nonthreatening avenue to express their understanding and share their testimony. A teacher, in turn, can provide much-needed encouragement and reinforcement of a student’s faith. One young woman, who specifically requested that she not be called upon in class, shared with me a thoughtful ponder paper near the end of the fall semester. This began a conversation between teacher and student, which in the winter semester provided her the confidence to raise her hand in class and publicly share what she privately knew.

*Receive promptings with real intent.* In all our discussion about faith-inspired actions, perhaps the notion of receiving promptings with real intent is paramount. Exercising faith in order to receive a prompting is a necessary part of conversion, but it is not sufficient. When an impression
or prompting is received, there must be a corollary action. Nephi taught that when the Holy Ghost shows us the “things what ye should do,” then it is incumbent upon us to do them (2 Nephi 32:5). Hence, if we seek truth with real intent, then we must be willing to act according to the demands of that truth when it is confirmed to our soul.

Students who receive impressions learn the will of the Lord, and when they act on those impressions and do his will, they are “irresistibly [drawn] close to the Spirit.” In words that verify the power of acting, a student wrote: “The whole semester was a huge testimony builder of how important it is to act on promptings. Having faith that the Holy Ghost will be with me when I act on those things is when I gained the evidence of things I desired and continued the cycle of me having faith, learning, and feeling the Spirit.” In words that resonate with conversion, this same student observed: “Acting on promptings has built me up, gotten me to higher ground. . . . Along with acting on promptings and feelings, I have gained a better understanding and stronger testimony of the importance of allowing my will to become the same as his.”

Conclusion

There is no presumption in this paper that the above faith-inspired actions are original or exhaustive, only that they are in harmony with gospel principles that foster personal conversion. Because these actions are principle based, they are not exclusive to a particular teaching style or setting. Whether a teacher has two hundred students in a lecture hall, twelve students around a table in a small classroom, or is visiting with one student in a hallway, in each setting a teacher can encourage his or her students to receive instruction from the Holy Ghost by acting in faith.

Considering the converting power of an action-oriented faith, it may be wise for us to specifically ask the following question during our preparation time: “What faith-inspired actions can my students practice today so they can open their hearts to the influence of the Holy Ghost?” And, yes, the keyword here is practice. Athletes and musicians know that practice is indispensable to performance. Great athletic feats and sublime musical performances are not merely a matter of talent but arise out of the sweat of hard work and consistent practice. During practice, individuals can master specific skills so that during a game or a concert, performance is proficient and effective. The principle of practice applies to spiritual matters. Students who regularly employ and practice faith-inspired actions will, in time, come to interact with
the Holy Ghost in a proficient and effective manner and thereby be on the path of true conversion.

Appendix: Teaching Emphasis for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

Teaching Emphasis for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion

Our objective indicates that we have a significant responsibility in strengthening the youth of the Church and inviting them to come unto Christ. Preparing students for missionary service and temple ordinances has always been a focus in Church education.

By implementing the following emphases and adjustments, we will more directly prepare young people for effective missionary service, to receive the ordinances of the temple, and to exemplify and teach gospel principles throughout their lives. This will also help deepen their faith, testimony, and conversion.

We are to learn and teach by the Spirit. We are to encourage students to learn and teach by the Spirit.

We are to emphasize the importance of reading the scripture text for each scripture course of study. We are to help students develop a habit of daily scripture study.

We are to help students understand the scriptures and the words of the prophets, identify and understand the doctrines and principles found therein, and apply them in their lives in ways that lead to personal conversion.

We are to help students learn to explain, share, and testify of the doctrines and principles of the restored gospel. We are to give them opportunities to do so with each other in class. We are to encourage them to do so outside of class with family and others.

We are to emphasize the mastery of key scriptural passages and help students understand and explain the doctrines and principles contained in those passages.

In seminary this means we will emphasize scripture mastery so that students better understand the doctrines and principles in the one hundred scripture mastery passages and are encouraged to memorize those passages.

In institute this means we will build upon the foundation of the one hundred scripture mastery passages and foster a depth of understanding of other key passages of scripture, with encouragement to memorize such passages.

We are to help students identify, understand, believe, explain, and apply basic doctrines and principles. These include the Godhead; the plan of salvation; the Creation and the Fall; the Atonement of Jesus Christ; dispensations, apostasy, and the Restoration; prophets; priesthood; the first principles and ordinances; covenants and ordinances; and commandments.
Notes

1. Henry B. Eyring, “We Must Raise Our Sights” (address at CES conference on the Book of Mormon, Brigham Young University, August 14, 2001), 1–2; emphasis added.
4. A. Roger Merrill, in Conference Report, October 2006, 40; or Ensign, November 2006, 93.
15. Preach My Gospel (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 185.
17. John W. Welch, “And with All Thy Mind” (devotional address, Brigham Young University, September 30, 2003), 2.
A young man went to institute the day before Thanksgiving. During the class, the teacher used several different methods to teach the topic of gratitude. At the end of the class the teacher challenged the students to take something from the class and teach it to their families or friends the following day. Although this young man was not living at home, he taught a lesson to the people he was living with. He later reported, “My Thanksgiving lesson was awesome! Everybody loved it!”

Another young man heard a talk on the subject of following the prophet. As he pondered the talk, he thought about the fact that he was steady dating a young lady—and he had not yet served a mission. He thought about what the prophets had said on this subject and decided to break up with his girlfriend. The talk he had heard had not specifically invited him to do this, but he felt inspired to apply what he had learned in this way.

These experiences illustrate two ways that learners can be invited to act as a result of participation in a class or sermon. Sometimes students are given specific direction from the teacher on what to do; on other occasions, the Spirit gives personalized instruction. In either case action is vital; as King Benjamin taught, “If you believe all these things see that ye do them” (Mosiah 4:10).

It is imperative that students act because conversion will come as they do. “What happens beyond the classroom has got to involve firsthand experiences with the principles of the gospel in application,”
explained Elder Neal A. Maxwell. “These experiences will give each of our young people a storehouse of spiritual experiences on which he can draw. . . . We need to be able to draw upon them to see our young people through the periods of time when they have intellectual problems; then experientially they will know the gospel is true because they have seen it happen.”

As Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “A message prepared under the influence of the Spirit to further the work of the Lord . . . is given to inspire, to edify, to challenge, or to correct. It is given to be heard under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, with the intended result that the listener learns from the talk and from the Spirit what he or she should do about it.” Elder Oaks said that listeners should learn “from the talk and from the Spirit” what they should do as a result of hearing the message. In this article, I discuss ways in which educators can facilitate these kinds of learning, with the expectation that students do things as a result.

Learning What to Do from the Talk

One of the simplest, most effective ways that religious educators can help their students learn what to do from the talk is to give an explicit call to action. The teachings of ancient and modern prophets are replete with examples of these types of invitations.

Nearly every significant sermon preached in the scriptures includes a call to action. These invitations to act can come during the beginning, the middle, or the end of a discourse. Consider the following examples, noting the specific actions the speaker invited the congregation to complete:

- “O, my beloved brethren, turn away from your sins; shake off the chains of him that would bind you fast; come unto that God who is the rock of your salvation. . . . Remember the words of your God; pray unto him continually by day, and give thanks unto his holy name by night. Let your hearts rejoice” (2 Nephi 9:45, 52).
- “Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both morning, mid-day, and evening” (Alma 34:21).
- “Behold, I say unto you, that ye must visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief” (Doctrine and Covenants 44:6).
Modern Church leaders also often issue calls to action as part of their inspired messages. Consider these examples:

- “We are asking leaders in every unit to . . . counsel together with parents and pray to find at least one more young man, above those already committed, who can be called to serve.”
- “All of the proceedings of this conference will appear in a subsequent issue of the *Ensign* and *Liahona*. We encourage you again to read the talks in your family home evenings and discuss them together as families.”

These specific calls to action challenged listeners to do something as a result of what was being taught. Elder V. Dallas Merrell explained, “When teachers present a doctrine or a historical event, they should teach a related principle—something hearers should do, something they should apply to their lives. Then what? We invite! Will you live according to this principle? Will you pray? Will you live revealed moral standards? Will you tithe your income? Will you show by your smile and friendliness the joy of the gospel?”

**Learning What to Do from the Spirit**

Another important part of learning is the personalized instruction listeners receive from the Holy Ghost. President Henry B. Eyring said, “You’ve had the same experiences I’ve had, that someone will come up to you after you have taught or spoken to them and say what a wonderful insight they got while you were speaking and then it wasn’t anything you said about at all, and what you know is the Holy Ghost was taking something you were saying and then taking them in a different direction where the Holy Ghost wanted them to go; . . . very often the student will learn things way beyond what we are saying.”

Many people have had experiences such as this. One young father attended a presentation at which the speakers quoted from a letter from the First Presidency dated February 11, 1999: “We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities.” Though the speaker soon switched topics, the Spirit spoke to this young father and said, “You need to have much better family home evenings.” This message from the Spirit was what this individual remembered and applied from the talk.

Perhaps because of the personalized nature of promptings from the Spirit, there are not abundant scriptural examples where listeners
specifically acted based on explicit promptings from the Spirit. Never-
theless there are some vignettes that show how this type of teaching
may have been at work.

For example, after Nephi heard his father testify of the vision of
the tree of life, he wrote, “I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see,
and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost”
(1 Nephi 10:17). Shortly thereafter Nephi records, “After I had desired
to know the things that my father had seen, and believing that the Lord
was able to make them known unto me, as I sat pondering in mine
heart I was caught away in the Spirit of the Lord” (1 Nephi 11:1).
Lehi never specifically challenged his children to go and seek their own
vision. Could it be that it was the Spirit who inspired Nephi, as he lis-
tened to his father’s message, to seek his own revelation?

Daniel K Judd, formerly of the Sunday School general presidency,
said, “It is the Spirit that is the most effective teacher in any given
situation. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: ‘The Spirit of God
speaking to the spirit of man has power to impart truth with greater
effect and understanding than the truth can be imparted by personal
contact even with heavenly beings.’”

Gospel teachers and learners must recognize that powerful invi-
tations to do things are coming from the Holy Spirit during gospel
instruction.

Therefore, What?

How can teachers help their students learn from the talk and from
the Spirit things that they should do as a result of the time they spend
in class? First, modern religious educators must recognize that one
of their major roles as teachers is to facilitate change or repentance.
Teachers should follow the counsel of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, who
taught, “Pray that your teaching will bring change.” One way that
teachers can encourage change in their students is to invite them to
do things differently as a result of the class. This will mean invitations
for students to determine how they can apply gospel principles. Elder
Oaks explained, “Teachers . . . should generally forgo teaching specific
rules or applications. For example, they would not teach any rules for
determining what is a full tithing, and they would not provide a list of
dos and don’ts for keeping the Sabbath day holy. Once a teacher has
taught the doctrine and the associated principles from the scriptures
and the living prophets, such specific applications or rules are generally
the responsibility of individuals and families.”
This quote does not mean that teachers should not invite their students to make any changes as a result of the principles taught in class, but rather that teachers should not make the specific applications of the principles to the lives of the students. For example, after a class on observing the Sabbath day, it would be appropriate for a teacher to invite students to ponder what things they could do to more fully honor the Sabbath in their lives. To invite students to visit sick relatives on the Sabbath (a specific application) would most likely not be appropriate.

One institute teacher issued a call to action at the end of his lessons by having a weekly challenge. This challenge, which was related to the lesson, provided an opportunity for students to make small but important changes in their lives. These invitations focused on a gospel principle and left specific application to the province of the student. In addition to living gospel principles, students can be invited to do the class reading assignments, to visit a Web site such as http://speeches.byu.edu, or to read general conference talks.

The previous paragraphs demonstrate some ways teachers can help their students know what they should do by way of explicit invitations. In addition, teachers can help their students learn “from the Spirit” what to do as a result of what they learn.

Daniel K Judd also taught, “Several months ago I attended a training meeting where a number of General Authorities had spoken. After commenting on the excellent instruction that had been given, Elder David A. Bednar asked the following question: ‘What are we learning that has not been said?’ He then explained that in addition to receiving the counsel that had been given by those who had spoken or who would yet speak, we should also carefully listen for and record the unspoken impressions given by the Holy Ghost.”11

Elder Bednar was acknowledging that students were receiving personalized instruction from the Spirit. Teachers can facilitate this type of learning by teaching their students about learning by the Spirit. They can take time to identify ways that the Spirit may be working in the class.

One teacher gave a class on the Creation. At the end of the class he asked the students, “Please take two minutes and write down some things you feel impressed by the Spirit to do as a result of what you have learned today.”

After giving students time to ponder he invited two or three to share. One person said he needed to better organize his life; another felt inspired to more deeply study his scriptures. This second impression, although seemingly unconnected with a study of the Creation
provides an example of how the Spirit may provide personal promptings, tailored to the needs of specific individuals.

In another teaching setting, a family home evening lesson was given on Elder Bednar’s parable of the pickle. The parent taught that “a cucumber becomes a pickle as it is prepared and cleaned, immersed in and saturated with salt brine, and sealed in a sterilized container.” After a discussion of Elder Bednar’s talk, the parent asked, “What lessons do you feel that you can draw from this parable?”

One family member who was going through some intense personal struggles said, “What came to my mind is the need for the cucumber to be immersed in the brine. If you take the cucumber out too early, it will not become what it needs to be. In my case, this means I need to work through this struggle I am having.” Although this was perhaps not directly the message the parable was intended to convey, again the Spirit provided individualized direction of what a listener could do.

Whether students are learning from the talk or from the Spirit, teachers also have a unique opportunity to follow up with their students on whether or not they have done what they were invited to do in the previous class. Because teachers see their students regularly they can find out whether students have completed the things they have committed to do. As one priesthood leader said, “It’s not only what’s expected, it’s what’s inspected that gets done.” By following up with students, teachers show that they truly care about whether or not their students are making changes.

During a class just before general conference, a teacher challenged his students to listen to every session of conference. At the next class he asked students to write about their experience applying this invitation. Some of the responses were as follows:

- “I noticed the difference because last time I did not attend all sessions. This time, when I went to them all, I got a lot more out of it.”
- “I saw all of the sessions, and they were amazing.”
- “General conference just gets better and better. It motivated me to make some changes in my life.”
- “I wrote down some questions before going to conference, and I got almost all my questions answered. I felt the Spirit so strong!”

On another occasion, after a lesson which included Josiah destroying artifacts of idol worship (see 2 Kings 23), students were challenged
to ponder how they could apply the principle “I will get rid of bad influences in my life.” When the teacher followed up to see how the students were prompted to do so, he received the following responses:

- “I got rid of bad influences including old friends, to the point where I have no way of contacting them anymore. For all the better!”
- “I threw out the remainder of my bad music. It was exhilarating, and God showed me things I had forgotten about.”
- “I threw away my old car magazines and beat them into powder because they had improper content.”
- “I got rid of some shirts that were not very modest.”

This example illustrates that when students are left free to determine how to apply principles, the Spirit will often dictate ways to do it that would be most meaningful for them personally.

In addition to having their students write about their experiences, teachers can invite students to share what they have done with the class. Using the previous example, a teacher could contact three students during the week and ask, “Next week, would you be willing to tell the class what you did to apply the principle of getting rid of bad influences?” When students hear their peers testify of things that they have done to apply principles, they will be more motivated to do so as well.

**Conclusion**

Elder Bednar taught, “One of the fundamental roles of a missionary is to help an investigator make and honor commitments—to act and learn by faith. Teaching, exhorting, and explaining, as important as they are, can never convey to an investigator a witness of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. Only as an investigator’s faith initiates action and opens the pathway to the heart can the Holy Ghost deliver a confirming witness.”

When applied to the classroom, we might paraphrase: One of the fundamental roles of a teacher is to help students make and honor commitments—to act. Teachers must pray that their teaching will bring change. They can give students specific things to do, help students recognize invitations from the Spirit, and follow up with students to ensure that they are doing things as a result of their instruction in the gospel. As religious educators do these things, it will increase the likelihood that the Spirit will go down deep into the hearts of the students and provide lasting conversion.
Notes

11. Judd, “Nourished by the Good Word of God,” 95; emphasis in original.
Outreach: A Conversation with James E. Faulconer

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McClellan: Dr. Faulconer, you hold the Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding with Fred Woods. Can you tell me a little about the chair and what you are looking forward to during your assignment?

Faulconer: There is a certain sense in which the title of the chair tells you what you are supposed to do with it: foster understanding with people of other religions. Right now, I suppose, I have two foci. One of them is trying to talk to the people in the Orthodox traditions and in the Christian Near East. Those are people who, in fact, disappear from the understanding of Christianity of most people in the United States. If you ask, “What is a Christian?” they respond by talking about the Protestants, the Catholics—and perhaps the Orthodox, but probably not. When it comes to Syrian Christians or Egyptian Christians, most people have no idea that there is any such thing. So I would like to engage some of those people; and with the Center for Law and Religion, the Wheatley Institution, and the Kennedy Center, we are sponsoring a major conference next year that will bring in Orthodox and Near East Christians. We are going to bring in about twenty scholars and clergy from these traditions and have them talk about their relationships with each other, with the state, and their beliefs.

That is one focus. My other focus comes from the letter that Elder Ballard wrote in which he encourages members of the Church to use the Internet to participate in the wider discussion that it makes possible. It seems to me that one of the things I can do—I hope I can
do—is to try to make some good things available to people who might be looking for information that is more academic than usual. So, I am working with people, all of them Latter-day Saints (and most of them outside of BYU), to do some seminars on scripture where we will look at them closely in an academic way and write up pieces about various scriptures. We have done one on Abraham. We are finishing one up on Alma 32. We are looking to do one on the sections of the Doctrine and Covenants on economics. There is someone who wants to do one on the New Testament. We are going to try to form these groups so that people who are wondering what the Latter-day Saints think about X, Y, or Z can see that there are groups of Latter-day Saint academics thinking and talking about some of these scriptural issues. We want to make that available online.

McClellan: Truman Madsen was the first person to hold this chair, and he held it for over twenty years. Have you spoken with him and some of your other predecessors about the assignment?

Faulconer: Yes. He was one of my professors when I was a student. In fact, I was his assistant. I have a lot of admiration for him and for what he did. I have spoken with him about the assignment. I have spoken with David Paulsen. I have spoken with Fred Woods, who is the other holder of the chair right now. I have also spoken with Paul Hoskisson. That is partly what has me excited—to hear the things that they did and what kinds of things one can do with the chair.

McClellan: So you are looking forward to some good experiences.

Faulconer: Yes, very much so.

McClellan: And what kind of counsel did you receive from them?

Faulconer: Their counsel has come down to something along the lines of “Do what you really want to. Do what you think is good for the chair.”

McClellan: So everyone has the prerogative to take the assignment in the direction they think it needs to go.

Faulconer: That is my understanding.

McClellan: The name of the chair changed from the Richard L. Evans Chair of Christian Understanding to the Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding. This was to reach out to a wider audience than just Christianity, correct?

Faulconer: Right. I think that change was made to include Buddhists and Confucians and Muslims and a lot of other groups that we need to be able to talk to.

McClellan: You have spent much of your life interacting with other faiths.
Faulconer: In philosophy most of my work has been either with atheists or with Catholics. Those are the two bigger groups in philosophy. I was a visiting professor at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium, and I think most of my work has been with people who happen to be Catholic, although until recently most of my work has not been about religion—it has been about other things, such as the philosophy of psychology. In the last five or six years, however, I have made a move in my own career in the direction of the philosophy of religion, and it is a happy coincidence, I think, that these people I have worked with have been mostly Catholics.

McClellan: Do you feel like that has given you a bit of a head start?

Faulconer: Actually I feel inundated. It is a big job; there is a lot to do. For example, I am teaching a course in October at St. Joseph’s University in Beirut. It is a Catholic University, and they have invited me to come and teach a five-day course on “prophetism.” That is their word, not mine. They are doing a whole semester on prophets in various contemporary religions. So they asked me to come and talk about Latter-day Saints and our understanding of prophets. It is a philosophy course—it is not supposed to be a history course or a course in doctrine—so I am still trying to figure out what to say, because I do not want to offend them and turn it into a proselytizing tool on the one hand. On the other hand, I feel strongly that it is important that I convey the message and the beliefs of the Church accurately, and that I do so as a believer rather than just an observer. So I am struggling with that—not in terms of whether there is enough to say, but in terms of what do I say and how do I say it? I have never had this kind of experience.

McClellan: So when you were a visiting professor in Belgium, it was not as a Latter-day Saint scholar but as a philosopher.

Faulconer: I was just a philosopher. I was teaching a course on the nature of community. Although it was a very interesting experience in Leuven because they knew that I was a Latter-day Saint, and they found it odd. They had never met a Latter-day Saint before—at least they did not know it if they had. There was a branch in the town, so they probably had. They had seen the missionaries.

So I met with the administrators (who were mostly Catholic priests) on various occasions, and they were very curious about our theology. They could not believe that we do not have the kind of official theology that they have. In fact, at one point one of them said, “When you go back to Utah, you should go talk to the leader of the Church and tell them that they need it.” I said, “I don’t think it works
that way.” My own position is that we ought not to have an official theology. If you have continuing revelation and you believe that each person should have the Spirit, between the two of those I think the kind of theological messiness in the Church that some people complain about is exactly what we ought to have. There ought to be a few basic principles out of which other things grow, and the rest of it happens as we follow our leaders and live our lives. Though I’ve spent my adult life studying and teaching philosophy—how to talk about everything—we are supposed to be living Christian lives, not worrying about how to explain it.

McClellan: As the quote often attributed to Augustine says, “In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty.”

Faulconer: Right, and that is the way it ought to be. I hope if I were to come back in a thousand years, assuming that the earth would still be here then in its current form, that Latter-day Saint theology would be just as messy.

McClellan: Do you think philosophy and the study of religion are interrelated as disciplines? Is this why so many in the ancient and modern world straddle that line?

Faulconer: Well, even in the ancient world there was some competition between philosophy and religion. When Paul warns about philosophy he is being serious. But philosophy was, in the ancient world, about how to live the best life. With Judaism or Christianity, or any religion, there is competition. Each says to the other, “No, that is not the best way to live the good life.” Today, philosophy is no longer about that. It is a much more abstract, theoretical discipline. And so today there is less competition between the two. I can say “I am a philosopher and a religious person” without there necessarily being a conflict between the two. Because philosophers are interested in the basic ideas of whatever it is they are studying, if they are religious they are also going to be interested in the basic ideas of their religion. Though there is no necessary connection between philosophy and theology today, it is not unusual for philosophers who are religious to also be interested in theology, since they are very similar disciplines. I also think there are probably more religious philosophers than in any other academic discipline.

McClellan: Do you think it is as common for a religious person to be drawn to philosophy as it is for a philosopher to be drawn to religion?

Faulconer: I think the former is more common. Most people who are religious are interested in some area of their theology, so that makes them also interested in philosophical ideas. But if you are an atheist
and you are interested in some area of philosophy, you may not be interested in religion at all.

_McClellan_: You are a professor of philosophy, but you have published in the field of biblical scholarship. You published a book on Romans and you say in your curriculum vitae that you are somewhat proficient in Greek. Can you comment on that?

_Faulconer_: Well, I studied Attic Greek in college as part of my philosophy requirements. I work with contemporary German and French philosophy, but since they refer to Greek philosophy a lot I had to learn some Greek. Then, for obvious reasons, I became interested in the New Testament and very interested in the book of Romans.

_McClellan_: You mentioned in the preface to your book Romans 1: Notes and Reflections that you cannot stop thinking about the book of Romans. What is it about Romans that is particularly compelling to you?

_Faulconer_: I think that the Apostle Paul has done as good a job of explaining the gospel as anyone. I think he does a great job. I think he gets a bad rap in Latter-day Saint Sunday School classes and other places. Part of that is because the translation is sometimes problematic. Part of that is because we have had missionary arguments with people of other religions about works and grace, which almost always result from misunderstandings on both sides about what Paul said. Part of my interest is also because there are places where Paul’s work does contain difficult doctrine, but that doctrine is very important. It is an important thing for us to understand, and for me the best thing about Romans is that, as I read it and try to understand it, the one text that helps me more than any other is the Book of Mormon. When I have said that in Sunday School class, Latter-day Saints sometimes gasp. They seem to think that is not possible. And I want to say, “Well, maybe you should read the Book of Mormon more carefully” or “Maybe you should read Romans more carefully.” I think they really do testify of each other. My experience is that the Book of Mormon and Romans fit together as well as any two other texts I can think of. Also, part of my interest is just biographical. I was born and raised Protestant. It was the text for us. It was the one we used and talked about a great deal. Some of my interest might be inexplicable too; I do not know.

_McClellan_: Do you think your training with Greek philosophy might have helped you understand the philosophical backdrop of Paul’s day?

_Faulconer_: I do not think philosophy helps me that much with Romans. The way that philosophy can help me understand is that in philosophy, the way I was taught it, the point is to read very slowly and carefully, and, at least hypothetically, to ask, What if this does not
mean what I think it does? Maybe it says something else, and the point is to figure out what it really does say. So I think it is not so much the content of philosophy that helps as much as the tools and the methods. They help a lot.

McClellan: You also mention in the preface to Romans 1 that the book is basically from one layperson to another. Would you like to see more Latter-day Saint publications of that nature?

Faulconer: I would. One of the problems that we have in the Church is that we have the idea that unless you are with the Church Educational System or the BYU Religious Education faculty, on the one hand, or a General Authority, on the other, you really do not have what it takes to talk about the scriptures. There are, at least in our unspoken assumptions, two groups of authorities who have the qualifications, and no one else. The rest of us just sit around and wait for them to say something. I think that is appropriate for the General Authorities, but I think that we put too much trust in the scholars of our culture, and we do not realize that each of us has the ability to be a scholar of the scriptures. It is important to remember that the word scholar means “a person of leisure”—someone who has the time. Given today’s society, most of us have the time, if we want to, to spend reading the scriptures carefully. And I think that is all it really amounts to. So what I was hoping that book will do—and I am trying to follow it up with another book on Romans 5–8—is say to people, “Look, here is a guy who does not know Greek very well, and has little academic training in the New Testament, but it is not knowing Greek or having training that makes the difference.” I think the book says, “Just think about what is going on in this verse, or in this passage, and look at other scriptures and try to understand what Paul was saying.” This is something that any member of the Church can do. You do not have to have a PhD to do it; you just have to take the time. If you have that time you can be a scholar, but it does mean reading a lot and thinking carefully about what you read. It means studying, but you do not have to have formal training. Of course, that is not to say that I do not appreciate what those with formal training can do. We need more people in the Church with formal training in Hebrew and Greek and in biblical scholarship, Church history, and so on. I just don’t want to cede all thinking and discussion to them.

McClellan: What advice would you give to people who are committed to other fields professionally but want to participate in some way in biblical scholarship?
Faulconer: Read a lot. Read with some mild skepticism. Do not believe that just because someone wrote it, it must be true. On the other hand, do not read with extreme skepticism. Do not believe that everything you read must be false. Most writers are sincerely and honestly trying to argue that what they believe is true. Take a careful look at their evidence and use your own intelligence, and especially the Spirit, to make decisions about what you read. But in addition to reading secondary sources, which I believe we ought to do, read the scriptures a lot. Read them slowly and carefully, and read them over again. Do not assume that you already know what they mean. That, I would say, is our single best tool for reading the scriptures. It is also one of our biggest problems when we read the scriptures. We think that we already know, and so we are not really reading—we are just repeating to ourselves what we think we know. Pick any scripture and we already know what it means, so what we hear in our heads is what everyone says. We sometimes do not even really see the words on the page—we see something else. Being a scholar of scripture, lay or professional, requires getting over that.
Dr. Nathan Smith's paper, *A Practical Essay on Typhous Fever* (1824), is considered to be an important early work dealing with typhoid fever. Smith saved Joseph's leg with his very advanced techniques in the treatment of bone infections after young Joseph had contracted typhoid fever.
Joseph Smith’s Childhood Illness

Nathan R. Welch

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Joseph Smith Jr., prophet of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was known for his robust strength and active life. Despite this reputation, he walked with a slight limp, which was the result of a childhood bout of typhoid fever.¹

Some may be confused by the designation “typhoid fever” because Joseph’s childhood disease was called “typhus” in the October 2002 and November 2005 issues of the Ensign and in Church history books by scholars such as LaMar C. Berrett,² Dean C. Jessee,³ Joseph Fielding McConkie, and Craig J. Ostler.⁴ Those who have referred to the disease as “typhus” are likely using primary sources and have found that Joseph’s mother recorded the disease as “typhus fever,”⁵ and in his own writings Joseph also referred to the illness that almost took his leg and life as “typhus”;⁶ however, the disease that ailed the boy Joseph was much more likely to have been typhoid fever. It is not strange that the Prophet and his mother would record his bout with typhoid as “typhus”; until 1850 the terms were used interchangeably because doctors were still learning to differentiate between the diseases.

Both diseases can produce fever, headache, and rash (among many other symptoms), and both have been famous throughout history. Epidemic typhus (Rickettsia prowazekii) is a louse-borne rickettsial disease that is most famously known for wiping out Napoleon’s army, preventing their defeat of Russia. It also killed three million people in Eastern Europe and Russia from 1918 to 1922.⁷ Typhoid, on the other
hand, is a bacterial infection caused by one of the strains of salmonella—Salmonella typhi. It is carried and transmitted by man, and it is spread through contaminated food, water, and soiled bedclothes. One of the most common stories about typhoid concerns Mary Mallon, or “Typhoid Mary,” who was a cook in New York during the early twentieth century. As a healthy typhoid carrier, she infected over fifty people with the disease, five of whom died. After being confined to Long Island for three years, she caused twenty-five more cases at a women’s hospital in Manhattan. Researchers also speculate that typhoid killed more than six thousand Jamestown settlers between 1607 and 1624. In the war against South Africa in the late nineteenth century, British troops lost thirteen thousand men to typhoid, but only eight thousand in battle. Speaking of typhoid fever, Nathan Smith, Joseph’s doctor, noted, “I have not perceived that occupation or habits of life make any difference in their liability to receive this disease, nor has it in this country been confined to the poor and filthy; but affects nearly alike the rich, the poor, and middle classes.”

Typhus, on the other hand, is “associated with conditions . . . such as war and poverty, natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, displacement of populations, jails, and lack of hygiene. [It is] a continued problem in impoverished, louse-infested populations.”

Until about 1837, the words typhus and typhoid were often used interchangeably for both diseases, even though typhoid has likely been a recognized disease since the time of Hippocrates in ancient Greece. The confusion probably arose because fever and rash accompany both diseases. The Greek word typhos means “hazy” or “smoky” and was applied to both diseases due to victims’ high fever and the state of stupor and delirium that often occurred. The fact that in early German medical literature typhoid fever is called “typhus” and typhus is called “Flecktyphus,” further illustrates how naming systems perpetuated confusion between the two diseases. In the United States in 1837, W. W. Gerhard clearly differentiated between typhoid and typhus. Although he presented convincing evidence that they were in fact two separate diseases, many felt that the differences he had described were just variations of the same disease. In London in 1849, William Jenner published his own paper showing how the two diseases differed using both clinical and postmortem evidence and thus “settled the question.” However, at the time of Joseph’s illness and at the time Lucy and Joseph compiled the histories describing it, the nomenclature had yet to be clearly defined.
As the years passed, the two diseases were further classified and understood, and the differences became more easily recognizable. For modern doctors there is clear differentiation between typhoid and typhus. Despite this differentiation, many Latter-day Saint scholars continue to use the term *typhus* to designate Joseph’s childhood disease. Others, however, use the correct term, *typhoid*. The Church Educational System manual *Church History in the Fulness of Times* describes Joseph’s illness as “typhoid,” as do the books *Our Heritage*, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, and *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. Joseph Smith is even on a list of famous people ailed by typhoid fever in the Wikipedia entry on the disease. Some members of the Latter-day Saint medical community have noticed the discrepancy. LeRoy Wirthlin has written two excellent articles on Nathan Smith, the famous New England doctor who saved Joseph Smith’s leg with his very advanced techniques in the treatment of bone infections. In these writings, Wirthlin always refers to the disease as “typhoid,” although the primary documents he uses contain the word *typhus*. He points out that disease was clearly typhoid and not typhus. It is important to note that Joseph Smith experienced osteomyelitis, which does not occur in typhus fever.

The following presents a brief diagnosis using the primary source documents, modern medical literature, and the observations of Dr. Nathan Smith, which are published in what some consider his most important paper, *A Practical Essay on Typhous Fever*, published in 1824. While the title of his paper uses the word “typhous,” it is considered to be an important early work dealing with typhoid fever. Joseph’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith, recorded that while the Smith family lived in New Hampshire from 1811 to 1813, all the Smith children contracted the disease presently known as typhoid fever. She writes: “In 1813, the typhus fever came into Lebanon and raged there horribly. Among the rest who were seized with this complaint was my oldest daughter, Sophronia, who was sick four weeks; next Hyrum came from Hanover sick with the same disease; then, Alvin, my oldest, and so on until there was not one of my family left well, save Mr. Smith and myself.” The fact that the fever affected only the children in the Smith family is consistent with typhoid fever, which has its “greatest occurrence in young people” and “affects the sexes equally. In endemic areas it shows a predilection for children and young adults.” Typhus, on the other hand, generally affects “all age groups.” Nathan Smith observed that those who had had the disease often did not get
it again, which may explain why the Smith children were all affected but not the parents.

The fact that the Smith family was residing near Dartmouth College and that Lucy specifically mentions that Hyrum came over from Hanover (the site of Dartmouth) fits well with the following statement from Nathan Smith’s paper: “In the autumn of 1812, Professor Perkins, now of New-York, and myself, attended between fifty and sixty cases of typhus in the vicinity of Dartmouth College.”29 This statement of Nathan Smith’s is congruous with Joseph’s own recollection of the event. When recalling his childhood illness, he states the following: “I endured the most acute suffering for a long time under the care of Drs. Smith, Stone and Perkins, of Hanover.” His further descriptions show that he had typhoid: “I was attacked with the Typhus Fever, and at one time, during my sickness, my father despaired of my life. The doctors broke the fever, after which it settled under my shoulder, & . . . Dr. Parker called it a sprained shoulder . . . when it proved to be a swelling under the arm which was opened, & discharged freely.”30 This swelling, or abscess, is indicative of typhoid. The area under the arm is the location of axillary lymph nodes, and the abscess of lymph nodes due to typhoid has been documented, although typhoid infections can also cause abscesses at almost any site.31 Nathan Smith notes in his essay that with typhoid fever, “it is not uncommon for boils to appear” and that sometimes they would “proceed to suppuration.”32 In contrast, abscess formation is not a commonly documented symptom of those suffering from typhus.

According to modern medical literature, typhoid may also “spread to the bone.”33 This is what happened in Joseph Smith’s case. “As soon as this sore had discharged itself, the pain left it and shot like lightning (as he said) down his side into the marrow of his leg bone on the same side. The boy was almost in total despair and cried out, ‘Oh father! the pain is so severe! How can I bear it?’ His leg immediately began to swell and he continued in the most excruciating pain for 2 weeks longer.”34 The fact that the infection spread to the bone is again indicative of typhoid. One modern text states the following: “focal infections can develop at any site of the body, but these are rare. The most common sites of infection are in the bones.”35 That typhoid can cause infection in the bones is also documented in many other sources.36 While Nathan Smith does not specifically mention bone infections in his paper on typhoid, he does mention that “in some instances one leg and thigh become enlarged.”37 It is also clear from Dr. Wirthlin’s aforementioned articles on Nathan Smith’s work as a surgeon that he was involved in
the treatment of bone infections. The sources sited above for typhoid-related bone infections make no mention of bone infections in their sections on typhus.\(^{38}\)

It is clear that Joseph had typhoid, not typhus, though primary sources call it “typhus” because there was not a clear differentiation between the two diseases at the time. With all the evidence in confirmation of this diagnosis, it is time for historians to refer to Joseph’s childhood illness by its correct designation—typhoid—rather than the historically inaccurate designation of typhus.\(^{36}\)

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**Notes**


20. *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), xiv, 2.


34. *The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, 72–73.

35. Hunter, Strickland, and Magill, *Tropical Medicine*, chapter 75.


Saints and Sickness: Medicine in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters

Joseph B. Hinckley

Letters and journals written by early members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints provide us with a unique view of their world. These documents can be used to broaden our understanding of historical events and to help narrate the story of the early Latter-day Saints. However, the numerous references to medical conditions endured by the Saints have often been overlooked in these documents. Because the early Saints lacked knowledge of such things as bacteria and viruses, what would be minor medical conditions to us often became life-threatening challenges to them. In our modern world, when we get a cut or scrape, we apply a sterile antiseptic ointment and cover it with a Band-Aid, and the wound heals quickly. In the early nineteenth century, however, even a minor cut could easily become so infected that the only remedy was amputation. Because even minor medical issues could be major afflictions, the early Saints’ letters and journals frequently mention their health conditions and their attempts to remedy them. Understanding this facet of the lives of early members of the Church provides us with a more complete understanding of their daily struggles.

Medicine in Antebellum America

Medical science progressed slowly from the time of the colonization of America until the early nineteenth century. It was not until after the Civil War that medicine achieved significant advances and evolved
into a more scientifically based field. In the early part of the nineteenth century, there were essentially two methods of medical practice. The first was “heroic” medicine or allopathy, and the other was botanical or homeopathic medicine.

**Heroic Medicine**

Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was one of the most prominent physicians of his era and contributed to the popularity of heroic medicine. Active in both politics and medicine, Rush was well known and his methods were widely respected. For example, bleeding, or bloodletting, gained increased popularity at the turn of the nineteenth century due largely to Rush’s endorsement of the practice. This practice was based on the ancient theory that all ailments could be treated by removing the toxins from the patient’s body to restore balance; this was achieved by draining blood from the patient by using either incisions or leeches. Medical historian William Rothstein observed, “Bleeding rapidly became a panacea and was used for every conceivable illness.”

Every illness from fevers to fractures was treated by this procedure. Patients were often bled repeatedly, with large quantities of blood extracted at each session. Because bloodletting often produced a noticeable physiological change in the patient, physicians believed it had a profound effect. In cases when a patient indeed suffered from excessive blood volume, as in severe heart failure, reducing the blood volume toward a normal level may actually have had a temporary salutary effect. But if the basic cause of heart failure was not reversed, the benefit would have been short lived. Generally, bloodletting itself seldom accelerated the healing process. Instead, patients subjected to the procedure were often left severely weak and faint. When a patient died after bloodletting, the physician often blamed the tragedy on the patient’s not seeking treatment soon enough.

Another treatment favored by practitioners of heroic medicine was the use of castor oil, often combined with calomel (mercurous chloride). Castor oil, extracted from the castor bean, was used as a potent laxative to clear the patient’s bowels and thus clean out any toxin, infection, or disease. However, this clearing of the digestive system often left the patient’s body dehydrated and depleted of nutrients. When combined with bloodletting, this treatment could make the body too weak to fight disease and infection.

Not surprisingly, these heroic treatments often caused more harm than good. The death of Alvin Smith, older brother of the Prophet Joseph Smith, is an example of a situation in which such treatments
proved to be more lethal than the disease. In 1823, when Alvin was twenty-five years old, he came down with what his mother, Lucy, described as “bilious colic.” The attending doctor “immediately administered a heavy dose of calomel to the patient, although he objected much against it.” The calomel lodged in Alvin’s stomach, blocking nutrients from reaching his digestive system, and he died just three days later. After his death, an autopsy “found the calomel still lodged in the upper bowels.” In light of this tragedy, it is easy to see why afterwards the Smith family distrusted doctors who administered calomel or used other heroic methods. In fact, Joseph Smith later spoke emphatically against heroic medicine. While greeting a group of newly arrived converts in Nauvoo in 1843, Joseph advised, “The doctors in this region don’t know much. . . . Doctors won’t tell you where to go to be well; they want to kill or cure you, to get your money. Calomel doctors will give you calomel to cure a sliver in the big toe; and they do not stop to know whether the stomach is empty or not; and calomel on an empty stomach will kill the patient.”

**Botanical Medicine**

The other dominant form of medical practice in America at this time was herbal or botanical medicine. Samuel Thomson significantly influenced the popularity of botanical medicine at the turn of the nineteenth century. Born in New Hampshire in 1769, Thomson grew up working on the family farm and had no formal education. After a few early experiences with the healing properties of roots and herbs, he began a career as a traveling healer, rejecting the heroic methods of physicians such as Benjamin Rush. At first, Thomson’s influence was limited only to a small geographical area in New England. However, historian John S. Haller Jr. describes how Thomson “transformed his medical practice into a successful business enterprise whose agents and subagents sold several hundred thousand rights to this system of practice, along with an even greater number of books and tons of botanical medicines.” By using his network of salesmen, Thomsonian medicine became popular nationwide. Before joining the Church, Willard Richards, who later served as a secretary to Joseph Smith and a counselor to Brigham Young, read Thomson’s *Practice of Medicine* and purchased the rights from one of Thomson’s agents. Later, Richards became well known for his use of medicinal herbs and was frequently referred to as “Dr. Richards,” though he never received any formal medical training.

Thomson’s homeopathic methods were especially popular among the Latter-day Saints. References to herbal medicine in Latter-day Saint
scriptures may have contributed, at least in part, to this popularity. For example, the Book of Mormon contains references to healing with “many plants and roots” (Alma 46:40). An 1831 revelation to Joseph Smith stated, “And whosoever among you are sick, and have not faith to be healed, but believe, shall be nourished with all tenderness, with herbs and mild food, and that not by the hand of an enemy” (D&C 42:43). Furthermore, the Word of Wisdom, revealed in 1833, gives council and instruction on the use of herbs—to tobacco in particular (see D&C 89:8–11). In 1841, Wilford Woodruff wrote, “I read the narrative of the life and medical Discoveries of Dr Samuel Thomson which were truly interesting & beneficial to mankind. I have no doubt but that his invention theory & practice of administering roots barks & herbs as medicine, is a great blessing to mankind & is one of the greatest improvements of the last days & is causing a great revolution throughout America in the mode of practice. . . . I Copied Dr Thomsons instructions on preparing medicine & administering it.”

Joseph Smith is reported to have said that Levi Richards, who practiced botanical medicine, was “the best physician I have ever been acquainted with.” Joseph went on to say, “People will seldom die of disease, provided we know it seasonably, and treat it mildly, patiently and perseveringly, and do not use harsh means.” Bloodletting and calomel were almost certainly some of the “harsh means” that Joseph referred to. On another occasion, the Prophet gave additional instructions on the treatment of sick persons: “I preached to a large congregation at the stand, on the science and practice of medicine, desiring to persuade the Saints to trust in God when sick, and not in an arm of flesh, and live by faith and not by medicine, or poison; and when they were sick, and had called for the Elders to pray for them, and they were not healed, to use herbs and mild food.” Here, the Prophet not only endorsed the use of medicinal herbs but also established priorities: ill people were to trust in God first and call for the elders to heal them, and then they were to employ the use of herbal medicine. Commenting on these priorities, historian Grant Underwood observed, “The Saints’ blend of priesthood blessings and basic botanical cures seems to bespeak moderation and practicality.” They were not overzealous in their use of faith healing, nor were they obsessive in their use of herbal healing.

The medical profession was not well regulated in the early nineteenth century. There were no standards of proficiency even among medical schools. The quality of the education of physicians would vary greatly from one to the next. Medical historian Volney Steele writes,
“Some medical schools existed only for profit and turned out nothing more than warm bodies with diplomas.” Therefore, it was difficult to distinguish between those who were trained medical professionals and those who were self-appointed practitioners. Patients needed to be careful and vigilant in selecting a doctor. Like Willard Richards, many carried the title of doctor even though they never attended medical school. Because of this, people often resorted to using Thomson’s botanical and other home remedies rather than trusting a doctor.

But even though many treatments were primitive during this time, great advancements were being made that paved the way for future medical procedures. One such example is the leg operation that the Prophet Joseph Smith received as a boy. After a battle with typhoid fever when he was just “five years old or thereabouts,” young Joseph was left with a severe infection in his lower leg. The pain soon became unbearably intense, and it seemed as though amputation was the only remedy. Dr. Nathan Smith, founder of Dartmouth Medical School, performed an experimental operation that saved Joseph’s leg from amputation. The procedure required the leg to be opened and the infected portions of the bone to be removed. One author has stated, “The operative removal of bone from a limb was not ordinary practice during that period. Nathan Smith had gained experience treating what was colloquially called ‘fever sore,’ or what we recognize now as osteomyelitis, the bacterial infection of bone. . . . Surgical cures for osteomyelitis were unheard of at that time.” This procedure was new and unproven. In fact, besides amputation, surgery was not a common solution to any medical problem at the time because of the great risk to the life of the patient. With no anesthetics available to reduce pain, no antibiotics to prevent infection, and no specialized surgical instruments, the surgeon had to act quickly and efficiently to complete the procedure before the patient died from the loss of blood. The longer the operation took to complete, the more trauma the patient was forced to endure, which decreased the chance of survival.

Because there were no hospitals or special operating rooms in existence, Joseph’s surgery was performed in one of the bedrooms of the Smith home. Before beginning the operation, the doctor suggested that Joseph be tied to the bed or take alcohol to dull his senses and help him endure the extreme pain of surgery, since he would remain fully conscious. The use of anesthetics such as ether to render a patient unconscious during surgery would not be tested until 1846. Rather than being bound to the bed or taking alcohol, Joseph insisted that he needed only to be held by his father during the operation.
was asked to leave the house during the surgery, but upon hearing him scream, she ran back. Lucy later recalled, “I burst into the room again, and, oh, my God, what a spectacle for a mother’s eye! The wound torn open to view, my boy and the bed on which he lay covered with the blood that was still gushing from the wound. Joseph was pale as a corpse, and the big drops of sweat were rolling down his face, every feature of which depicted agony that cannot be described.”

Lucy explained that the surgeon then used “forceps or pincers” to break off the infected portion of the bone. Although Joseph walked on crutches for the next two years, the surgery was successful and he was able to recover. As one author observed, “Joseph’s surgery has been described as ‘brutal’ and ‘gruesome,’ but when seen through the eyes of the surgeon, there was a great sophistication in the operation performed.” This pioneering surgical technique would not become a generally accepted practice until the early twentieth century.

Medical Conditions in Nauvoo

After being driven from Missouri in the spring of 1839, the Saints settled on a bend of the Mississippi River in a place known as Commerce, Illinois. The name of the place was later changed to Nauvoo—“the Beautiful.” Although this place may have been beautiful as a place of relief from the persecution of the Missouri mobs, the living conditions were less than ideal. Writing in 1881, Helen Mar Whitney recalled, “My first impression concerning the place was anything but pleasing; the circumstances attending my arrival there were probably the reason—the weather was excessively warm, and the bottom land being swampy, nearly everyone who had come there was sick upon the bank of the river.”

Unknown to the Nauvoo pioneers, the swampy, humid conditions made the riverbank an ideal breeding ground for malaria-carrying mosquitoes. One historian described Nauvoo as the “Beautiful Pesthole.” Until homes were built, some families found temporary shelter in abandoned log cabins. Others lived in dugouts, tents, and wagon boxes, which provided little protection from the mosquitoes.

Due to their weakened conditions following their expulsion from Missouri, the Saints were particularly susceptible to the sicknesses of the area. Those who arrived on the banks of the Mississippi River were not only physically weary from the journey but also emotionally and spiritually drained. During the months previous to their finding refuge in Illinois, the Saints experienced the apostasy of Church leaders, a tumult of persecution, and other intense suffering. During the winter of 1838–39, the Prophet Joseph Smith was incarcerated with five other
men in Liberty, Missouri, and prospects for their release were dim. The tragic massacre at Haun’s Mill, which had occurred the previous October, was still a vivid and terrifying image in the minds of the people.23 Concerning the prevalence of malaria and the weakened state of the Saints in Nauvoo, Helen Mar Whitney wrote, “Those who were strong enough wore it out in time, but many died because they were previously worn out and had not sufficient vitality to battle with this and other diseases brought on by suffering and privation and they died martyrs to the truth.”24

Even in these miserable and mosquito-infested conditions, the Saints experienced a day of miraculous healings performed by the Prophet Joseph Smith. On July 22, 1839, Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal that “Joseph [Smith] was in Montrose [across the river from Nauvoo] and it was a day of Gods power. There were many sick among the Saints on both sides of the river & Joseph went through the midst of those in Montrose taking them by the hand & in a loud voice Commanding them in the name of Jesus Christ to arise from their beds & be made whole & they leaped from their beds made whole by the power of God.”25 However, on the same day, Joseph Smith noted that although there were many healed, “many remain sick, and new cases are occurring daily.”26

The Saints called malaria different names, such as the “ague” and the “shakes.” The “shakes” referred to the chills—which could be violent at times—associated with the attacks. Malaria attacked the liver and produced a severely high fever accompanied by chills that caused the victim to shiver uncontrollably. This disease posed the most serious threat to the health of Nauvoo residents. The prevalence of malaria in Nauvoo has led one historian to conclude, “In a large family, someone was almost always down with the ‘shakes.’”27 Because infections were so widespread, death was a common occurrence in Nauvoo. One study noted that “during their sojourn in Illinois, the [Latter-day Saints] suffered from a death rate well above the national average for the mid-19th century.”28

As an alternative to heroic medical treatments, advertisements in Nauvoo newspapers promoted various products that promised effective relief not only from ague but also from a variety of other afflictions. The Times and Seasons, the Church newspaper in Nauvoo, printed numerous advertisements promoting pills, powders, and ointments that would provide relief from symptoms and ailments as diverse as the ague, fever, prairie itch, scald head, bowel afflictions, dyspepsia, colic, and many others.29 Most of these medications had no scientific
basis and treated only the symptoms of diseases, not their causes. Still, people were willing to try any remedy, and even superstitious cures, to find relief. Helen Mar Whitney records a humorous incident when she resorted to a superstitious trick in order to get relief from the ague:

Every remedy that could be thought or heard of was tried; we even resorted to tricks and stratagems, some of which were ludicrous in the extreme and afforded considerable fun and amusement. . . . The following one had a striking effect upon me: when we began to feel the symptoms we were to start and run across the floor as if going onto the bed, but to go under instead, thus cheating the old gentleman, who would go as usual onto the bed. At that time my regular chill came on every other evening, and when I first felt the symptoms I started from the fireplace, but in dodging to go under the bed I gave my head a frightful blow, and felt no more chills of the fever for three weeks; but whether it was due to the blow on my head or my faith in the trick I could never quite decide. 30

As ridiculous as it may seem to deceive an illness by hiding under the bed, this method appeared to Helen Mar Whitney to be at least temporarily effective.

Dentistry was also an emerging medical field during this era. Alexander Neibaur, an early convert to the Church, was born in Germany and had studied dentistry in England. Upon moving to Nauvoo, he presented himself as a dentist with an advertisement in the *Times and Seasons* offering services “in all branches connected with his profession, Teeth cleaned, plugged, filed, the Scurva effectually cured, children’s teeth regulated, natural or artificial teeth from a single tooth to a whole set inserted on the most approved principle.” 31 However, it is not likely that there was enough business in Nauvoo for him to make dentistry his primary occupation.

All the residents of Nauvoo suffered from the effects of the harsh conditions, and the Prophet’s family was no exception. Emma Smith, overworked and exhausted, gave birth to a stillborn son on February 6, 1842. In the middle of February, Joseph and Emma buried the child amidst a great deal of sorrow. Only five months earlier, their fourteen-month-old baby boy, Don Carlos, had died from the effects of malaria.

Personal letters and diaries of women in Nauvoo often spoke, without self-pity, of their sorrows—many times without their spouses to assist and comfort them. As letters were the principle means of communication, they often reported the sicknesses and deaths of friends and family members. Sally Carlisle Randall wrote several letters from Nauvoo that provide the modern reader with a unique look into life in
Nauvoo. After their conversion to the Church, Sally’s husband, James, traveled to Nauvoo in 1843 ahead of Sally and their children to arrange housing for the family. Sally and her three sons followed him in the fall of that year. The letters she wrote to her nonmember family in the East include detailed descriptions of the scene in Nauvoo. She writes about such things as the price of flour, the doctrine of baptisms for the dead, the events surrounding the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and the health conditions in the city. Shortly after her arrival in Nauvoo, she writes, “It is very sickly here at present with fevers and fever and ague and measles, and a great many children die with them.”

A few weeks after writing that letter, Sally’s oldest son, George, died at the age of fourteen, presumably of malaria. Her letter to her family telling them of George’s passing shows her grief as well as her faith:

Dear Friends,

I take my pen this morning to write a few lines to you, although with a trembling hand and a heart full of grief and sorrow, to inform you of our afflictions which are very great. It seems more sometimes than we are able to bear, but it is the Lord that hath done it. . . .

George has gone to try the realities of eternity. He died the first day of this month about 3 o’clock in the morning. He was sick three weeks and three days with the ague and fever. He had it every other day about two weeks and then every day till he died. . . .

I have one request to make and that is you will not cast any reflections and say if we had not come here he might have been alive, for we don’t know. I believe it was the will of the Lord that we should come that his body might be laid with the Saints.

As difficult as it may have been to live on the frontier, traveling presented its own set of challenges. The physical exertion of long journeys and exposure to the elements left travelers vulnerable to a variety of health problems. In August 1842, Wilford Woodruff traveled to St. Louis from Nauvoo, mostly via the Mississippi River, to procure printing supplies. One might think that riding on the river would be a relatively easy mode of transportation, but Wilford records in his journal all the ailments he suffered during his journey: “An exceeding Cold day & night & morning. As for myself I am in almost evry kind of trouble. A severe cold has settled throughout my body. I have the Rheumatism, teeth ake, head ake, bones ake, have got the musketoe [mosquito] fever, Bilious fever, & sick Stomack, . . . & am many more weeks getting to St Louis & if the Musketoes do not favor me more than they have done, that it will be a question whether I ever reach home or not. But I hope for the best.” Obviously, this was
not an enjoyable trip. Wilford’s complaints about the mosquitoes also illustrate the significant problem they presented to health conditions all along the river.

**Medical Conditions in Winter Quarters**

Patty Bartlett Sessions began a daybook in February 1846, just two days before leaving her home in Nauvoo to cross the river for Iowa. Having learned to be a midwife from her mother-in-law in Maine before joining the Saints in Missouri, she became an exceptionally skilled caregiver and was affectionately known as “Mother Sessions.” She wrote in her first daybook entry, “My things are now packed ready for the west, have been and put Richard’s wife to bed with a daughter [she had delivered a baby as a midwife]. In the afternoon put Sister Harriet Young to bed with a son.”

It took longer than expected to cross the muddy plains of Iowa, and the Saints were forced to spend the winter on the Missouri River before they could continue on to the Rocky Mountains. During her stay in Winter Quarters from September 1846 to June 1847, Patty Sessions assisted in the delivery of fifty-five infants. Her diary from this period shows that she was constantly caring for the sick. With doctors scarce—and a good doctor even more so—women were often the primary caregivers. In addition to midwifery, Patty was also skilled in mixing herbs and natural remedies in the Thomsonian tradition. Her diary records recipes for several remedies of her own making. One of these recipes reads as follows: “For bowel complaint take tea one spoonful of rubarb one forth corbnet soda one table spoonful brandy one tea spoonful peperment essence half tea cup ful warm water take a table spoonful once an hour until it operates.”

Patty assisted in the delivery of Helen Mar Whitney’s daughter in Winter Quarters. Tragically, the child did not survive. Helen later recalled, “On the morning of May 6th I was delivered of a beautiful and healthy girl baby which died at birth. Thus the only bright star, to which my doting heart had clung, was snatched away.” Weakened from this traumatic delivery, Helen was stricken with a case of scurvy and was bedridden for several weeks. “The scurvy laid hold of me,” she said, “commencing at the tips of the fingers of my left hand with black streaks running up the nails, with inflammation and the most intense pain, and which increased till it had reached my shoulder.” Fortunately, Helen survived.

Just as malaria was the common killer in Nauvoo, scurvy, an extremely painful disease, was the common killer in Winter Quarters.
Helen’s husband, Horace, described the terrible pain experienced by victims of scurvy: “It would commence with dark streaks and pains in the ends of the fingers or toes, which increased and spread till the limbs were inflamed and became almost black, causing such intense agony that death would be welcomed as a release from their suffering. It was caused by the want of vegetable food and living so long on salt meat without it.” Horace indicates that they understood that the cause of scurvy was an inadequate diet, but with no fresh fruits or vegetables available during the winter, there was not much they could do about it.

The harsh winter conditions claimed the lives of many who were already exhausted from the hasty exodus from Nauvoo, the endlessly muddy roads in Iowa, inadequate shelter and nutrition, and other factors. The exact number of people who died during this period in Winter Quarters is difficult to determine. It is commonly thought that about six hundred Saints died at Winter Quarters, mostly from scurvy. This estimate originates from Thomas L. Kane’s lecture, The Mormons, published in 1850, and most likely includes settlements in the surrounding areas. Despite the efforts of sextons to keep accurate records, many burials in and around Winter Quarters went unrecorded. This difficulty in record keeping was due, at least in part, to the nearly constant stream of grieving families making their way to the cemetery.

Conclusion

The early Saints faced immense medical challenges and harsh living conditions. The frequent mention of medical challenges in the Saint’ letters and journals shows that such challenges were a major part of their daily lives. By understanding how the Saints dealt with sickness and disease, we can more fully understand the early Latter-day Saint experience.

Notes

4. The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith, 117.


Medical science was in its infancy during the Nauvoo and Winter Quarters period. Causes of infectious diseases were largely unknown. (Theodore Gorka, *Emma Smith, the Elect Lady*)

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Medical Terms Used by Saints in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters, 1839–48

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A search of old documents, journals, and newspapers of the day will often mention but fail to clarify the medical terms used by Latter-day Saint pioneers. Consequently, we felt it important in preparing this paper to gather as much data as we could and use modern medical terminology to clarify many original health-related records. We hope the information will be of interest to readers, particularly those whose ancestors had serious illnesses or died in Nauvoo or Winter Quarters in the years 1839 to 1848.

Medical science was in its infancy during the mid-nineteenth century. The terms people used to describe diseases then are different from those we would use today. Causes of infectious diseases were largely unknown, and families described illnesses that caused death in the best way they knew how. Such diseases as measles, scarlet fever, and scurvy had telltale signs which generally permitted an accurate diagnosis. However, many reported causes of death, such as “fever,” “inflammation,” “stone quarry death,” “winter fever,” “hyetic fever,” and so on, could each have been used to describe a variety of diseases. Illnesses and causes of death were discussed with neighbors and sometimes with self-appointed “doctors” in the community. This provided a limited degree of commonality in describing major illnesses of the time but was often confusing.

Consider the setting in which the Saints lived. Few diagnostic facilities were available. There were no laboratories which could
identify bacteria or viruses. X-rays, CAT scans, and MRIs were not known. Simple tests like blood counts, urinalyses, and blood chemistry determinations were not within reach. People frequently guessed what sickness they were dealing with. Even if they guessed correctly, there seldom was anything medical science could do to alter the course of the illness. Doctors sometimes did more harm than good with their prescriptions, purgatives, and bloodletting practices. Joseph Smith’s older brother Alvin was, in all likelihood, killed by the inappropriate administration of mercurous chloride (calomel) by a physician. After Alvin’s death, two consulting physicians who were surprised at Alvin’s demise performed a postmortem examination. They found that a concretion of calomel had blocked his small intestine, strongly suggesting that this blockage was the cause of his death.²

In April 1843, at a meeting with new immigrants, Joseph Smith said, “Doctors won’t tell you where to go to be well; they want to kill or cure you, to get your money. Calomel doctors will give you calomel to cure a sliver in the big toe. . . . And the lobelia doctors will do the same.”³ It is heart-wrenching to think of oneself in the position of a Nauvoo Saint who had a serious illness to deal with.

We were able to find approximately one hundred perceived causes of death recorded by family members in newspapers and personal journals of the time and by sextons who were charged with keeping burial records for specific cemeteries. William Huntington, sexton for Old Nauvoo Cemetery, recorded many deaths. Families reported what they believed to be the cause of death of loved ones. This was often simply the most prominent symptom they had observed. The sexton, who was not a trained physician, recorded the family’s belief or his own interpretation of the cause of death.⁴

Though there are limitations in any assessment drawn from rather scanty data, we have utilized epidemiological information gleaned from the reported dates of death, ages of the people who died, recorded comments, and current knowledge of diseases to draw our conclusions. We have grouped certain symptoms together when we thought it appropriate. For example, malaria caused diverse symptoms, and malaria deaths were given various names. Other physicians may analyze recorded causes of death somewhat differently. Nevertheless, we have used our best judgment and in some instances have offered alternative possibilities. A more detailed discussion of deaths which occurred from 1839 through 1848—with an analysis of seasonal, gender, and age-related demographics—will be presented in a separate article.⁵
**Comments Regarding Selected Causes of Death Recorded by Pioneers, 1839–48**

*Ague* (Latin *acuta*, “sharp” or “acute”): Acute attacks of chills and fever. In the mid-nineteenth century, the term “ague” usually described malaria. Other terms such as “chill fever,” “recurrent chills,” or “bilious fever” also were descriptors of malaria. Malaria-related deaths usually occurred one to three months after a person had been bitten by a mosquito carrying virulent plasmodium parasites. The disease is commonly associated with marked malaise, a lack of energy, and a sense of depression. These three symptoms by themselves were commonly referred to as ague.

*Apoplexy* (Greek *apopleśsein*, “to strike”): This refers to a stroke, often due to a hemorrhage or blood clot in an organ, usually the brain. It can cause various symptoms including weakness or palsy, altered sensation, and problems with vision, speech, or walking.

*Bilious fever* (Latin *bilis*, “bile”): Refers to fever associated with excessive bile or bilirubin in the blood stream and tissues, causing jaundice (a yellow color in the skin and sclera of the eye). The most common cause was malaria. Viral hepatitis and bacterial infections of the blood stream (sepsis) may have caused a few of the deaths reported as bilious fever.

*Cancer* (Latin *cancer*, “a crab”): Generally refers to a malignant tumor. Without surgery, radiotherapy, or chemotherapy, it usually spreads and causes death.

*Canker* (Latin *cancer* or *cancrum*, “a crab”): Refers to an ulceration, usually in the mouth. In the presence of malnutrition, debilitation, or immune deficiency, it may spread and cause tissue destruction, gangrene, and an agonizing death. Fortunately, the amount of pain experienced by patients with fatal canker is relatively small. In pioneer times the gangrene often turned tissues black, in which instance the disease was called “black canker.” Without antibiotics or adequate nutrition, progressive canker or *cancrum oris* was fatal in about 95 percent of cases, usually within one to three weeks of its recognition. Today this condition still occurs in countries where there is severe poverty and malnutrition. Several diseases which weaken the immune system can add to the effects of malnutrition and debilitation, increasing the risk of progressive canker. These include measles, gastroenteritis, scurvy, AIDS, and, in the case of children, an initial or primary herpes virus infection in the mouth. The beginning of the disease may look like simple *aphthous stomatitis* (common canker in the mouth). However,
when it progressed into tissue necrosis or gangrene as a result of one or more of the above predisposing factors, the end result was usually the patient’s demise. Malaria, whooping cough, and severe diarrhea in all likelihood enhanced susceptibility in early Nauvoo and Winter Quarters. We have noted that the majority of fatalities caused by these diseases in Nauvoo coincided with the season of peak canker deaths. Indeed, any serious ongoing disease probably contributed to the risk of developing lethal canker in subjects with severe malnutrition. Canker deaths did, and still do, occur predominantly in young children. The years of maximal susceptibility (ages one to seven) are years when the immune system is not yet fully mature and passive protection from mother’s breast milk is waning or has gone.

Nowadays if the disease process is arrested through the administration of appropriate antibiotics and correction of malnutrition, the patient is left with debilitating scar tissue and disfiguration, often requiring heroic reconstructive plastic surgery. Unfortunately the early Saints had no antibiotics and all too often did not obtain adequate nutrition. They had little knowledge about what caused canker. Centuries ago, the condition was erroneously thought to be a cancer, hence the term cancrum. Later, in Great Britain, the commonly used terms were “mouth canker” and “noma.” Early Saints from England probably introduced the terms “canker” and “black canker” to other pioneers in describing this fatal condition. At present the four generally accepted medical terms for the condition are: *cancrum oris, gangrenous...*
stomatitis, necrotizing ulcerative stomatitis, and noma. Some authorities consider noma to be the preferred name.\textsuperscript{15}

The disease usually begins on the gums inside the mouth, then progresses and spreads gangrene. It causes necrosis (death) of adjacent tissues, including bone and skin. If not treated by the administration of good nutrition and antibiotics, death ensues. One can see from the photos above that even if the disease is arrested, major reparative surgery may be needed.

Cholera: A severe form of diarrhea caused by the bacterium \textit{Vibrio cholerae}. It results in massive loss of fluid into the bowel and severe watery stools. It can cause death from dehydration and shock within a few hours. It often occurs in epidemics. It is characterized by “rice water stools” and seldom has associated fever, colicky pain, or blood in the stools. If people of the mid-nineteenth century had known that giving boiled water containing appropriate amounts of salt and sugar by mouth at the onset of symptoms would counteract the dehydration, many lives could have been saved.\textsuperscript{16}

Childbed fever or childbirth fever: Current medical terminology is \textit{puerperal fever} or \textit{puerperal sepsis}. It is a serious illness caused by bacteria entering the mother’s blood stream during the time of labor or delivery. It especially attends births in which there is poor or inadequate sanitation.

Colic (Greek \textit{kolikos}, “pertaining to the colon”): Episodes of acute abdominal pain. There are numerous causes including gall bladder disease, gastroenteritis, food poisoning, cancer of the intestine, appendicitis, and so on. “Colic” was one of the many terms describing a symptom (in this instance, pain) that was considered to be the cause of death.

Congestive fever: An abnormal accumulation of fluid or secretions in some part of the body, associated with fever. Deaths reported to be congestive fever probably were most often due to pneumonia.

Consumption (Latin \textit{consumptio}, “process of consuming or wearing away”): This usually referred to tuberculosis. It described a chronic infection which slowly depleted the body reserves.

Cranium (Greek \textit{cranion}, “skull”): When listed as a cause of death, it probably meant a blow to the head or a disease in the head such as meningitis, encephalitis, or brain tumor.

Croup (British dialect, “to cry or cough hoarsely”): Usually an inflammation of the larynx causing a typical croupy, bark-like cough. It is most often caused by a respiratory virus, and occasionally the inflammation is so severe that it obstructs the intake of air, thus caus-
ing death. The danger of death is greatest in young children.

*Dropy* (Greek *hydros*, “of water”): An abnormal accumulation of fluid, especially in the lower legs and feet. Dropy or edema in the legs may be secondary to malnutrition, weakness of the heart (heart failure), kidney disease, or old age. Occasionally, dropy in other areas of the body were listed as causes of death: dropy of the abdomen (ascites or fluid in the abdominal cavity), dropy in the chest (usually due to weakness or failure of the left ventricle of the heart), or dropy in the head (hydrocephalus).

*Dyspepsia* (Greek *dys* + *pepsis*, “disturbed digestion”): Commonly associated with excessive production of hydrochloric acid causing inflammation of the stomach, lower esophagus, or duodenum, sometimes associated with peptic ulcers. Dyspepsia also may be associated with cancer of the stomach, intestine, pancreas, or esophagus.

*fits*: Convulsions or sudden abnormal behavior.

*Flux* (Latin *fluxus*, “excessive flow”): A term frequently applied to diarrhea in adults.

*Gropt* (probably from French *grippé*, “seized”): A term frequently used to describe influenza.

*Hooping cough* or *hopping cough* (see *pertussis*).

*Hyetic fever* (Greek *hyetos*, “rain”): Fever associated with a period of rainfall.

*Inflammation* (Latin *inflammare*, “to set on fire”): Refers to redness, heat, and pain. It involves the accumulation in body tissue of white blood cells and chemical mediators of inflammation. It can occur in any part of the body. Sometimes only the term “inflammation” was provided as the cause of death.

*Inflammation of the bowels*: Diarrhea, dysentery, flux, colitis, or enteritis.

*Inflammation of the brain*: Meningitis, encephalitis, or brain abscess.

*Inflammation of the head*: Meningitis, encephalitis, brain abscess, or cellulitis (infection of the skin) of the scalp.

*Inflammation of the lungs*: Pneumonia or lung abscess.
Irraecepelas (Greek *erythros* + *pela*, “red skin”): The correct spelling is “erysipelas.” This refers to a spreading infection of the skin, usually due to streptococcus. If unchecked it may lead to sepsis (serious blood stream infection) and death.

*Lung fever*: Probably indicates pneumonia, lung abscess, or infection of the covering of the lungs (pleurisy).

*Malaria* (Italian *mala* + *aria*, “bad air”): A disease thought to be due to bad air in the mid-nineteenth century. It is actually caused by the bite of an *anopheles* mosquito transmitting plasmodium parasites which entered the victim’s red blood cells and destroyed many of them. There are four types of malaria parasites, *Plasmodium falciparum* being the one that is usually responsible for death. The disease is typically manifested by severe recurrent chills and fever, often with jaundice, sweating, and fatigue. Death, when it occurs, usually comes one to three months after exposure to mosquitoes carrying the parasite. Mosquitoes were prevalent mainly from July until the first frost in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters. Deaths attributed to ague were largely due to malaria in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters.
Mercurial diarrhea: This could refer to massive diarrhea of any cause, or it might refer to diarrhea initiated by the commonly prescribed calomel, a purgative prepared from the mercury compound mercurous chloride. If given in excess to a sick person, this laxative may cause or exacerbate diarrhea. If improperly diluted, it may cause blockage in the bowel. In either event calomel may contribute to or cause death.

Nervous fever (Latin nervosa, “composed of nerves”): It could refer to meningitis or encephalitis, or it could refer to a nervous reaction during a febrile disease such as malaria. Clues to its cause could sometimes be found in the time of year it occurred as well as in associated symptoms.

Noma (Latin nome, “corroding ulcer”): Spreading gangrene, nearly always beginning in the mouth but rarely in the nose or another part of the body. A synonym of canker, black canker, cancerum oris, and gangrenous stomatitis.

Numb palsy: Weakness, paralysis, or stroke associated with decreased sensation or numbness in part of the body.

Old age: It is of interest that this cause of death was listed for people ages 56 to 78. It probably was given as a cause of death when the family could not recognize any other specific cause.
Palsy (Latin paralysis, “loss of the ability to move part of the body”): Weakness or inability to move a part of the body.

Pertussis (Latin per + tussis, “extreme cough”): It is caused by the bacterium Bordetella pertussis. A whooping cough–like illness that is occasionally caused by B. parapertussis or by mycoplasmal or chlamydial organisms. In children, whooping cough often is associated with an inspiratory crowing sound or whoop, hence the name whooping cough. There may be some difficulty breathing at any age, but in infants and young children it may be so severe as to cause death.

Pleurisy (Greek pleuritis, “inflammation of the side or ribs”): The pleura is a covering on the surface of the lungs and the inner surfaces of the thoracic cavity. Pleurisy is often associated with pneumonia, but it can be caused without pneumonia by enteroviruses. It also may result from trauma to the chest wall.

Putrid sore throat (Latin putridus, “rotten”): This could have referred to diphtheria, peritonsillar abscess, or membranous pharyngitis due to either streptococcal infection or infectious mononucleosis. It could also have been associated with canker or black canker (cancrum oris) since this condition often results in foul-smelling breath.

Quinsy (Latin quinancia, “disease of the throat”): This usually refers to a peritonsillar abscess which can be acute and rapidly enlarging. It may cause death by obstructing the intake of air.

Remittent fever: Exacerbations and remissions of fever. It is most often due to malaria but could have other causes. Remittent fever of malaria may recur intermittently over a period of weeks or months. It may lead to death or may gradually subside due to the development of immunity.

Rickets: Deformity of the long bones in the legs or arms due to vitamin D deficiency. It can cause bowlegs, bumps where the cartilage and bones of the rib meet (rachitic rosary), deformities of the spine, and so on. It may occur in infants and young children who are exclusively breast fed and not exposed to sunlight for long periods of time. It is rather unusual for vitamin D–deficient rickets alone to be a cause of death. More unusual conditions such as renal rickets and vitamin D–resistant rickets may be fatal if not recognized and treated appropriately. Accurate diagnosis was often impossible in the mid-nineteenth century.

Rheumatic fever (Greek rheumatikos, “subject to a flow”): Sometimes called “traveling rheumatism” by early pioneers because it resulted in arthritis that migrated from joint to joint. It is a complication of streptococcal sore throat or scarlet fever and may be associated
with rheumatic heart disease (damage to the muscles and valves of the heart). Heart involvement was the usual cause of death.

**Scurvy:** Scurvy results from vitamin C deficiency. Deaths from scurvy occurred most frequently in late winter and early spring before the fresh fruits, berries, and vegetables, which provide vitamin C, were on the family table. Corkscrew hairs arising from hair follicles which have pinpoint hemorrhages or petechiae are pathognomonic of scurvy. Scurvy causes bleeding in the skin and mucus membranes. It also causes spongy, bleeding gums and loose teeth. It is a known predisposing factor for canker or black canker. When severe, scurvy can cause hemorrhage in the brain and death.

**Spasm** (Greek *spasmos*, “sudden involuntary muscle contraction”): Can be associated with convulsions or electrolyte disturbances.

**Spinal irritation:** Spine refers to the vertebral column. Spinal irritation was most commonly caused by meningitis, which usually led to death.

**Stone quarry death:** It could be due to an accident in the quarry, or it might refer to lung damage associated with inhaling large quantities of dust from stonecutting or polishing. Malaria also might have caused some deaths in quarry workers since the temple was located in a mosquito-infested area. Exposure to severe cold and dampness in wintertime could lead to death.

**Teething:** This refers to the appearance of teeth in young children. In itself, it almost never causes death. Rarely it may cause minor inflammation of the gums where a tooth is erupting. It was frequently listed as the cause of death when an underlying cause was not recognized.

**Typhus fever** (Greek *typhos*, “fever”): This is a disease caused by an organism called *Rickettsia*, which is transmitted from person to person by the body louse *Pediculus humanus*. It usually occurs during the winter months. Typhus fever was commonly confused with typhoid fever during the nineteenth century. Both diseases exhibit a high fever and a rash.
Typhoid fever. “Typhoid” means “typhus-like.” This disease is caused by the bacterium *Salmonella typhi*. It often involves infection of the bloodstream and may lead to infection in diverse parts of the body, especially the bones. Typhus fever does not cause bone infection or osteomyelitis, whereas typhoid fever does. It is now recognized that the osteomyelitis experienced by Joseph Smith in his youth was, in all likelihood, due to typhoid fever rather than to typhus fever as recorded by Joseph’s mother, Lucy Mack Smith.¹⁹

Ulcer (Latin *ulcerous*, “ulcer” or “sore”): Interrupted epithelial surface usually with an inflamed base. It generally refers to the gastrointestinal tract (stomach or duodenum), but it can occur in the mouth or on the body surface.

White swelling: This usually refers to swelling of the joints without redness or heat, as is often the case with tuberculosis of the joints. We can only surmise that tuberculosis was the disease to which the Nauvoo sexton referred when he listed this as a cause of death.

Winter fever: This could be any fever leading to death during winter months. Most likely it refers to influenza or pneumonia, both of which were prevalent in the winter months.

Whooping cough (see pertussis).

Worm fever: Worms seldom cause fever and rarely cause death. In all likelihood, the involved person had a fever and a cause of death other than worms, but because worms were observed in the person’s stools, it was concluded that they caused the death.²⁰

Notes


16. Lawrence M. Tierney, Stephen J. McPhee, and Maxine A Papadakis, *Current Medical Diagnosis and Treatment* (Norwalk, CT: Appleton and Lange, 1998), 1316.
Deaths in Early Nauvoo, 1839–46, and Winter Quarters, 1846–48

Evan L. Ivie and Douglas C. Heiner

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That the struggles, the sacrifices, and the sufferings of the faithful pioneers and the cause they represented shall never be forgotten, this monument is gratefully erected and dedicated.

—Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark Jr., and David O. McKay, 1936, inscription on the Winter Quarters Cemetery Monument

Many people know of the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in Carthage on June 27, 1844, but the two brothers were not the only martyrs in the Smith family. Between 1840 and 1844, three other men in the family died as a result of persecution: Joseph Sr. died September 14, 1840, Don Carlos died August 7, 1841, and Samuel Harrison died July 30, 1844. In addition to these members of the Smith family, hundreds of Saints died in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters from disease, malnutrition, or exposure to the elements as a result of persecution.

This article focuses on a unique—yet perhaps poorly understood—aspect of American history: the settling of and the exodus from Nauvoo, Illinois, by early Latter-day Saints. In seven years, Nauvoo grew from a mostly unsettled swamp to a city rivaling Chicago in size and significance. Then, even more quickly, its citizens departed, leaving the town almost empty.

We will not address in this article why the Saints clung so tenaciously to their newfound religion. Nor will we try to explain why they were so intensely persecuted, not only in Nauvoo but also earlier in New York, Ohio, and Missouri. Instead, our goal will be to analyze
only one aspect of their sacrifice: the deaths that occurred in Nauvoo and during their migration west to Winter Quarters. And as we do this, it will become evident that there were many more martyrs for the cause than those shot by the mobs.

This article, along with a companion article,\(^1\) analyzes the causes and frequency of death in early Nauvoo, 1839–46. For comparison purposes, data is also included on the deaths in Winter Quarters, 1846–48,\(^2\) and those in Nauvoo, 1850–65.\(^3\)

Over a hundred different causes of death are noted in various early Nauvoo records. William Huntington, the sexton of the Old Nauvoo Cemetery, recorded many of the deaths in cemetery records.\(^4\) Obituaries in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, the *Times and Seasons*, and the *Wasp* provide another source of death information, and journals and diaries provide a third source.

In our earlier article, “Medical Terms Used by Saints in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters, 1839–48,” we translated these recorded causes of death into modern medical terms.\(^5\) The medical field has made tremendous advances over the last 160 years. Our current understanding of the causes of death, of historical records and descriptions, and of clues based on seasonal, age, and gender factors has allowed us to reexamine most of the early Nauvoo causes of death using today’s terminology.

Many of the causes of death listed in the early records are not familiar to us today. In some cases, the terminology has changed. In other cases, the stated cause of death was only a symptom. Examples of these symptoms include fever, sore throat, fits, spasms, swelling, and inflammation. In still other cases, the stated cause of death was perhaps not even related to the actual cause. Examples of these stated causes include “teething,” “old age,” “stone quarry,” “cranium,” and “worms.” The data and charts presented here utilize the nomenclature mentioned above. In that effort, we classified the causes of death according to current medical terminology.

**Basic Nauvoo Death Data**

Teresa Whitehead created an access database of all of the Nauvoo deaths that we located. Data was entered with the assistance of Natalie Freitas, Joy Heiner, and Betty Jo Ivie. These deaths were taken from the records of William Huntington, from obituaries in the Nauvoo newspapers, from journals and diaries, and from other sources.

Death by year. There were 1,925 deaths identified during the period in question. We were able to locate a cause of death for 956 of these, most of which came from Huntington’s records. Figure 1 shows
the number of recorded deaths and the number of recorded causes by year for Nauvoo, 1839–46. Almost no causes were recorded until August of 1842, when Huntington became the sexton. There was only one cause recorded in 1846. We are indebted to Sexton Huntington for his careful record keeping during 1842–45.

From 1840 to 1843, total deaths increased almost linearly each year (63, 175, 299 and 435: increases of 102, 124, and 135). The increase in the population of Nauvoo during that period probably accounts for much of the increase in deaths. The numbers of deaths in 1843, 1844, and 1845 were about the same (435, 440, 404). Could this consistency counterbalance the increase in the Nauvoo population and the fact that the swamps had been drained? Finally, in 1846, the Nauvoo death rate dropped to just 37 deaths. After the exodus started on February 4, 1846, and the Nauvoo War, which drove the remaining Saints out, began in September 1846, the town was left with almost no population.

Causes of Death

There were 956 death records found in which a cause of death was given. Over 100 distinct causes of death are given in these 956 records. These 100 distinct causes have been classified into 37 causes using current medical terminology. We have focused on the six leading causes of death. Figure 2 shows the six leading causes of death in Nauvoo, plus cholera, which is included for comparison purposes. Other lesser causes that account for at least 1 percent of the total deaths include:
Pneumonia ........ 4.0%
Typhus Fever....... 3.3%
Accidents .......... 3.2%
Whooping Cough ... 2.8%
Convulsions ....... 2.4%
Scarlet Fever ...... 2.3%
Dysentery .......... 2.1%
Inflammation ...... 2.0%
Dropsy (Edema) .... 1.5%
Gastroenteritis ... 1.2%
Nervous Fever ...... 1.0%
Hydrocephalus ...... 1.0%
Childbirth .......... 1.0%

Predilection of Diseases for Age, Season, and Gender

In addition to analyzing the deaths in Nauvoo by time and by cause, we also looked at whether there was any predilection of the cause of death for a given age group, for a given season of the year, or for a given gender. Figure 3 summarizes the deaths for 11 major causes, providing the age range, the mean age, the percent of deaths during the last half of the year, and the percent of male deaths. The following three sections summarize the results for age, season, and gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaria</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1 mo. to 81 yrs.</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td><strong>98%</strong></td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>10 days to 86 yrs.</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td><strong>93%</strong></td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1 mo. to 71 yrs.</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canker (Noma)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>18 days to 66 yrs.</td>
<td><strong>17 months</strong></td>
<td><strong>88%</strong></td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measles</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1 mo. to 45 yrs.</td>
<td><strong>18 months</strong></td>
<td><strong>73%</strong></td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung Infections</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24 days to 80 yrs.</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typhus Fever</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2 yrs. to 72 yrs.</td>
<td>26 years</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whooping Cough</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3 mos. to 7 yrs.</td>
<td><strong>13 months</strong></td>
<td><strong>96%</strong></td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deaths by age. As figure 3 shows, the mean age of those who died from five of the diseases was eighteen months or less (these are shown in boldface). The diseases that singled out babies and very young children were canker, measles, whooping cough, meningitis, and convulsions/fits. One disease, scarlet fever, affected babies and young children, but was not as strongly skewed to babies, with a mean age at death of three years and five months. For the five other diseases—malaria, diarrhea, tuberculosis, lung fever, and typhus fever—deaths occurred in a wide range of ages, affecting adults, babies, and children.

Deaths by month (seasonal variation). Were there more deaths during certain months or seasons of the year than in others? Figure 3 shows that death occurred mainly in the second half of the year for five of the diseases (these percentages are shown in boldface). These diseases are malaria, diarrhea, canker, measles, and whooping cough.

Figure 4 shows this seasonal death phenomenon differently. Deaths were charted bimonthly over a six-year period. Each point represents a two-month period (Feb.–Mar., Apr.–May, June–July, Aug.–Sept., Oct.–Nov., Dec.–Jan.). There is a striking rise in the number of deaths during the fall of each year, with the deaths peaking in August/September. We have examined seasonal death rates for a few other populations and have found that nineteenth-century deaths often increase in late summer or in the middle of winter. However, the Nauvoo data represent a very pronounced seasonal variation.

Malaria was the most common cause of death in Nauvoo. Since Nauvoo was a swamp before the Saints arrived, it was undoubtedly a haven for mosquitoes. Malarial deaths tend to peak in August and September in the Northern Hemisphere, because infections occur during the summer months as the mosquito population grows and infections occur. Following infection, there is an incubation period and a symptomatic phase, and finally death occurs in late summer or early fall. There was an average of about 40 recorded deaths each year from malaria, and on average, the total deaths jumped from about 15 in...
March to more than 80 in September. This increase occurred because a number of other major causes of death in addition to malaria had a similar seasonal characteristic.

Deaths by gender. Of the six major causes of death in early Nauvoo, only malaria shows much of a predilection for one gender: 59 percent of the malarial deaths were males. Men were more exposed to mosquitoes because they were outside more often than women were and because they dug the drainage ditches. Whooping cough and measles deaths were also slightly more prevalent among males than among women. However, typhus fever, meningitis, and scarlet fever were more prevalent among females. The only two minor diseases that showed a marked predilection for a gender were childbirth (for female, obviously) and accidents, where males made up 87 percent of the deaths.

Comparisons: Winter Quarters and Postexodus Nauvoo

To better understand the results of our study, we compared the death data for the Saints in postexodus Nauvoo to the deaths for the Saints in Winter Quarters, Nebraska, where they resided for a short period before moving on to Utah. This data covers the years 1846–48. The Winter Quarters Information Center provided information on 391 deaths. There was a stated cause of death for 261, or two-thirds of the

Fig. 4. Nauvoo Deaths bimonthly: April–May 1842 to October–November 1846. Peaks always occurred in August to September.
deaths. There were 50 distinct causes of death listed. The recorded deaths for the Catholic Cemetery in Nauvoo after the exodus of the Saints comprised a third comparison group. The period examined for this group was 1850–65, approximately twice the length of time the Saints were in Nauvoo. There were 664 deaths recorded, with 532 listing a cause of death.

Figure 5 shows the percentage of total reported causes of death for six major causes across three study groups. The percentages of deaths caused by tuberculosis in early Nauvoo, Winter Quarters, and the Catholic Cemetery are almost identical (11 percent, 11 percent, and 10.5 percent). Deaths attributed to diarrhea are also somewhat similar (13 percent, 13.4 percent, and 7 percent). However, there are marked differences across the three study groups for the other four causes of death.

Malaria (ague) was the largest cause of death in early Nauvoo and in Winter Quarters, but almost no malarial deaths were reported for the Nauvoo Catholic Cemetery for 1850–65. One possible explanation might be that the swamps in Nauvoo had been drained by the time the Saints left, leaving a much smaller mosquito population for the future Nauvoo residents. Another explanation might be that an almost completely new citizenry who were not carriers of the disease moved into Nauvoo.

Noma (canker), like malaria, was a significant cause of death in both early Nauvoo and Winter Quarters, but not for the postexodus Catholic Cemetery. As our sister article reports, canker was caused largely by malnutrition. It is evident that insufficient food was a problem the Saints faced in both locations. Many of the Winter Quarters Saints had been driven from Nauvoo without sufficient food and supplies. For example, Latter-day Saint Edmond Durfey had returned to his farm in Yelrom, Illinois, about twenty-five miles south of Nauvoo, to try to harvest some of his crops when he was shot to death in late 1845. In September 1846, the Nauvoo War drove the last several hundred Saints out of the city before they could harvest sufficient food to be prepared to leave. As this data indicates, these expulsions were not merely a matter of relocating the Saints to a new home, but were a matter of life and death.

Cholera was a significant cause of death in postexodus Nauvoo, but not in early Nauvoo or Winter Quarters. Cholera epidemics swept through the United States in 1833–34, 1848–49, 1850–51, and 1865–66, but did not reach Winter Quarters or Salt Lake City. The Saints were
also largely unaffected by the yellow fever epidemics of 1841, 1847, 1850, and 1855. Evidently the Saints’ isolation had some benefits.

Neither the Saints nor the Catholics in Nauvoo suffered from scurvy, which is caused by a deficiency of vitamin C. However, the Winter Quarters Saints did. Recently arrived and often exhausted, Winter Quarters Saints had to subsist largely on meat and transported grains. Most cases of scurvy there occurred in March and April 1846, before fresh vegetables containing vitamin C could be harvested.

Death Rate in Early Nauvoo

One of the goals of this research that we failed to achieve was to determine accurately the mean yearly population of the Saints in Nauvoo from 1839 to 1846. We detail our efforts in the hope that future researchers will be able to obtain more precise data.

To determine the population of Nauvoo, we used various census counts, population counts in newspaper articles and other printed documents, and ship passenger lists. We used these counts to make a chronological chart of the population of Nauvoo by month for the seven-year period. We then averaged that count for each year to obtain the average yearly populations. The death counts came from the access database created for this paper. Figure 6 shows the estimated numbers.

![Figure 5: Reported causes of death in early Nauvoo, 1839–46; the Nauvoo Catholic Cemetery, 1850–65; and Winter Quarters, 1846–48.](image-url)
Year | Avg. population | Deaths | Death rate
---|---|---|---
1839 | 2,000 | 61 | 30
1840 | 2,700 | 63 | 23
1841 | 5,150 | 175 | 33
1842 | 9,600 | 299 | 31
1843 | 13,200 | 435 | 33
1844 | 15,000 | 440 | 29
1845 | 16,500 | 404 | 22
1846 | 2,500 | 37 | 15

Fig. 6. Estimated death rates per 1,000 population in early Nauvoo, 1839–46

Our population counts are not as accurate as we would like them to be, largely because of the following questions:

- Were the counts recorded in the records intended to be accurate or only rough estimates?
- Were the counts over- or underestimated based on the purpose of the estimator?
- Did the counts include nonmembers?
- Did the counts include nearby settlements or only Nauvoo proper?
- Did the counts include visitors as well as residents?

Some of the uncertainty about the yearly death counts are a result of the following:

- We don’t know what portion of the database includes people living in outlying settlements and not in Nauvoo.
- Cemeteries for the nearby settlements of Zarahemla, Nashville, Yelrom, and Webster have recently been located and studied. These recent findings are not included in our effort.
- The pavilion at the Old Pioneer Cemetery in Nauvoo includes about 1,765 of the same names as our database. Further efforts will be needed to resolve the differences.

We believe that, despite these uncertainties, our general conclusions approximate the actual situation.

Our desire to consider death rates in Nauvoo prompted us to add this section. In fairness, an entire article could be written including all
the sources we used and how we calculated the average yearly population. You may want to compare our population results with those in an article in *BYU Studies* in 1995.\textsuperscript{11} That article gives the population of Nauvoo at specific points in time. For example, the population in 1839 is given as 100, which would be correct for the beginning of the year but does not reflect the influx of Mormons during 1839. Our yearly populations are in general higher than the counts given in the *BYU Studies* article, a fact that needs to be addressed in another research paper, along with an analysis of the death rates.

**Conclusions**

*Causes of death.* Some diseases that the Nauvoo Saints suffered from (e.g. tuberculosis, measles, whooping cough) were common to most parts of the country. A second category of diseases was the result of persecution. Some persecution-related deaths were caused by malnutrition (e.g., canker, scurvy) while others (e.g., malaria) were caused by the Saints’ being forced to occupy undesirable land such as the swamps in Nauvoo. Perhaps 600 of the 1,925 Nauvoo deaths that we studied were persecution related. A third category includes infectious diseases such as those listed as “fever” and “diarrhea,” and epidemic diseases such as cholera, yellow fever, typhoid fever, and louse-born typhus. The epidemic diseases such as cholera and yellow fever constitute a fourth category of diseases. In all likelihood, persecution, stress, and malnutrition contributed to the severity of some illnesses caused by infectious disease.

*Age, season, and gender predilections.* Babies and young children were especially hard-hit by death in Nauvoo. Diseases that particularly attacked babies were canker or noma, measles, whooping cough, meningitis, and convulsions. There was a striking increase in deaths in Nauvoo starting in July and peaking in September. Diseases that exhibited this seasonal peaking included malaria, diarrhea, canker, measles, and whooping cough. The various causes of death in Nauvoo did not generally favor one gender over the other.

*Comparison groups (Winter Quarters and postexodus Nauvoo).* We compared the causes of death in early Nauvoo to those in Winter Quarters (same people, different location and time) and to those in the Nauvoo Catholic Cemetery records (different people and time, same location). Four of the major diseases showed a marked difference among these three groups. The persecution-related diseases—malaria and noma/canker—were significant killers in both early Nauvoo and Winter Quarters, but they were almost nonexistent in postexodus
Nauvoo. The other persecution-related disease, scurvy, was a major problem only in Winter Quarters. Only one disease, cholera, was epidemic related. The cholera epidemics reached Nauvoo but not Winter Quarters.

Death rate. The death rate in early Nauvoo appears to be 25 to 35 per 1,000, but further work needs to be done in this area.

Notes

2. Mormon Trail Center Staff, “Deaths and Burials in the Camp of Israel at Cutler’s Park and Winter Quarters beginning Sept. 1846,” manuscript at the Mormon Trail Center in Omaha, Nebraska.
8. Mormon Trail Staff, “Deaths and Burials in the Camp of Israel.”
The command for the Saints to move from New York to Ohio presented a significant “why” moment for the early members.
(Kirtland Temple, Kirtland, Ohio)

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Why the Ohio? Why Anything in My Life? Lessons from the Command to Gather

Scott C. Esplin

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“When you face adversity,” observed Elder Richard G. Scott, “you can be led to ask many questions. Some serve a useful purpose; others do not. To ask, Why does this have to happen to me? Why do I have to suffer this, now? What have I done to cause this? will lead you into blind alleys. It really does no good to ask questions that reflect opposition to the will of God.” This futility in asking “why” was taught by the Lord to his Saints early in the Restoration. The command for the Saints to move from New York to Ohio, found in sections 37 and 38 of the Doctrine and Covenants, presented a significant “why” moment for the early members. These Saints dealt with challenges common to Church members today, including sacrificing material possessions or friends and family in following the Lord’s command. Though the Lord addressed some of their concerns in these revelations, other “whys” regarding the move remained unanswered, helping them learn to trust the omniscience of God and rely on his promised blessings. The revelations themselves, together with the response by Church membership, highlight principles that teach how to properly act when the “whys” of life are unclear. Lessons from the historical context of these sections can help teachers and students deal with similar periods of “why” in their own lives.

“Go to the Ohio” (D&C 37:1)—Setting Up the “Why”

The fledgling Church faced increasing opposition in New York throughout the summer and fall of 1830. Church leaders, including
Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, sought safety in partial seclusion as mobs and legal proceedings hampered their ability to minister to the members. Meanwhile, the work of the Lord expanded. Obedient to a call to serve, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer Jr., Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson journeyed westward to Missouri on a mission to the Lamanites. Along the way, they experienced great success in the Ohio community of Kirtland. Following a monthlong preaching tour during which the elders baptized nearly 130 converts, Church membership in northern Ohio rivaled that in New York.

Before continuing their mission to the West, Oliver Cowdery and his companions sent word to Joseph Smith, “desiring him to send an elder to preside over the branch which they had raised up” in Kirtland. The Prophet sent John Whitmer, who arrived in mid-January 1831. Upon his arrival, he found a congregation of about three hundred, more than double that previously reported. Reacting to this growth, John Whitmer wrote a letter to Joseph, “desiring his immediate assistance in Kirtland in regulating the affairs of the Church there.”

Responding to the need for leadership in Kirtland, the Lord told Joseph, “Behold, I say unto you that it is not expedient in me that ye should translate any more until ye shall go to the Ohio.” Addressing the reason the Prophet should move, the Lord continued, “And this because of the enemy and for your sakes” (D&C 37:1). Furthermore, the Lord expanded the directive to include all Church members: “And again, a commandment I give unto the church, that it is expedient in me that they should assemble together at the Ohio” (D&C 37:3). Reiterating the agency of members in following the command, the Lord concluded, “Behold, here is wisdom, and let every man choose for himself” (D&C 37:4).

These commands must have sparked a series of questions in the minds of the Prophet and his associates. Why would the Lord choose Ohio, with only the newly converted Saints in Kirtland, as the headquarters of the Church? How would its designation as the first gathering place in this dispensation aid the work of the Restoration? Like the Church itself, the state of Ohio was also undergoing an era of rapid growth. During the first three decades of the nineteenth century, Ohio experienced a tenfold increase in population, growing from seventy-two thousand residents in 1800 to over eight hundred thousand by 1826. During the 1830s, the decade in which the Church was headquartered there, the state’s population increased by almost six hundred thousand, and by 1840 Ohio was the third most populous state in the nation behind only New York and Pennsylvania.
itself kept pace with the growth of the state. In the decade before the Church arrived, the population of the town more than doubled.

Rapid growth in the area, coupled with the availability of land and the opportunity to expand, produced a region ripe for establishing a Church headquarters. Ohio served as an ideal location because it was centrally located within the young nation and thus mission fields across the United States and even north to Canada were easily accessible by river, canal, lake, or land. Furthermore, it was a step closer to Zion, an area of growing interest to Joseph Smith and the Church. From his home in Kirtland, the Prophet made frequent trips to Independence, Missouri, guiding members in their attempts to establish the New Jerusalem. Finally, Ohio represented a place where the Church and its leaders could get a fresh start, protected from the increasing opposition they faced in New York.

“All Things Are Present before [His] Eyes” (D&C 38:2)—Responding to the Call to Gather

The command to move must have been electrifying to Church members. Concerning a conference of the Church held in early January 1831, Church historian John Whitmer recorded, “The solemnities of eternity rested on the congregation, and having previously received a revelation to go to Ohio, [the Saints] desired to know somewhat more concerning this matter.” In response, “the Seer enquired of the Lord in the presence of the whole congregation, and thus came the word of the Lord”—Doctrine and Covenants section 38.8

The Lord’s words in section 38 highlight the “why” questions that must have been circulating throughout Church membership regarding the move. Possibly because the Saints questioned the wisdom of leaving their homes in New York, the section begins with the Lord reiterating his omniscience, declaring that he “knoweth all things, for all things are present before [his] eyes” (D&C 38:2). Furthermore, the Lord promised to be in their midst, with the blessing that “the day soon cometh that ye shall see me, and know that I am” (D&C 38:8). Regarding the dangers threatening the Saints in New York, the Lord encouraged them to “go . . . out from among the wicked” (D&C 38:42), warning that “the enemy in the secret chambers seeketh your lives” (D&C 38:28). Finally, addressing the particulars of the move and encouraging haste, he emphasized, “And they that have farms that cannot be sold, let them be left or rented as seemeth them good” (D&C 38:37).

The initial response to this command was mixed. Though the Lord outlined that members should trust both his omniscience and his aid,
John Whitmer’s history recalls, “After the Lord had manifested the above words [section 38], through Joseph the Seer, there were some divisions among the congregation, some would not receive the above as the word of the Lord: but [held] that Joseph had invented it himself to deceive the people that in the end he might get gain. Now this was because, their hearts were not right in the sight of the Lord, for they wanted to serve God and man; but our Savior has declared that it was impossible to do so.”

News of the command to gather and of Joseph’s anticipated transfer to Ohio quickly spread outside the Church. As early as mid-January, newspapers in the Kirtland area began revealing details of the move. On January 18, 1831, the Painesville Telegraph announced the coming of John Whitmer to the area. Though slightly inaccurate in its assessment of Church doctrine, the account preserves some detail regarding the anticipated arrival of Joseph Smith:

A young gentleman by the name of Whitmer arrived here last week from Manchester, N.Y., the seat of wonders, with a new batch of revelations from God, as he pretended, which have just been communicated to Joseph Smith. As far as we have been able to learn their contents, they are a more particular description of the creation of the world, and a history of Adam and his family, and other sketches of the anti-deluvian [antediluvian] world, which Moses neglected to record. But the more important part of the mission was to inform the brethren that the boundaries of the promised land, or the New Jerusalem, had just been made known to Smith from God—the township of Kirtland, a few miles west of this, is the eastern line and the Pacific Ocean the western line; if the north and south lines have been described, we have not learned them. Orders were also brought to the brethren to sell no more land, but rather buy more. Joseph Smith and all his forces are to be on here soon to take possession of the promised land.

In Ohio, local residents both in and out of the faith braced themselves for the Church’s arrival.

“Let Your Preaching be the Warning Voice” (D&C 38:41)—Preparing to Leave

Back in New York, area newspapers began covering the Saints’ preparations for the exodus. In Palmyra, the Reflector published a letter to the editor, written from Waterloo, New York, on January 26, 1831:

Elder S. Rigdon left this village on Monday morning last in the stage, for the “Holy Land,” where all the “Gold Bible” converts, have recently received a written commandment from God, through Jo Smith, junior, to repair with all convenient speed after selling off the property. This
command was at first resisted by such as had property, (the brethren
from the neighboring counties being all assembled by special sum-
mons,) but after a night of fasting, prayer and trial, they all consented
to obey the holy messenger.—Rigdon has for some time past been
arranging matters with Smith for the final departure of the faithful
for the “far west.” The man of many CREEDS, (Rigdon) appears to
possess colloquial powers to a considerable degree, and before leaving
this vicinity left us his blessing. He delivered a discourse at the Court
House immediately preceding his departure, wherein he depicted in
strong language, the want of “charity and brotherly love” among the
prevailing sects and denominations of professing christians, and sorry I
am to admit, that he had too much truth on his side with regard to this
particular. After denouncing dreadful vengeance on the whole state of
New York, and this village in particular, and recommending to all such
as wished to flee from “the wrath to come,” to follow him beyond the
“western waters,” he took his leave.\(^\text{11}\)

As is evident from the above account, Church leaders including
Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon obeyed the Lord’s command that “ye
shall not go until ye have preached my gospel in those parts, and have
strengthened up the church whithersoever it is found, and more espe-
cially in Colesville” (D&C 37:2). Though some may question whether
Sidney’s preaching had been “the warning voice, every man to his
neighbor, in mildness and meekness” (D&C 38:41), none can question
Sidney’s and Joseph’s efforts. As recorded by John Whitmer, “Joseph
and Sidney went to Colesville to do the will of the Lord in that part of
the land and to strengthen the disciples in that part of the vineyard, and
preach the gospel [sic] to a hardened and a wicked people.”\(^\text{12}\) Describ-
ing the response, Whitmer continued, “When Sidney and the Revelator
arrivd [sic] there, they held prayer meetings, among the disciples, and
they also held public meetings but it was all in vain, they threatend
[sic] to kill them. Therefore, they knew that they were not fit for the
Kingdom of God, and well nigh ripe for destruction. The Spirit of the
Lord fell upon Sidney, and he spoke with boldness, and he preached
the gospel in its purity; but they laughed him to scorn.”\(^\text{13}\) Surely, this
must have been part of the Lord’s omniscient warning to the Church
that “the enemy” was “combined” (D&C 38:12) in New York.

“\text{They That Have Farms}” (D&C 38:37)—
Sacrificing Possessions, Family, and Friends

After raising the warning voice in the area, disposing of property
became the primary activity. An informant from Waterloo wrote in
Palmyra’s local newspaper, “The Prophet, Spouse, and whole ‘holy
family’ (as they style themselves,) will follow Rigdon, so soon as their deluded or hypothetical followers, shall be able to dispose of what little real property they possess in this region: one farm [Whitmers] was sold a few days ago for $2,300. Their first place of destination is understood to be a few miles west of Painesville, Ohio.” Indeed, the informant seems to be relatively correct regarding the sale of Peter Whitmer’s hundred-acre farm in Fayette. Land records from the area indicate that it was sold to Charles Stuart of Waterloo on April 1, 1831, for $2,200. Indicative of the sacrifice Church members made by disposing of property at a discount, the same farm was sold by Charles Stuart just six weeks later for a $300 profit. Faithful Saints like the Whitmers learned the painful lesson that obedience to divine command sometimes requires temporal sacrifice in exchange for spiritual blessings.

Indeed, disposing of property in New York during the late winter and early spring became a chief concern for some members. Obeying the directive to leave property if it couldn’t be sold (see D&C 38:37), “Joseph Smith’s land, 13 acres and eighty perches, was either ‘left or rented’ until June 28, 1833, when the property was sold to a brother-in-law, Joseph McKune, Jr.” Having already left for Ohio, Joseph Knight Sr. employed attorney William M. Waterman to represent him in his land sale. An ad placed in the Broome Republican on May 5, 1831, announced: “FOR SALE, THE farm lately occupied by Joseph Knight, situate [sic] in the town of Colesville, near the Colesville Bridge—bounded on one side by the Susquehanna River, and containing about one hundred and forty two acres. On said Farm are two Dwelling Houses, a good Barn, and a fine Orchard. The terms of sale will be liberal—Apply to Wm. M. Waterman.” About their difficulties in selling, Newel Knight remembered “great sacrifices of our property.”

Having made arrangements for the sale of their farm, Joseph and Emma were among the first to comply with the divine command to gather in Ohio. Though Emma was pregnant with twins, the couple, together with at least Edward Partridge, Sidney Ridgon, and Joseph and Polly Knight, left New York in late January, arriving in Kirtland on February 1, 1831. Again, unfriendly newspaper accounts chronicled their journey. In Palmyra on March 9, 1831, the Reflector announced, “We also learn from the State of Ohio, that the work moves on apace. Joe Smith with his better half, had arrived in that country,—the prophet well clad, while the female exhibited a gold watch—a profusion of rings, &c.—demonstrating the fact, that even Mormonism is a
‘living business.’” This negative assessment of the Prophet and his family characterizes one of the challenges faced by modern members seeking to obey a directive of the Lord. Obeying the Lord requires not only personal sacrifice, sometimes of property and possessions, but also opens one to ridicule and scorn.

“The Enemy Is Combined” (D&C 38:12)—Preventing Physical Threats to the People

Derision for following the Lord’s command can turn to danger; knowing this, the Prophet remained concerned about the welfare of those following him from New York to Ohio. Aware of the Lord’s warning that the Saints were to go to Ohio “because of the enemy” (D&C 37:1), Joseph continued to warn the Saints to be careful. On March 3, 1831, Joseph wrote to his brother Hyrum, who presided over the Saints in Colesville: “My Dearly Beloved Brother Hyrum I have had much Concern about you but I always remember you in my prayers Calling upon god to keep you Safe in spite of men or devils I think you had better Come into this Country immediately for the Lord has Commanded us that we should Call the Elders of this Church to gather unto this place as soon as possible.”

Appending an additional note of concern to the letter, the Prophet warned, “David Jackways has threatened to take father with a supreme writ in the spring you had better Come to Fayette and take father along with you Come in a one horse wagon if you Can do not Come through Buffalo for the[ely will lie in wait for you God protect you I am Joseph.”

Fortunately, the specific threat concerning Joseph Smith Sr. and Hyrum Smith never materialized. However, members leaving New York encountered opposition, especially in Buffalo. When a group of Saints led by Lucy Mack Smith arrived in the town, the Colesville Saints who had preceded them warned them not to mention that they were Mormons, “for if you do, you will not get a boat nor a house.” Specifically, Thomas Marsh warned her, “Now, Mother Smith, if you do sing and have prayers and acknowledge that you are Mormons here in this place, as you have done all along, you will be mobbed before morning.”

Nothing materialized with the mobs, in spite of Lucy’s determination to “sing and attend to prayers before sunset, mob or no mob;” however, one wonders if these perceived threats in Buffalo were not based, at least in some part, on fact. The Prophet himself certainly felt that some danger lay in wait for him and his family there.
“Let Every Man Choose For Himself” (D&C 37:4)—Honoring Agency in the Command

While the physical threat of opposition represented one form of resistance, strain on loyalty and friendship was another difficulty the Saints faced as they relocated. Like other moves in the prophetic history of mankind, the move from New York to Ohio provided an opportunity for members to prove their faith. Generally, Church members were obedient to the command to relocate. However, as the Lord indicated in his initial instruction, “every man” was free to “choose for himself” regarding his obedience (D&C 37:4). As Church membership was “clean, but not all” (D&C 38:10), the call to obey a prophet provided an opportunity for the righteous to “go . . . out from among the wicked” (D&C 38:42).

Those who were well-respected citizens in their communities especially faced familial and social pressure to remain. Of Martin Harris’s leaving Palmyra with the rest of the “Mormon Emigration,” a local newspaper declared, “Several families, numbering about fifty souls, took up their line of march from this town last week for the ‘promised land,’ among whom is Martin Harris, one of the original believers in the ‘Book of Mormon.’ Mr. Harris was among the early settlers of this town, and has ever borne the character of an honorable and upright man, and an obliging and benevolent neighbor. He had secured to himself by honest industry a respectable fortune—and he has left a large circle of acquaintances and friends to pity his delusion.”

One local newspaper account describes the dilemma faced by some early members in choosing to follow the Lord’s call. New York’s Lockport Balance emphasized, “In and about the town of Kirtland, Geauga County. . . . The deluded followers of the false prophet are repairing. . . . Families, in some instances, have been divided, and in others, mothers have been obliged to follow their deluded husbands, or adopt the disagreeable alternative, of parting with them, and their children.” Additional statements seem to support the claim that the call to move divided families. Joseph Hervy recalled watching the various parties leave and later remarked, “My memory is that some twenty or thirty women, girls, men and boys, on foot and in two old-fashioned western emigrant wagons comprised the emigrating party. I well remember hearing it talked that women left their husbands and families to go with Smith.”

Apparently the call to gather divided even those hoping to begin families. Over seventy years after the move, Harriet E. Shay, eyewitness to the departure, shared the following:
I distinctly remember seeing the followers of Joseph Smith, Jr., of Mormon fame, go by my fathers, George Clappers, house on the east side of the Susquehanna River in the Town of Afton County of Chenango, N.Y. between Afton, formerly South Bainbridge and Ninevah, on what is now known as the Lewis Poole Farm.

To the best of my recollection there were eight (8) or ten (10) wagons. They were covered like western emigrant wagons, and were drawn by oxen.

One reason I remember so distinctly of the wagons going by is from the fact that my Uncle Cornelius Atherton was engaged to be married to Betsy Peck daughter of Hezekiah Peck, who with his wife and son, Reed Peck went with the Mormons at that time. Hezekiah Peck forbade the marriage of Betsy and Uncle Cornelius unless he would join the Mormons and go with them; this Uncle Cornelius would not do.

That day was made impression to me as I witnessed the sorrow of Uncle Cornelius who was at our house when the wagon train went by.

I also remember an incident which occurred about the same time which later became more familiar to me as I became acquainted with the parties. Stephen Pratt was engaged to be married to a Peck girl, a relative of Hezekiah Peck, I think her name was Anna. Just before the followers of Smith started they ran away and were married, therefore, they did not go with the Mormons. 29

In Palmyra, the Reflector similarly dramatized the choice to obey, likewise highlighting those unwilling to make the sacrifice,

Our Waterloo correspondent informs us, that two of the most responsible Mormonites, as it respects property, in that vicinity, have demurred to the divine command, through Jo Smith, requiring them to sell their property and put it into the common fund, and repair with all convenient speed to the New Jerusalem, lately located by Cowdery somewhere in the western region. A requisition of twelve hundred dollars, in cash, it is said, was made upon one of these gentlemen, (Mr. B.)—‘the Lord having need of it.’ This request was promptly refused by the gentleman, who, at the same time informed the prophet that he would rather risque [sic] his soul as it was (having been dipt) [sic] than trust his money or property in the hands of such agents as were applying for it. 30

As one paper played up refusals to obey, another ridiculed the faithful compliance with divine command. In Painesville, Ohio, the Telegraph remarked:

About two hundred men, women and children, of the deluded followers of Jo Smith’s Bible speculation have arrived on our coast during the last week, from the State of New York, & are about seating themselves down upon the “promised land” in this county. It is surely a melancholy comment upon human nature to see so many people at this enlightened age of the world, truckling along at the care of a miserable impostor, submitting themselves, both soul and body, to his spiritual
and temporal mandates, without a murmur, or presuming to question that it is all a command direct from Heaven,—Such an abject slavery of the mind may endure for a season; but in due time, like the chains of Popery, the links which bind them will be rent asunder, and reason resume again her empire.  

Indeed, the call to gather became a test of faithfulness for the early Saints. Summarizing the results of the gathering during the summer of 1831, John Whitmer observed, “About these days the disciples arrived from State of New York. To this place Kirtland State of Ohio. They had some difficulty because of some that did not continue faithful, who denied the truth and turned unto fables. . . . Therefore a part of the Revelation given at Fayette New York was fulfilled. The churches of the State of New York had moved to Ohio, with their Wives and their children, and all their Substance some purchased farms others rented, and thus they situated themselves as convenient as they could.” In total, the majority of Church membership in New York, estimated at approximately two hundred people, immigrated to Ohio between January and June of 1831.

“I Am in Your Midst” (D&C 38:7)—Finding Peace through God’s Guiding Hand during Times of “Why”

While the revelations surrounding the commanded move to Ohio offered glimpses of the reasons the Saints should go, the Lord also made specific promises to those who would faithfully comply with the command. The Lord reassured those doubting the divine directive that he was “in [their] midst” and that, though they couldn’t see him, “the day soon cometh that [they] shall see [him], and know that [he is]” (D&C 38:7–8). Evidence of God’s guiding hand became a theme of the move.

Lucy Mack Smith’s account of the journey emphasizes the Lord’s miraculous aid. She credits the Lord with protecting them on the journey, aiding them in locating housing along the way, and most dramatically, parting an ice jam that blocked Buffalo harbor, allowing their boat to narrowly navigate the opening. Describing this miracle, Lucy remembered:

Turning to our own company, I said, “Now, brethren and sisters, if you will all of you raise your desires to heaven that the ice may be broken before us, and we be set at liberty to go on our way, as sure as the Lord lives, it shall be done.” At that moment a noise was heard like bursting thunder. The captain cried out, “Every man to his post,” and the ice parted, leaving barely a pathway for the boat that was so narrow that, as
the boat passed through, the buckets were torn with a crash from the waterwheel. This, with the noise of the ice, the confusion of the spectators, the word of command from the captain, and the hoarse answering of the sailors, was truly dreadful. We had barely passed through the avenue, when the ice closed together again.\textsuperscript{34}

Newel Knight similarly recorded the hand of the Lord on his journey. Traveling with family and friends, he described a miraculous healing:

Soon after I left, my aunt, Electa Peck, fell and broke her shoulder in a most shocking manner; a surgeon was called to relieve her sufferings, which were very great. My aunt dreamed that I had returned and laid my hands upon her, prayed for her, and she was made whole and pursued her journey with the company. She related this dream to the surgeon who replied, “If you are able to travel in many weeks, it will be a miracle, and I will be a Mormon too.”

I arrived at the place where the company had stopped, late in the evening; but on learning of the accident, I went to see my aunt, and immediately on my entering the room she said: “Oh, Brother Newel, if you will lay your hands upon me, I shall be well and able to go on the journey with you.” I stepped up to the bed, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, rebuked the pain with which she was suffering, and commanded her to be made whole; and it was done; for the next morning she arose, dressed herself, and pursued the journey with us.\textsuperscript{35}

While some saw an immediate fulfillment of the Lord’s promises in the journey, several of the other promises made to the Saints in section 38 were fulfilled later in Ohio. This seems characteristic of the Lord, who fulfills promises “in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will” (D&C 88:68). In fact, the day did come in which the Saints who had faithfully moved saw the Lord and knew that he was (see D&C 38:8). These revelations include his appearances to the School of the Prophets and later those associated with the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. Additional literal fulfillment of Doctrine and Covenants section 38 includes the giving of the law (see D&C 38:32; D&C 42), members being “endowed with power from on high” (D&C 38:32; D&C 110:9), and the gospel going forth from Ohio “among all nations” (D&C 38:33; D&C 110:10–11). As the first gathering site, Ohio also became the place where the law of consecration could be revealed, giving every man the chance to “esteem his brother as himself” (D&C 38:25) and to “be one” (D&C 38:27). Ironically, the section outlining the blessings and promises associated with the move to Ohio also included an apparent warning regarding Kirtland’s fall: “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 . . . but beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old”
(D&C 38:39). Indeed, the Lord, through his prophet, addressed those
asking “why” by giving promises and warnings to the faithful.

Conclusion: Dealing with the “Whys” of Life Today

In their work with youth, religious educators are frequently con-
fronted with “why” scenarios. Why do we have to do certain things?
Why doesn’t life work out as planned? Why do good people suffer? The
lessons the Lord emphasized during the commanded move to Ohio
teach principles related to “why” questions. Helping students move
forward with faith during periods of “why” is an essential element of
gospel teaching.

Importantly, the Lord’s revelations addressing “why” contain par-
allels for gospel teachers and students. Like these early members, our
personal times of “why” sometimes go unanswered. God offers prom-
ises based on obedience, but he may or may not explain why he gives
us a particular commandment. Regarding this phenomenon, Elder
Dallin H. Oaks observed, “If you read the scriptures with the question
in mind, ‘Why did the Lord command this or why did he command
that,’ you find that in less than one in a hundred commands was any
reason given. It’s not the pattern of the Lord to give reasons. We can
put reason to revelation. We can put reasons to commandments. When
we do we’re on our own.”

Early Church members were given a glimpse of the reasons why
they were to move, but for the most part, they were expected to act with
the faith that the Lord “knoweth all things, for all things are present
before [his] eyes” (D&C 38:2). As with the early Saints, God knows
all things and promises to be with us if we are obedient to his com-
mands. Faithful obedience, as the Saints demonstrated in the move to
Ohio, sometimes includes sacrificing material comforts, facing familial
and social pressure, and trusting God’s omniscience. It requires moving
forward when we may not see God’s hand, with faith that we someday
will (see D&C 38:7–8). Not knowing all the “whys” of life may, there-
fore, be by divine design. Ultimately, “reasons” are not the “whys” for
obedience. Rather, as Elder Oaks summarized, “revelations are what we
sustain as the will of the Lord and that’s where safety lies.”

Using the move to Ohio as an example, the Doctrine and Cov-
enants teaches us to trust the Lord’s directives even when the specific
reasons for commandments are unclear. Summarizing this principle,
Elder Robert D. Hales remarked, “I have come to understand how
useless it is to dwell on the *whys*, *whats* and *if onlys* for which there likely will be given no answers in mortality. To receive the Lord’s comfort, we must exercise faith. The questions *Why me? Why our family? Why now?* are usually unanswerable questions. These questions detract from our spirituality and can destroy our faith. We need to spend our time and energy building our faith by turning to the Lord and asking for strength to overcome the pains and trials of this world and to endure to the end for greater understanding.”

The move from New York to Ohio built the faith of the early Saints. Teaching about their experience can do the same for us and our students.

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Notes

4. *Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith*, 251. There is some discrepancy regarding the dating of John Whitmer’s letter. Lucy Mack Smith’s history reports Joseph’s receiving the letter inviting him to come to Kirtland in December 1830. Because of this letter, Joseph “inquired of the Lord and received a commandment to go straightway to Kirtland with his family and effects” (p. 251), something that sounds like D&C 37. However, the January 18 edition of the Painesville *Telegraph*, a local Ohio newspaper, indicated that Elder Whitmer arrived in Ohio during the middle of January. One option is that he wrote the letter to Joseph before arriving in Ohio. Another option is that this letter was, indeed, written in mid-January, after John’s arrival in Kirtland. If this is the case, the revelation it sparked, requiring Joseph to leave for Ohio immediately, may be different than the one recorded in section 37.


22. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 231–32; spelling in original. It is unclear what danger Joseph sensed for his father and brother in Buffalo. According to Dean Jessee, David Jackways is “probably David Strong Jackway or Jackways, whose father, William Jackway . . . came to Palmyra, New York, in 1787. William Jackway owned a 500-acre farm, and he and his son David were hatters by trade. A David Jackways, in his fifties, is listed in the 1840 Palmyra, New York census” (669 n. 8). Apparently Joseph sensed a danger from this individual.


32. Westergren, *From Historian to Dissident*, 69, 71.


The University of Nauvoo, 1841–45

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A number of new sources reveal little-known facts about the University of Nauvoo. These facts provide unique properties and greater clarity to our understanding of the role of the university. This article will explain these facts and show why the university was established in Nauvoo, describe its structure from 1841 to 1845, and analyze its effectiveness and role in the city.

Establishing a University in Nauvoo

The Lord commanded the early Saints to “teach one another the doctrines of the kingdom” (D&C 88:77). The reason was so that the Saints “may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God” (v. 78). The Lord also admonished the Prophet Joseph Smith and his followers to learn “of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass” (v. 79).

Hoping to implement these directives, Joseph instructed his followers early on to establish private schools to educate the children of the Church. In response, Latter-day Saints in Ohio opened their homes, shops, and barns for academic instruction. Eliza R. Snow taught the basics—reading, writing, and arithmetic; Orson Hyde taught English grammar, oration, and writing; and M. C. Davis opened a singing school. W. W. Phelps asked subscribers of The Evening and
the Morning Star to lose “no time in preparing schools for their children” in Missouri. Oliver Cowdery responded by opening a school in what is today Kansas City. John Corrill opened a school on the corner of Union and Lexington streets in Independence. By 1836, Latter-day Saints had built a large schoolhouse in Far West. Helen Mar Whitney recalled that it was superior to “the ones built by gentiles of my native town.” In this facility and others like it, teachers such as Mary Eliza-abeth Lightner, Erastus Snow, Zenos H. Gurley, and John Murdock taught spelling, writing, reading, and geography. As for Joseph Smith, he started the School of the Prophets for men in Kirtland. Instruction in his school focused on Church doctrine and the gospel message of salvation. Thus most children growing up in Latter-day Saint homes learned “things which are at home, things which are abroad” while their fathers learned “the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God” (D&C 88:78, 79).

The lack of unity in an educational process driven by age and gender was riddled with problems in Ohio and Missouri. Many men struggled with the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic while being taught truths of eternity. Children struggled to understand the basics of the gospel, as their disinterest in Church matters later revealed, yet they could readily recite the times tables. The need to combine temporal learning with religious education that “all may be edified” (D&C 84:110) was apparent, but the answer was slow in coming.

It was not until the Latter-day Saints settled in Commerce, Illinois, that Joseph proposed an educational program that combined the learning of this world with the learning of a better world. By establishing a more complete educational opportunity for his followers, Joseph believed that his “people whose minds [are] cultivated and manners refined by education” would have “great and precious enjoyments that [the] ignorant [would] not.” Such a belief butted against established educational practices in Illinois. Educating one child in six was the standard of state-sponsored education at the time. The reason was that surviving on the land “was too pressing to allow children the luxury of ‘idle’ hours at school.”

Such reasoning was unacceptable to Joseph. He held that all men and women, youth and adults, had the right to an education. His belief was shared by John C. Bennett, who was well versed in educational matters before the two men had become acquainted. Bennett had petitioned the state legislatures of Virginia, Indiana, and Ohio to incorporate medical schools and universities. Granted, in a few cases he petitioned legislators without the knowledge or support of the princi-
ples he professed to represent, but he was familiar with the legal process of creating a state-sanctioned university. For example, in December 1832 he pushed through the incorporation of Christian College in New Albany, Indiana, without the support of Alexander and Thomas Campbell, the very men he claimed to represent. The college was founded, and Bennett was appointed its chancellor even though the Campbells heard “nothing of this project until it was consummated.” Being called “a false brother, a person of no solid learning, and of very bad morals” did not stop Bennett from moving onto another state with another college plan. The following year, he lobbied the Ohio legislature for a university in Franklin County and later for Willoughby Medical University. By 1838 he had established at least six schools in various Midwest localities, and critics dubbed him a “getter up of colleges” and a “diploma peddler.”

With this checkered background, it is surprising that Joseph found Bennett a useful man. “He is a man of enterprise, extensive acquirements, and of independent mind, and is calculated to be a great blessing to our community,” said Joseph. At first, Bennett proved to be a blessing to the community of Saints. He arrived in Commerce in September 1840 and boarded with the Smith family for the next thirty-nine weeks. At an October 1840 general conference, Bennett was appointed to a committee to draft a bill that would incorporate the city of Nauvoo. He was also appointed to be a “delegate, to urge the passage of said bill through the legislature.” Bennett accepted the appointments and, after the bill was drafted, joined Almon W. Babbitt in Springfield for the December convening of the Illinois legislature. As a lobbyist, Bennett renewed his acquaintance with Whig and Democratic legislators, including Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. The bill to incorporate Nauvoo moved quickly through both houses of the legislature with little discussion or debate. The bill was signed into law on December 17, 1840, by Governor Thomas Carlin. The law, known as the Nauvoo Charter, granted the city of Nauvoo several rights, including the right to establish a university—the first city university in the state of Illinois.

Section 24 of the charter reads, “The City Council may establish and organize an institution of learning within the limits of the city, for the teaching of the Arts, Sciences, and Learned Professions, to be called the ‘University of the City of Nauvoo,’ which institution shall be under the control and management of a Board of Trustees, consisting of a Chancellor, Registrar, and twenty-three Regents, which Board shall thereafter be a body corporate and politic, with perpetual succession
by the name of the ‘Chancellor and Regents of the University of the City of Nauvoo.’”

Joseph said of the university component of the charter, “We hope to make this institution one of the great lights of the world, and by and through it, to diffuse that kind of knowledge which will be of practical utility, and for the public good, and also for private and individual happiness.”

Structure of the University

On February 3, 1841, the first meeting of the Nauvoo City Council was held in Joseph Smith’s office. At the meeting, the council voted to establish the “University of the City of Nauvoo.” According to council minutes, the university was to be a self-governing entity that would provide educational opportunities for adults and children in Nauvoo. The university was charged with all education in town—university, seminary or secondary, and common schools. Supervision of the three educational levels was given to a chancellor, registrar, and board of regents. Later, other administrative officers—trustees, wardens, directors, and examiners—were added. Seventy-seven men served in an administrative function in the University of Nauvoo. In retrospect, the top-heavy administration had too many leadership layers to successfully implement all administrative directives. Ideas generated at a low level of the vertical structure were slow to reach the top officials of the hierarchy.

The city council appointed Bennett as university chancellor and William Law as registrar. The council selected and appointed twenty-three men from its ranks to serve on the board of regents, among whom were Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, William Marks, Samuel H. Smith, Daniel H. Wells, and Newel K. Whitney. This multitier governing body was autocratic and operated in a strict line of authority. It also had uncontested power of perpetual succession.

On February 9, 1841, just six days after being appointed, members of the board of regents met at Joseph Smith’s office. There the board established laws and ordinances necessary for the welfare of the university, its officers, its faculty, and its students. The laws and ordinances were in compliance with the laws of the state of Illinois and the U.S. Constitution. On February 22, 1841, the city council transferred to the chancellor and board of regents all rights pertaining to educational matters in Nauvoo, except the right to appoint future members to the board. When the city council concluded that all legal rights pertaining to education in town had been successfully passed to the chancellor and
his board, education at three levels (university, seminary, and common school) was authorized to begin.

**University level.** In August 1841, the first session of higher education began in Nauvoo. Classes were held in a loosely knit upper- and lower-university campus. On the upper campus, classroom instruction was given in private homes and in public structures such as the Concert Hall and the Nauvoo Temple. On the lower campus, private residences and the more public Masonic Hall, Seventies Hall, and Joseph Smith store were used as places of learning.\(^{15}\) Several adults participated in university classes, although a record of their attendance has not been preserved. The absence of records suggests that attendance was not a requirement for university enrollment.

Professors Orson Spencer, Sidney Rigdon, Gustavus Hills, John Pack, and Orson Pratt taught at the university. Of these learned professors, Pratt was the leading scholar. Historian Hubert Bancroft referred to Pratt as “a man of pure mind and a high order of ability, who without early education and amidst great difficulties had to achieve learning as best he could, and in truth has achieved it.”\(^ {16}\) Under Pratt’s guidance, more so than under chancellor John C. Bennett and later chancellor James Kelly,\(^ {17}\) university instruction followed a liberal arts curriculum. Pratt taught mathematic courses such as arithmetic, algebra, trigonometry, geometry, conic sections, surveying, navigation, and differential calculus. He also presented lectures on astronomy, chemistry, foreign languages, and philosophy. Rigdon taught English literature, language, rhetoric, and Mormon history. Hills lectured on the science of music and the sacred art of singing by using Parker’s *Encyclopedia of Music* and Lowell Mason’s *Manual of Instruction*.\(^ {18}\) And Spencer, a graduate of Union College and Baptist Literary and Theological Seminary of New York, taught foreign languages.

For their university instruction, professors received a modest salary.\(^ {19}\) Salary was not based on the number of students attending classes, as was the salary of common school teachers. Professors received a percentage of the taxes levied against property owners in Nauvoo. As for textbooks and other scholastic necessities, students bore the expense. Although the fees varied from fifty cents to ten dollars per course, few students purchased the requisite texts or other classroom necessities.\(^ {20}\)

Matriculating students did not receive a university degree for successfully completing course work, because a curriculum leading toward graduation was never developed. The university did, however, grant honorary degrees to nonstudents. Among those so honored was Professor Orson Pratt, who was awarded an honorary master of arts degree.
A law degree (LLD) was granted to editors John Wentworth of the *Chicago Democrat* and James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Weekly Herald* for printing favorable editorials about Mormonism.21 James Arlington Bennett of Arlington House in New York, an influential lawyer and friend of Church leaders, also received an honorary degree.22

The board of regents selected Vinson Knight, Daniel H. Wells, and Charles C. Rich to raise subscriptions or funds for the construction of multiple university buildings. These men met together often as the Finance and Construction Committee of the university.23 Unfortunately, they did not gather the funds needed to build the university campus.24

**Seminary level.** Seminary was the secondary level of education in the University of Nauvoo (grades nine through twelve). Joseph N. Cole and his sister Adelia were appointed directors of seminary instruction by the board of regents. As such, the Coles had responsibility for the seminary building, located one block northwest of the Nauvoo Temple on Wells Street, and had responsibility for classes taught in the brick structure. In addition, during the summer of 1843, the Coles taught in Joseph Smith’s redbrick store, as evidenced by an advertisement in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*:

**NAUVOO SEMINARY**

Mr. Joseph N. and Miss Adelia Cole, would respectfully inform the citizens of Nauvoo, that they have opened a school in the large and convenient room, in the second story of President Joseph Smith’s store, on the corner of Water and Granger streets, on Tuesday the 11\(^{th}\) inst. [July] for the instruction of male and female . . .

**TERMS OF TUITION**

Reading, writing, and spelling ....................... $2.00  
English Grammar & Geography .......................... 2.50  
Chemistry and Natural Philosophy ................... 3.00  
Astronomy ........................................... 4.00

A quarter will consist of twelve weeks or sixty-five days, and no allowance will be made for absences unless prevented from attendance by sickness or by special agreement.25

In addition, the Coles supervised secondary faculty, who were expected to follow the curriculum prescribed by the board of regents. This curriculum was fashioned after that used in New England secondary schools. It included Latin, Greek, English grammar, writing, math, bookkeeping, and geography, as well as religious topics.26 The number
of students receiving secondary instruction is unknown because attendance rolls naming faculty and students were not preserved.

Common school level. Common schools (first through eighth grades) in the University of Nauvoo were held in each Nauvoo ward (a ward being a political division). Under the supervision of the board of regents, trustees, and secondary directors, a curriculum was selected, exams were administered to potential teachers, and teacher competency certificates were issued. The board appointed twelve wardens, three from each of the four political divisions in town, to administer common school instruction. The first of many school wardens was selected on March 1, 1841, at the board’s second meeting. At the meeting, the board authorized wardens to start open-enrollment common schools in their respective wards. It is believed that this authorization was motivated by a First Presidency message: “Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Latter-day Saints, Quakers, Episcopalians, Universalists, Unitarians, Mohammedans, and all other religious sects and denominations whatever, shall have free toleration, and equal privileges, in this city.” To ensure that open enrollment was maintained, wardens visited classrooms, checked attendance records, and certified whether the teacher-generated holographic records were correct.

Becoming a schoolteacher at a common school was no small matter. From 1842 to 1845, only thirty-five teachers passed the competency exam and received a teaching certificate. The following certificate shows that applicant Lovinia Whipple was competent to teach certain subjects:

```
Certification
State of Illinois
County of Hancock:

We certify that having examined Lovinia Whipple, the teacher above named, we find her duly qualified to teach a common school in the following branches to wit, reading, writing, geography, English grammar, and arithmetic. Given under our hands and seals this day the first of March, 1844.

Norton Jacobs
William W. Lane

The certification process was not uniform. The application of Charles Wesley Wandell reveals more than his competency in certain subjects. It shows that meetings were held by inspectors of schoolteachers:
State of Illinois
County of Hancock

We certify that at a meeting of the employers of Charles Wesley Wandell the above named Teacher, held at the school-house in Warsaw street, near Parley street, Nauvoo, township six north range nine west, in the county of Hancock State of Illinois, pursuant to notice on the eighth day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty four, we were duly appointed trustees of said school, that we have performed the duties of such trustees by visiting said school, and superintending.

We the undersigned inspectors of Teachers of common schools in the city of Nauvoo Hancock County, in the state of Illinois do certify that at a meeting held for that purpose at the house of Sidney Rigdon, we have examined Charles W. Wandell and find him of sufficient learning and ability and in other respects well qualified to teach a school in the several branches of reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and grammar,—

Given under our hands at Nauvoo the 3 day of February 1844

Inspectors of Teachers of Common Schools
Sidney Rigdon
Joseph M. Cole

A teacher who possessed such a coveted certificate was guaranteed employment in Nauvoo. Parents knew that such a teacher had received approval from two local trustees, three wardens, two examiners, two inspectors, and twenty-three members of the board of regents. What they did not know was that many of the schoolteachers were self-taught. Perhaps the teachers’ lack of formal education was the reason that curriculum decisions were made by the board. The board claimed that all young students should learn languages—Greek, Latin, Spanish, and French—along with reading, writing, arithmetic, oration, and philosophy. Therefore, the board advised teachers to use these specific texts for classroom instruction:

Town’s Spelling Book.
Town’s Introduction to Analysis.
Town’s Analysis.
M Vickar’s Political Economy for Schools.
Help to Young Writers.
Girl’s Reading Book, by Mrs. Sigourney.
Boy’s Reading Book, by Mrs. Sigourney.
Bennett’s Arithmetic.
Bennett’s Book Keeping.
Kirkham’s English Grammar.
Olney’s Geography.
Noticeably missing from the prescribed list is a history text. Board members believed history immortalized the worst men and failed to recognize praiseworthy men; thus they omitted it from the curriculum.\textsuperscript{35}

Teachers did not appreciate the board’s approach to curriculum, the omission of history, or the textbook list. Teachers met on September 2, 1843, at the Nauvoo Seminary to discuss what they believed was a rigid, stagnant curriculum.\textsuperscript{36} To these teachers, science, grammar, literature, music, foreign languages, orthography, composition, oratory, chemistry, geography, and even history had a place in the common school curriculum.\textsuperscript{37} At the meeting, the teachers also discussed the possible effects of hiring more female teachers. The board paid female teachers one-half to two-thirds the salary of their male counterparts. Regents proposed that more female teachers were needed to meet the challenge of educating every child in Nauvoo; teachers believed the proposal had more to do with salary than with children.\textsuperscript{38} Although many disgruntled comments were expressed, the suggested curriculum was adopted, and more women were hired to teach the children.

With teachers in place, sessions at the common school level began. During the first days of instruction, classrooms were crowded, as evidenced by attendance records. A simple system of “P” for present and “A” for absent showed their attendance. At first, four common school buildings in each ward, along with private homes, vacant offices, and barns, were filled with eager youth. Perhaps teacher James Monroe said it best: “I have now about a dozen in each school. Several other individuals wish to get their children in my school, but I could not take them.”\textsuperscript{39} In Monroe’s schools and others in town, backless benches, writing tables, a teacher’s desk, and a fireplace or stove were all the furnishings budgets would allow. Maps, globes, and charts were uncommon luxuries; teachers had to improvise visual aids or do without.

Scarcity of resources, segregated instruction (boys and girls were seated on opposite sides of the classroom), and strict discipline too often curbed youthful enthusiasm for classroom instruction.\textsuperscript{40} Recitation of long lists such as names of states or capitals or “lists of tables, including apothecary weights, avoirdupois weights, troy weights, long measures, square measures, land measures and Federal and English money” frustrated more than one student, as did oral exams in front of the class.\textsuperscript{41} To keep interest in education alive, teachers awarded an illustrated paper certificate to successful students. The certificates, sold in large quantities to teachers, were valued by young students, who had few personal possessions.\textsuperscript{42} For students who failed to earn a certificate, attendance became an issue. “This A.M. my scholars seemed to have
forgotten their interest in their studies and the necessity of industry and I was almost ready to despair,” recalled Monroe. “By a little wholesome severity in keeping them after school, I regained all I had lost and I think lost none of their love.”

Not all teachers were as successful as Monroe. W. S. Hathaway, after thirty-five days of instruction in 1843, had seventeen students drop out of his school. Twelve new students entered, but over the next several weeks, seven more left. Only three children remained under his tutelage for the entire 117-day term. Their last names were Hathaway, of course.

Unfortunately for Hathaway and other teachers at the common school level, salary was based on the number of students enrolled and the number of days these students attended class. Teachers were required to submit a “written schedule,” or attendance roll, to a designated warden. The schedule listed the teacher’s name, the township and range of the school location, the names of students enrolled, the daily attendance of students, the cumulative days students attended school, and the salary due for instruction rendered. Several written schedules have been preserved and transcribed. Schedules reveal that 1,439 students attended common schools between 1841 and 1845. Most of the students’ names do not appear on any other record or database compilation of the Nauvoo period.

### Abstract of Schedules for University of Nauvoo, 1844 (6N 9W)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Names</th>
<th>No. of Days</th>
<th>Apportionment $ Cts [Cts = cents]</th>
<th>Ratio 6929 mills [mill = $1000 U.S. dollar]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Holbrook</td>
<td>7352</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>04 Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Grant</td>
<td>1074</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38¾ Paid not certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. M. Patterson</td>
<td>3467</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse W. Fox</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47¾ Paid not certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisa Pratt</td>
<td>1652</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75 Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huldah Barnes</td>
<td>1566</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40 Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Phelps</td>
<td>1495</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10¾ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli B. Kelsey</td>
<td>9176</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>49½ 5.50 Paid in full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. S. Hathaway</td>
<td>3016</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32¼ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles H. Bassett</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Pierce</td>
<td>2599</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>62 Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Haven (2)</td>
<td>4255</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>38½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Names</td>
<td>No. of Days</td>
<td>Apportionment $ Cts [Cts = cents]</td>
<td>Ratio 6929 mills [mill = $\frac{1}{1000}$ U.S. dollar]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria L. Brown</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David M. Hard</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31½ Paid not certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Kempton</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67 Paid not certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Candland</td>
<td>1823</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>48½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. G. Luce</td>
<td>1051</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah Tupper</td>
<td>1254</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14½ Assigned to J. Holbrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Wilsey</td>
<td>1417</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>79 Assigned to J. Holbrook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randolph Alexander</td>
<td>154</td>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James M. Monroe</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>74¼ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Goldsmith</td>
<td>1045</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27 Paid J. L. Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline Bullard</td>
<td>3514</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Coray</td>
<td>1399</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>71½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. G. Luce</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>70½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Grant</td>
<td>1154</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>71½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. M. Cole and A. B. Cole</td>
<td>5822</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>78¼ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. W. Wandall</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>78 Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Total]</td>
<td>63,621</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>265</td>
<td>28 C. Robisen SC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abstract of Schedules for University of Nauvoo, 1844 (7N 9W)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers’ Names</th>
<th>No. of Days</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>Cts Ratio 6929</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Howard Coray</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>52¼ 652½ Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Alexander</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27¼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Havens</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99½ Paid (7.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. A. Shurtleff</td>
<td>3526</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>43 Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy Groves</td>
<td>9643</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>81 3 Paid in full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wm S. Hathaway</td>
<td>3081</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34¼ $17 Paid in full</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Total]</td>
<td>17,799</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To ensure that teachers were not overpaid, school schedules were meticulously reviewed by trustees and wardens. These administrators presented a written verification of the schedule’s accuracy to the board of regents, suggesting payment for instruction rendered. One example is that of teacher Abigail Abbott:

We certify that we as trustees of said school have examined the within and foregoing schedule and find the same to be correct and that the scholars at the dates of their attendance were residents of Township 7 north of Range 9 west of the fourth principal Meridian, that the compensation of said teacher is one dollar and fifty cents per scholar.

Witness our hands and seals this 31st day of December, A.D. 1842

Elias Higbee (signed)
Charles C. Rich (signed)

Trustees and wardens were expected to recommend to the board a reduction in pay for teachers who had poor student attendance.

Analyzing the University Structure

Joseph Smith was not alone in orchestrating the intricate and unique school system in Nauvoo. Bennett was also a pioneer of the innovative and encompassing educational system. Records show that he had a key, if not central, role in writing the Nauvoo Charter, which authorized a university system in Nauvoo. Bennett, with his history of petitioning state legislatures, proved to be an asset in pushing forward the university in Nauvoo, the first city university in the state of Illinois. As Nauvoo mayor, Bennett oversaw the university and saw it become, albeit briefly, a self-governing entity supported by taxation. He also saw the university effectively provide educational opportunities for adults and children in town. As the first chancellor of the university, Bennett guided administrators and teachers alike. He ran an autocratic governing body as a leader of education in Nauvoo.

When Bennett’s character flaws were discovered, James Kelly was appointed by the board to take his place as chancellor. Kelly’s role was more elusive than Bennett’s. Kelly did not draft a bill for an educational program or lobby a legislature. The administrative structure Bennett put in place sufficed for him. As Kelly and other administrators implemented Bennett’s school structure, success at all three levels of education was apparent. Adult scholars were taught by five competent professors in an upper and lower campus. A liberal arts curriculum with a sprinkling of astronomy, chemistry, foreign languages, and philoso-
phy brought education to new heights in Nauvoo. Although there was never a college curriculum leading to graduation, the university successfully combined the things of this world with those of a better one. As for seminary instruction, the Coles constituted the entire program. They oversaw the building, the New England curriculum, classes, and students. The Coles made sure that studies of this earth were mingled with studies of eternity.

The biggest flaw in the University of Nauvoo was found at the common school level. Even though education was based in Nauvoo wards, this did not ensure religious instruction. Extant records do not show that the gospel was being taught at the elementary level. Instead, common school instruction was much like the instruction given to elementary-age children in large eastern cities within the United States.

Another failure of the University of Nauvoo rested with the administrators, who had been charged with providing all education for adults and children in town. Private schools sprang up in Nauvoo between 1841 and 1845. Teachers in the private schools prided themselves on being out of the administrative realm of the University of Nauvoo. These teachers did not receive a certificate or verification of ability from the board of regents. However, that did not matter to the majority of private school teachers. Fifty-three such teachers ignored the exam and certification process, yet boasted of superior qualifications and received parental funds, not public funds, for educating youth in subscription or private schools. Unlike teachers with predetermined salaries in common schools, these educators received between seventeen and twenty-five cents for each subject taught. The cost of instructing “one student taking just the basic five subjects—reading, writing, geography, grammar, and arithmetic—was approximately a dollar each week, or twenty cents per day.”

Private schools were not bound to teach the same subjects or use the same curriculum as common schools. Thus, instruction of elementary age children varied in Nauvoo.

The University of the City of Nauvoo was a grand experiment in education. Its demise was the natural by-product of a city being transformed. Blacksmiths, carpenters, and wheelwrights were on call day and night in 1845, and so were their offspring. Every available space, from the shop to the parlor, was used to assemble boxes, covers, wheels, and harnesses for the coming exodus. Common school buildings, the Nauvoo Seminary, and the university campus were no exceptions. Of necessity, education halted. Administrators, teachers, and students were asked to prepare wagons. Nearly fifteen hundred
wagons were ready for the westward trek by Thanksgiving of 1845, and another two thousand were partially completed by midwinter.

Unfortunately, the preparation time for building wagons was shortened by harassment and vehement threats against the Nauvoo community. Brigham Young advised Latter-day Saints to leave Nauvoo in February 1846. In obedience, the Saints traveled on flatboats, old lighters, and a number of skiffs as they fled the city and crossed the Mississippi River to Iowa. It appeared to many that an entire community was moving west. However, this was not true, especially when viewing the whereabouts of the administrators, teachers, and students of the University of Nauvoo. Of the 77 known administrators, only 44 (57 percent) followed Brigham Young to Iowa. Of the 35 known common school teachers, only 21 (60 percent) followed Young westward. Of the 53 known private school teachers, only 24 (45 percent) ventured westward. Of the 14,390 known students, only 785 (51 percent) found a haven with the Latter-day Saints in the Rockies.

Whether those associated with the university eventually joined the westward migration or drifted elsewhere, the University of the City of Nauvoo closed. New settlers moved into town and occupied the shops and homes that were once the property of the Saints. These settlers knew little of Mormons and even less of the school structure that had once flourished in town. These new settlers, like their predecessors, wanted educational opportunities for their children but struggled to find competent teachers. The Hancock Eagle noted the academic void in Nauvoo: “SCHOOLS: We are requested to call the attention of Teachers to the fact that a good school is much wanted in this place; and should a competent person think proper to establish one at this place, he would probably be extensively patronized.”

Conclusion

Little evidence suggests that the progressive educational system established in Nauvoo, in a state where public education was in its infancy, had any effect on future educational opportunities in the town.

However, for the westward-bound Latter-day Saints, the University of Nauvoo had a long-lasting effect. The university became a reference point, an inspiration for future educational goals. It is not surprising that vestiges of the Nauvoo educational system were implemented in Utah Territory or that the words of Brigham Young given on December 11, 1854, before the legislative assembly of Utah sound familiar:
The subject of Education has probably received as much attention in this as in any other as newly settled State or Territory. In almost all the Wards and Districts, good School Houses have been erected, and Schools maintained a part of the year, but I feel that sufficient attention is not paid to the selection and examination of teachers, or the manner of conducting Schools. Although the Board of Regents, have doubtless by their influence aided much, and are still extending their influence and exertions in a general way to advance the cause of education, yet at this moment, there is not a Parent School for the instruction of Teachers—a Mathematical or High School where the higher branches are taught.

Latter-day Saints, who founded the University of Nauvoo, believed in being more perfectly instructed “in theory, in principle, and in doctrine” (D&C 88:78). They actively pursued education in “things both in heaven and in the earth” whether in Nauvoo or in the Rockies (D&C 88:79).

Notes

2. The schoolhouse was named the Colesville School. It was built in the Troost Park Lake about twelve miles west of Independence (see Milton Lynn Bennion, Mormonism and Education [Salt Lake City: Department of Education of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1939], 17).
3. The schoolhouse also served as a town hall and courthouse (see History of Caldwell and Livingston Counties, Missouri [St. Louis: National Historical Company, 1886], 120–21).
5. George W. Givens, In Old Nauvoo: Everyday Life in the City of Joseph (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 237. In 1824 Joseph Duncan introduced “An Act Providing for the Establishment of Free Schools” in the Illinois General Assembly. The act required townships with fifteen families or more to support a free school for at least three months every year. The act was approved on January 15, 1825, and repealed in 1828. The reason given for the repeal was that “there was still strong feelings that no one should have to pay taxes for the education of the children of other men” (Robert Gehlmann Bone, “Education in Illinois before 1857,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 50, no. 2 [Summer 1957]: 124).

9. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:205; see also Joseph Smith, “Minutes of the General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints held Nauvoo, Hancock, Illinois, October 3, 1840,” *Times and Seasons*, October 1840, 186. Other committee members were Joseph Smith and Robert B. Thompson. Flanders claims that “Bennett had already been at work on the charter and probably had it completed before the conference met” (Robert Bruce Flanders, *Nauvoo: Kingdom on the Mississippi* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975], 96).


13. On Monday, February 22, 1841, the city council advised, “Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Nauvoo, That all matters and powers whatever in relation to common schools, and all other institutions of learning, within the City of Nauvoo, be, and the same hereby are transferred from the City Council of the City of Nauvoo, to the Chancellor and Regents of the University of the City of Nauvoo” (“City Ordinances,” *Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1841, 336; see also Paul Thomas Smith, “A Historical Study of the Nauvoo Illinois, Public School System, 1841–1845” [master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1969]; Arthur Clark Wiscombe, “Eternalism: The Philosophical Basis of Mormon Education” [EdD diss., University of Colorado, 1963]).

14. For members of the board of regents, see Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:293. The fourteen members of the city council of Nauvoo were also members of the university administration (see Don Wallace McBride, “The Development of Higher Education in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” [PhD diss., Michigan State College, 1952]).

15. “Orson Pratt, Professor of Mathematics and English Literature in the University of the City of Nauvoo,” *The Wasp*, September 17, 1842, 23.


17. The board of regents selected Dr. James Kelly, an alumnus of Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, to replace John C. Bennett as chancellor. Kelly was a leading scholar of philosophy. The selection of a chancellor from Europe for the Nauvoo University was in keeping with the pattern of early American universities. Kelly received the unanimous vote of the regents (see Calvin V. French, “Organization and Administration of the Latter-day Saint School System of Free Education, Common School through University at Nauvoo, Illinois, 1840–1845” [master’s thesis, Temple University, 1965], 42; see also “President of the University,” *Times and Seasons*, February 15, 1841, 320).

19. Common school education was supported by taxation (see “An Act to Incorporate the City of Nauvoo,” *History of the Church*, 4:239–45).

20. A city council raising money for a secondary school and university was an unknown practice in Illinois at this time. In 1845 the General Assembly of the state of Illinois granted the state school commissioner the right to sell land and use the proceeds from the sales to support common schools (see Charles Scofield, ed., *History of Hancock County* [Chicago: Munsell, 1921], 2:817).


24. The Finance and Construction Committee only raised funds to construct a common school building in each ward.


28. On March 1, 1841, the city council divided Nauvoo into four wards: “All the district of country within the city limits, north of the center of Knight street, and west of the center of Wells street, shall constitute the first ward. North of the center of Knight street and east of the center of Wells street, the second ward. South of the center of Knight street, and east of the center of Wells street, the third ward. South of the center of Knight street, and west of the center of Wells street, the fourth ward” (Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:305–6).


34. “Common School Books Adopted,” *Times and Seasons*, January 1, 1842, 652. The textbooks were purchased from the American Common School Society of
New York City. Ebenezer Robinson, publisher of the *Times and Seasons*, had exclusive rights to sell the books in Nauvoo (see Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* [Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2002], 196).


36. An announcement of the teachers’ meeting was printed on August 30, 1843, in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*: “The School teachers in the City of Nauvoo, both male and female, are requested to meet at the brick building northeast of the Temple called the Nauvoo Seminary, on Saturday, the second day of September at 2 p.m., for the purpose of taking into consideration the measure of establishing a uniformity of class books at the several schools and of promoting a greater concert of action among the teachers and inhabitants, and to transact such other business as shall lend to the general promotion of education” (“Notice to School Teachers,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, August 30, 1843, 3).

37. Many teachers believed that they were following the admonition of Church leaders: “The ‘University of the City of Nauvoo,’ will enable us to teach our children wisdom—to instruct them in all knowledge, and learning, in the Arts, Sciences and Learned Professions” (Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith, “A Proclamation to the Saints Scattered Abroad,” *Times and Seasons*, January 15, 1841, 274).


39. In addition to teaching youth, Monroe taught adult classes in the evenings. In those classes, he taught singing, theology, reading, writing, spelling, grammar, geography, chemistry, philosophy, and astronomy. See James J. Monroe Diary, 117, Lovejoy Library, Microfilm Collection, Southern Illinois University, as cited in Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 242; D. Garron Brian, “Adult Education in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1965), 55.

40. This was not unlike school on the frontier or in early Utah. Maria Dilworth Nebeker recalled attending the first school in the Salt Lake Valley: “I attended the first school in Utah taught by my sister, Mary Jane, in a small round tent seated with logs. The school was opened just three weeks after our arrival in the valley” (Levi Edgar Young, “Education in Utah,” *Improvement Era*, July 1913, 882).


42. Written exams and periodic reporting or report cards were introduced in 1845 in Boston, Massachusetts.


47. Givens, *In Old Nauvoo*, 241. Jesse Haven exchanged teaching for produce. In a *Nauvoo Neighbor* advertisement, Haven said, “All kinds of produce, store goods, and even money (bogus excepted) will be taken in pay.” “Select School,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, November 27, 1844, 3. Such exchanges were typical on the western frontier.


The Doctrine and Covenants: A Roundtable Discussion, Part 2

Holzapfel: If you had children in a Doctrine and Covenants class at BYU–Idaho or BYU–Provo, what is one thing you would hope they would get out of the class?

Harper: I believe Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s statement that if you listen carefully to the Doctrine and Covenants, you “can almost ‘hear’ [the Savior] talking.” I try to help my students appreciate this by asking if they have ever seen a New Testament with the Savior’s words printed in red letters. Most of them have. I then ask, “If we printed all of our standard works that way, which, percentage-wise, would have the most red text?” The answer, overwhelmingly, is the Doctrine and Covenants. That fact does not diminish the other books; it just helps students get a sense of what they are looking at in the Doctrine and Covenants—the words of the Savior. So I want my loved ones to appreciate what the Explanatory Introduction says, that the Doctrine and Covenants contains “an invitation to all people everywhere.” I would emphasize the inclusive nature of that invitation: all people everywhere are to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ and respond to his invitation. Related to that point, I would want myself and my loved ones to come to know Christ by listening to him.

I sometimes worry that we have mistaken assumptions about Christ. I think assumptions can be the enemy of knowledge. If we recognize that assumptions are hypotheses, we can verify them. That is...
what Joseph Smith did. Joseph was not satisfied with assumptions, but so many of us are. We assume that we know who Christ is and what he is like, but to listen to him speak for almost 140 sections is a sanctifying yet challenging experience. He does not always sound as we might assume he would. As Christ said in John 17, eternal life is knowing God and his Son, Jesus Christ. I want my children to come to know Christ by listening to his voice. That would be my main message.

Fluhman: I agree. If I were to add to that, I would reinforce to students a point about revelation. Revelation is a process—a process described powerfully in the Doctrine and Covenants. It is not a static or passive experience. It was not that way for Joseph Smith, and it is not that way for any Latter-day Saint. Sometimes we imagine revelation as a mechanical thing. Some might imagine Joseph Smith as a puppet or a ventriloquist’s dummy, but it is not so! If they see the process of revelation as a demanding and dynamic process, my students and my children will see in Joseph Smith not someone who is utterly unlike themselves, but someone who is quite similar to them in important ways.

Oliver Cowdery learned the active, searching nature of revelation the hard way. He learned it through the translation process of the Book of Mormon. The Lord had to say bluntly, “You have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it to you” (D&C 9:7). A passive, mechanical thing is what Oliver expected. It turned out not to be that way. It was more demanding than Oliver had even supposed. I want my children and my students to understand that about themselves, about God, and about prophets and apostles. It is not easier for prophets and apostles—it is as demanding and dynamic a process as it is for us as we seek God’s will in our own lives. The Doctrine and Covenants is such a great place to learn and to teach those lessons about what it means to be a religious person, a spiritual person, a seeker after God, a seeker of truth.

Underwood: Many of our students are surprised when they discover that the revelations as we have them now are not exactly the same as when they were first recorded. They are unaware of the inspired revisions and amplifications made by the Prophet. It is interesting to reflect on commonly held assumptions about the process of receiving scriptural revelations that amount to viewing the Prophet as a human fax machine through which God sends his revelations. How did such views arise? Why are they so popular?

Woodford: I agree with Spencer [Fluhman] that Joseph was not a passive instrument through whom the word of the Lord was transcribed verbatim. Many have criticized the Prophet for revising his texts, belie-
ing that the revelations are word-for-word dictations from the Lord. While some revelations were received via the Urim and Thummim, and others were visions and theophanies, the vast majority, I believe, were received the very same way we receive inspiration today. I believe the principle taught in Moroni 10:5, that it is by the power of the Holy Ghost that we may know the truth of all things. The Prophet received inspiration the same way we do, but he had the added task of writing the revelations for the benefit of the members of the Church.

Underwood: People create an image of the Prophet in their minds, and when the historical Joseph Smith does not match it, they have doubts. The solution is to square our mental images with the facts rather than to sanctify our perceptions. We need to help students distinguish their perceptions, their current understanding, from their testimonies.

Harper: People mistake assumptions for knowledge. So if I say, “Well, I know what a prophet is like,” and then meet one named Joseph Smith and read his documents and find that he does not match the assumption, then what I thought was knowledge has been disproved. Truth has not been disproved—it is my wrong assumption that has been disproved. Critics of Joseph Smith have taken their assumptions as truth, and it is the wrong way to reason. It is not a coherent epistemology or way of knowing. The best way of knowing is the way Joseph modeled for us. Joseph started with a premise, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5). Joseph could have said, “You know, I believe that, and now I think I’ll stay home and watch the grass grow this morning.” He did not say that. He said, “How to act I did not know” (Joseph Smith—History 1:12). He learned how to act in James 1:5, and then he acted. Elder David A. Bednar has emphasized this point in the Religious Educator. Joseph goes and does something. He acts in a way that will verify or disprove the premise.

One of the great things Joseph Smith gives to us is a model on how to get revelations. He does not just get them for us; he shows us how to get them. And we should never be satisfied just to read his revelations and be done with it. We should want to get our own revelations that confirm that his are true. In 2005, when the Library of Congress celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of Joseph Smith’s birth, Elder Dallin H. Oaks emphasized that principle. He called it the principle of “independent verification by revelation.” Every single one of those words is important. Independently, we—with no mediators but the Godhead, nothing between us and the Holy Spirit—should verify with our own revelations the truths that Joseph Smith reveals.
to us. If that sounds disrespectful or challenging to the prophets, the answer from Joseph Smith and Brigham Young and others is, “No! Get close to the Holy Ghost and get your own confirmation of what we have taught.”

Underwood: I agree with everything that has been said about what we would like our children to take away from a class in the Doctrine and Covenants. One other element I would mention is the evidence in so many of the revelations of a loving, forgiving Heavenly Father. It is so imperative, the way he gives people chances to serve even when he knows that six months later, or six years later, they will fall away. Yet he accords them love and respect. In addition to that, he is so forgiving. How many times do we read some version of, “I forgive your sins”? What I want my kids to see is that Heavenly Father is loving! The notion of God as the stern judge looking down his nose at us from high on his bench is not our understanding. That is not what our revelations portray. In my view, the love of Heavenly Father is more powerfully portrayed in the Doctrine and Covenants than in any other volume of scripture. I love the Book of Mormon; it teaches us about and brings us to Christ in a powerful way. But the very personal love that God has for his individual children cannot be more powerfully taught than it is in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Holzapfel: What about the concept of God chastening us?

Harper: Section 95 is so interesting on that point. In the first verse, Christ explains that whom he loves, he chastens. And then the verse ends with him saying, “And I have loved you.” The first word in verse 2 is “wherefore,” and then he lays into them about building the temple. Even that rebuke from God is evidence or a manifestation of his love.

Underwood: Another concept to emphasize is that there are witnesses of the Doctrine and Covenants. We know the Book of Mormon witness story so well; almost any student in your class can just tell you the story. But when it comes to the fact that there are witnesses to the Doctrine and Covenants, some ask, “Why is that important?” Should we emphasize that more?

Woodford: The witnesses originally were those who were at the conference of November 1831 for the Book of Commandments—separate from the Quorum of the Twelve, whose testimony is found in the Explanatory Introduction of the Doctrine and Covenants today. I suspect that we would have had the witness of those who planned for the Book of Commandments had the book ever been completed in the initial printing. I believe it would have been in the back of the
book as was the testimony of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon in the 1830 edition. When the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants was published, it included the testimony of the Quorum of the Twelve, unsigned. But if you read the testimony of the Book of Commandments and the testimony of the Twelve, there is only a slight variation between the two. Joseph Smith received it by revelation, and the Twelve were willing to say that they agreed with that testimony, but it was never signed by those men. The testimony of the Twelve was first included in the *History of the Church* with the signatures added by B. H. Roberts. He wrote a little footnote that he thought it was appropriate to attach their names. Both testimonies were in the introduction to the Doctrine and Covenants from 1921 to 1981; then the Church removed the one from the Book of Commandments, and we now just have the one from the Twelve. But I think the testimony of the Twelve serves the same purpose: these revelations are the word of the Lord. The Holy Ghost has borne witness to us that the words are true.

**Harper:** The Lord explains in section 17 his logic for calling witnesses, which he did for both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants. He is not under the illusion that because there are witnesses, everybody is going to believe. He talks about what he calls his “righteous purposes.” Witnesses serve the function of presenting a choice to the hearers or recipients of the revelations. When people declare their witness that these things are true, that witness compels readers to make a choice about it; we have to decide whether we will believe them. We have been made a free agent in that process. So the Lord is compelling us to choose. He is putting the responsibility of choosing whether to believe him squarely on our shoulders and giving us the chance to receive the promised blessings or the punishments, depending on what we do.

**Holzapfel:** What is the greatest experience you’ve had in your personal study of the Doctrine and Covenants that you can share publicly?

**Woodford:** When I was doing research for my dissertation, I had to read negative comments by people critical of the Prophet. One day I sat back in my chair and thought, “Could all of these people be lying about Joseph Smith? Was he really a bad man?” What came to my mind was, “Well, what about the Book of Mormon?” I know that the Book of Mormon is the word of God, and since that time I never had any serious doubts about the Prophet Joseph Smith. Critics can call him anything they like; it does not give me great concern. My testimony is that he is a prophet of God and the head of this dispensation.
Harper: I had an experience with the manuscript that William McLellin copied of section 66, which was directed to him. In trying to make sense of that document, I went to Independence, Missouri, to the Community of Christ archives to read a related letter there. I had swimming around in my head a constellation of documents related to the manuscript of the revelation, the copy of it that McLellin put in his journal for October 29, 1831. Readers may be interested to know that that revelation was received on October 29 in Hiram, Ohio, and the reason we know that is that the McLellin journals are now available. *History of the Church* does not explicitly say, but implies that the revelation was received October 25. The second manuscript I was researching was a letter from Joseph to his wife Emma, written in June of 1832.

When I put these documents together, I knew there was a fascinating story going on, but I could not quite figure it out. For several months I had these pieces of evidence sort of going around in my head, almost like a puzzle. And twist and turn them as I might, I could not make them fit together. I was lying in bed one morning at about two o’clock, and I had an epiphany: I think I know what this revelation meant to William McLellin and what it meant to Joseph Smith. And immediately following that, I had this wave of feeling of empathy for William McLellin that I had not had before. He had traditionally been painted as an apostate, and I shared that sense. I do not excuse him in any way for his apostasy, but now I felt much more empathetic and had this feeling, “There but for the grace of God go I.” In other words, I learned from section 66 by likening it to myself, as we have talked about here. For me, cracking into the original intent of that revelation—what it meant to them, there, then—was, at the same time, the key to my being able to get the most meaning out of it for myself, here, now.

I won’t go into the details, but I will just say this much: Unbeknownst to Joseph Smith, McLellin asked God five secret questions which God answered in the revelation. Joseph did not ever know what the five questions were. McLellin, of course, became a bitter apostate—an enemy of Joseph Smith. But for the rest of his life, he testified in his own newspaper, “I to this day consider it to me an evidence I cannot refute.”

Even more meaningful than that for me was an experience I had in the mission field. My companion and I were asked to visit a woman who was struggling with serious depression. We accompanied the missionaries who were seeing her to her house. I had no special things to
say, and neither did my companion, so we just tried to have something in mind or be open to the Spirit. I am not sure exactly how, but we ended up in section 18 of the Doctrine and Covenants. We read out loud with her, “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. . . . And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!” (D&C 18:10–11, 13). I remember teaching those verses—I am sure it was the first time in my life that I had ever taught them—and simultaneously learning from them. You know what that experience is like. The Holy Spirit was with us for the sake of this woman.

I remember a line of questioning we put to this woman, and as we did, it was the first time I had thought about these questions or the implications of them for myself. I remember asking her that if she was the only one who ever needed redemption and an Atonement, would Christ do it? Did she think it would be worth it to Christ? She thought for a minute, and she said, “Yes.” And she was right. The Book of Mormon emphasizes an infinite Atonement. An infinite Atonement is just as extensive for one person needing redemption as for eight hundred billion people in need of redemption. That text more than any other, I think, drives home the point, as Elder Ballard recently emphasized in conference, about the Savior’s concern for the one and the value of the Atonement for one.

I like to think of those verses as an equation: The worth of a soul is great in the sight of God. If we had to write a mathematical equation to describe the worth of a soul, based on those verses, I think we could say with the Book of Mormon’s help in describing the Atonement as infinite, that a soul to God is equal to the infinite Atonement of the Only Begotten Son of God. I believe that. I believe that is the doctrine of section 18, wonderfully supported by section 19. In other words, the doctrine of the Atonement flowing out of these revelations is my most cherished experience with them.

Fluhman: Mine is an experience from before I was ever a serious scholar or teacher of the Doctrine and Covenants. In a way, mine mirrors Steve’s experience as a young missionary. I found myself being asked to train an even younger missionary in the middle of nowhere, a little tiny town in western Maryland, when the biggest snowstorm in a hundred years hit us. We could not do anything. It was as miserable a time as I have ever had. I was just overwhelmed with discouragement and with all sorts of questions, and I was still trying to sort through the beginnings of a set of convictions about God and the Church and
everything else. In the midst of that very depressing, gray winter, out of desperation, I decided to get up a little bit earlier to read all the way through the Doctrine and Covenants for the first time.

That deep winter in the middle of the Allegheny Mountains offers one of the most poignant memories of my life. Morning after morning, as the sun was coming up over those mountains, I sat alone in the little front room of our apartment, grappling with the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants for the first time. I experienced finding hope where I had had none, faith where I could not muster it before, love for people that I was not inclined to love—all those dramatic changes of heart that many can now look back on in their own lives. For me, that real transformative period of my life came because of my study of the Doctrine and Covenants. Ever since then, I have had a special affection and a relationship with those revelations that still drive my scholarship, still propel my study, and still demand my commitment of time.

Underwood: I would focus on my recent period working with The Joseph Smith Papers. This has been an opportunity to go back and engage the earliest surviving copies and records of that revelatory moment, or a series of revelatory moments that the Prophet experienced, and it has given a tangibility and a reality to the revelations that has enriched prior understanding. Previously, most of my reading—as I would imagine it is for most Latter-day Saints—had been focused on, “How might this text bless and enrich my life or my current circumstance?” In addition to applying those revelations to your current situation, it is exhilarating and exciting to feel like you are almost there, touching the footprint of God in the 1830s. That is the impact this project has had on me. It has given a realism and a vitality to the revelations that add to my earlier appreciation.

Woodford: The revelations were preserved, for the most part, in two manuscript books before they were published as the Book of Commandments and then the Doctrine and Covenants. The first of these was called “A Book of Commandments and Revelations,” and the second is commonly known as the “Kirtland Revelation Book.” The Book of Commandments and Revelations was taken by Oliver Cowdery and John Whitmer to Missouri in 1831 to publish the Book of Commandments. That is when they began recording revelations in the second volume, starting with what is now D&C 76. It would be fascinating to have the original manuscripts of the revelations, but, unfortunately, there are only a few of them that we can positively identify. We suppose that many of the originals were discarded once the published volumes were available. The revelations we have in these
two manuscript books are prepublication manuscripts, and it is thrilling to view them in the handwriting of John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Frederick G. Williams, Sidney Rigdon, and others, with corrections by these same men and Joseph Smith.

Holzapfel: May I ask you a question? Joseph Smith was commanded by the angel to go find the plates and to translate them. There is no question about what he was supposed to do there. There were the plates and the Urim and Thummim. The whole process of what he needed to do was laid out for him. Why, all of a sudden, did he start writing down the revelations?

Harper: I wouldn’t say it was all of a sudden. I would say it was quite gradual. His revelation of the First Vision was not written down for a dozen years. As far as we can tell, the first revelation to be recorded was section 3.

Holzapfel: I mean why all of a sudden on a certain day did he decide, “I’m going to write this revelation down”? What initiated him to say, “You know, I should write this down”?

Woodford: Ron Barney has got an interesting idea on that. In the summer of 1830, the Prophet and John Whitmer sat down to copy the revelations and put them together. Ron thinks that is when some of the revelations were originally recorded.

Harper: In which case, the catalyst may be section 21 in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Behold, there shall be a record kept among you” (v. 1).

Fluhman: Another catalyst may have been the first four verses of Doctrine and Covenants 18, which contains the commandment for Oliver to rely upon the Book of Mormon manuscript to prepare a kind of foundational document for the restored Church.

Woodford: We feel that it was reasonably close to June of 1829 that Oliver, in response to that opening portion of section 18, started writing down a document similar to what later became section 20, the Articles and Covenants of the Church.

Holzapfel: This raises the question, “Why was section 3 written down when earlier ones may not have been?” One could postulate that Joseph might have received other divine communications that he did not choose to record in the same way that he did section 3 and onward. There I think we go to a slightly different question, “What is it about the content of section 3 that makes the experience so profound?” We imagine the incredible setback of losing the first portion of the Book of Mormon translation. The Prophet had been working on this for months. This loss was catastrophe number one in the beginning of the Restoration.

Harper: Surely Lucy Mack Smith’s remembrance points that out.
Underwood: Exactly. And if anything might elicit a profound and reassuring communication from the Lord, it would have been that event. God said, “Yes, you were irresponsible; I’ll beat you with a few stripes and you’ll suffer an affliction for a season.” But afterward, here’s that loving, kind Heavenly Father saying, “You’re still Joseph, my prophet. This work will go forth.” How could Joseph not be reassured and uplifted by that?

Harper: As far as I could tell from historical records, section 3 is the first time Joseph speaks in the prophetic voice. Look at the last few verses of that revelation. He had gone into the grove in 1820 as a humble teenager and by the time he was done with section 3, he was a prophet speaking on behalf of the Lord, declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the house of Israel so that through it they can repent and be saved. He set forth the gospel like a prophet. Section 3 became a turning point for him.

Section 3 is a beautiful revelation—it is twenty verses long, and right at the midway point is where we see a dramatic tone change. The Lord lambasts Joseph in the first ten verses for losing the 116 pages. In verse 4, it says, “Whoever sets at naught the counsels of God . . . must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God.” And then verse 10 says, “But remember, God is merciful.” The second half of the revelation is in the voice of a merciful God, saying, “Repent of that which thou hast done, and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work” (v. 10). It is one of the most beautiful texts in the whole world.

Holzapfel: Let’s finish up with this. It’s often easier to accept the dead prophets of the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Nephi is dead, so he is on a pedestal. But in the 1830s, the members had to exercise faith in a living prophet. The acceptance of the Doctrine and Covenants to me is more singular than accepting the Book of Mormon, because here was a man who had to use the outhouse. The early members saw him when he had not shaved. They saw him maybe a little cross with his children or his wife or impatient with people around him. Joseph Smith was profoundly young. He was getting revelation. At the November 1831 conference, they were willing to accept this living person as a prophet. I am not saying it wasn’t hard accepting dead prophets, but they were all safely dead. Joseph was a man who struggled to be a disciple as much as anyone else. Do you perceive a change in the willingness of members to move from accepting the Book of Mormon to accepting the Doctrine and Covenants?

Fluhman: Grant’s research demonstrates that the first-generation Latter-day Saints did not know the Book of Mormon very well, nor did they preach from it very often; but they were more likely than not to
call attention to it as the signal witness of Joseph Smith’s prophetic call. And, in a sense, the book signified Joseph Smith’s mission. For many of those early Saints who accepted the Book of Mormon as scripture, there was a certain logic that predisposed them to see Joseph Smith as an instrument in the hands of God. So we have more work to do in understanding exactly what the Saints thought and how they connected things.

Harper: There are several early Latter-day Saints who accepted and endured in their acceptance of the Book of Mormon but later stopped believing in Joseph’s revelations—David Whitmer, William McLellin, John Corrill, and others. For myself I cannot separate the two; if I believe in the Book of Mormon, then I believe in the later revelations. My own conclusion and conviction is that the same testimony I have of the Book of Mormon carries through and testifies to me of the later revelations as well.

Martin Harris believed Joseph was a prophet. He was worried about losing a lot of money. He came to Joseph in a panic that the Book of Mormon was not selling. “I need a commandment!” he demanded, “I want a revelation.” Joseph says, “Well, you got section 5. The Lord told you there what you needed to do.” But still Martin demands another revelation. So here is a man twice as old as Joseph, prosperous and respectable. He does not want to hear Joseph Smith the farmer giving advice; he wants a commandment from God. Where does he go to get it? To Joseph Smith the seer, and when that commandment, section 19, comes it is more stinging, more pointed than anything Joseph ever said, and Harris tries his best to follow it. And this leads to a point I try to make to my students. To sum it up in a simple way, those who knew Joseph best believed him most. Most of the newspaper editors did not believe him and mocked him, and all kinds of people poked fun at him and believed in their minds he was a fraud. What about his wife? What about his mother? My mom would know if I were a seer or not. My wife would know if I translated the Book of Mormon by the power of God or not. What do the people who know Joseph best—Martin Harris, John Whitmer—believe about his revelations? They move from place to place, sacrifice farms, and whatever else because the revelations say to. That is a compelling historical point to me.

Underwood: There have been individuals who have felt that at some point in history, Joseph became a fallen prophet, that he was no longer the conduit for divine revelation. But many never questioned him. They embraced the gospel from day one and never looked back. This says a lot about the faith and religiosity of so many of the early
Saints. We all try to live the gospel, try to obey its precepts and serve in our callings; but the constant, deep pursuit of godliness and religious devotion that is manifest in many of the early diaries, letters, and histories shows that these people were almost mystical in their spirituality. It seemed natural for these spiritually prepared individuals to accept Joseph. And mind you, in many cases, these folks had a fair knowledge of Christian history and knew that often God’s spokesmen have been young. Finally, consider that there is in humanity a spark of divinity. If it is not stifled, it can recognize inspiration from whatever quarter.

We tend to experience something of the same phenomenon in the Church today. We usually believe that our bishop or the stake president is speaking God’s will to us. We embrace their words as inspired until proven otherwise. We give our leaders the benefit of the doubt. That testifies to the depth of devotion on the part of so many ordinary Latter-day Saints to hear and receive the word of God however he chooses to send it. 

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**Notes**

The subject of life after death is one that has challenged scholars for centuries. A significant Roman Catholic writer, Father Richard John Neuhaus, quoted philosopher George Santayana: “A good way of testing the caliber of a philosophy is to ask what it thinks of death.” Neuhaus then made the following poignant query: “What does it tell us that modern philosophy has had relatively little to say about death?”

In fact, the Prophet Joseph Smith observed: “All men know that they must die. . . . It is but reasonable to suppose that God would reveal something in reference to the matter, and it is a subject we ought to study more than any other. We ought to study it day and night, for the world is ignorant in reference to their true condition and relation. If we have any claim on our Heavenly Father for anything, it is for knowledge on this important subject.”

In that spirit, and being one who is intrigued with what persons of other faiths have to say on the matter, as well as what has come to us through modern revelation, I would like to engage in a rather unusual exercise: I will review and discuss, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, a recent book by British scholar N. T. Wright entitled *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*.

The Work of N. T. Wright

Few scholars have taken the religious world by storm as dramatically as Professor Nicholas Thomas Wright, known on his academic
works as N. T. Wright and on his more popular commentaries as Tom Wright. Wright is currently the Anglican bishop of Durham, fourth in line of authority behind the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop of York, and the bishop of London. And he is now one of the most respected New Testament scholars in the world.

Wright is, in my opinion, the C. S. Lewis of our generation. On the one hand, he has a brilliant mind and is equipped to engage the Bible—its historical context, biblical languages, hermeneutics, and doctrinal message—in exacting detail, more concerned about searching for and finding the truth than with defending a denominational or creedal perspective. He is a staunch believer in the divinity of Jesus Christ and one who has a high view of scripture. Perhaps his most respected series, Christian Origins and the Question of God, consists of three volumes: *The New Testament and the People of God*, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, and *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Without question, his most controversial work has been as a major contributor to the “New Perspectives on Paul” movement during recent decades. Among other things, his books *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, and *Paul in Fresh Perspective* set forth an interpretation of the phrase “the righteousness of God” that has aroused the passions of Protestant (especially Evangelical) thinkers who feel Wright has dismissed out of hand one of the pearls of the Reformation, namely, the forensic imputation of righteousness to sinners through Christ’s Atonement. Wright has suggested that in understanding Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, for example, we should not look upon chapters 9–11 (on the destiny of Israel) as a misplaced doctrinal side canyon that has been plopped right into the middle of the Apostle’s weighty discussion of justification by faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. Rather, Wright asks us to entertain a “fresh perspective” on Paul’s teachings, one not so burdened by Reformation thinking, one much more historically contextual—that the “righteousness of God” is not simply that heavenly goodness that is imputed to the sinner, but rather the steadfast and immutable promise that the Almighty will not let Israel go, that he will through his infinite patience and long-suffering keep his promises made to the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to make of Israel a holy nation. In short, while Wright does still hold out imputed righteousness as a secondary meaning of “God’s righteousness,” he feels the primary Pauline meaning is linked to God’s covenant loyalty to his chosen people.
At the same time, Wright is able to present his scholarly findings in books clearly intended for the informed nonspecialist, works that are gaining a broad and extensive reading audience. I speak here of such books as *The Challenge of Jesus*, *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture*, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense*, *Evil and the Justice of God*, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus*, and *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision*. *Surprised by Hope*, though a rigorous and mind-stretching read in itself, appears to be Wright’s more popular version of *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

Some five months before Hurricane Katrina ripped through the Gulf Coast and decimated the city of New Orleans, I attended a debate in the Crescent City between Wright and John Dominic Crossan on the topic of the Resurrection. The two-day conference was held in a Southern Baptist Seminary in the heart of New Orleans. While the two men, each distinguished scholars in their own right, could not have disagreed more vehemently upon whether Jesus did (Wright) or did not (Crossan) rise in bodily form from the dead and leave the Arimathean’s tomb, their conduct and composure were admirable and contagious; although varying approaches were taken and certainly disparate conclusions were drawn by the two, they could not have demonstrated more respect, common decency, and convicted civility than they did. Crossan’s was a liberal Catholic point of view, indeed, a radical revisionist reading of the scriptural text, explaining the Resurrection as a great mythic moment in Christian history, a symbol of the new intellectual and spiritual birth that comes to those who accept and abide by the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Wright’s was, of course, a more traditional witness of the literal union of body and spirit of the Son of God that took place on that first Easter morning.

Since then I have had occasion to read and study much of Wright’s work and to find *Surprised by Hope* a literary gem, a historical and doctrinal defense of the Resurrection that, as far as I am concerned, is without peer. In the preface Wright calls for the Christian world to recapture “the classic Christian answer to the question of death and beyond, which these days is not so much disbelieved (in world and church alike) as simply not known.” He adds that “I often find that though Christians still use the word resurrection, they treat it as a synonym for ‘life after death’ or ‘going to heaven’ and that, when pressed, they often share the confusion of the wider world on the subject” (xii).
The Kingdom of God

The author suggests that there are two questions that too often are addressed separately, when in fact they are inextricably linked. “First, what is the ultimate Christian hope? Second, what hope is there for change, rescue, transformation, new possibilities within the world in the present? And the main answer can be put like this. As long as we see Christian hope in terms of ‘going to heaven,’ of a salvation that is essentially away from this world, the two questions are bound to appear unrelated” (5). Wright reminds us that John Donne had a glimpse of “what we shall discover to be the central New Testament belief: that at the last, death will be not simply redefined but defeated. God’s intention is not to let death have its way with us” (15).

Above and beyond all things, Wright desires to clarify that when Jesus spoke of the “kingdom of heaven” he was really speaking of the “kingdom of God” that had come to earth and not about some post-mortem place to which the righteous will be escorted as they breathe their last. “The roots of the misunderstanding go very deep,” Wright observes, “not least into the residual Platonism that has infected whole swaths of Christian thinking and has misled people into supposing that Christians are meant to devalue this present world and our present bodies and regard them as shabby or shameful. . . . Heaven, in the Bible, is not a future destiny but the other, hidden, dimension of our ordinary life—God’s dimension, if you like. God made heaven and earth; at the last he will remake both and join them together forever” (18–19). Wright insists later, “What creation needs is neither abandonment nor evolution but rather redemption and renewal; and this is both promised and guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This is what the whole world’s waiting for” (107).

In addressing the question of the immortality of the soul, the author points out that many in the “Christian and sub-Christian tradition” have adopted an odd idea that it is the soul that needs saving, the soul being that part of us that will enter heaven after death. “All this, however, finds minimal support in the New Testament, including the teaching of Jesus, where the word soul, though rare, reflects when it does occur underlying Hebrew or Aramaic words referring not to a disembodied entity hidden within the outer shell of the disposable body but rather what we would call the whole person or personality” (28). This of course reminds Latter-day Saints of the words of Jacob, son of Lehi: “O how great the plan of our God! . . . The paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver
up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls” (2 Nephi 9:13; emphasis added). Or as set forth briefly but poignantly in modern revelation: “And the spirit and the body are the soul of man. And the resurrection of the dead is the redemption of the soul” (D&C 88:15–16; emphasis added).

Wright warned that left to ourselves, we automatically “lapse into a kind of collusion with entropy, acquiescing in the general belief that things may be getting worse but that there’s nothing much that we can do about them. And we are wrong. Our task in the present . . . is to live as resurrection people in between Easter and the final day” (29–30).

An Intermediate Stop

The writer explains that when the early Christians did speak of heaven as a destination after this life, they seemed to be speaking not of a final destination but of a kind of way-station. “They seemed to regard this heavenly life,” Wright says, “as a temporary stage on the way to the eventual resurrection of the body. When Jesus tells the brigand [the thief on the cross] that he will join him in paradise that very day, paradise clearly cannot be their ultimate destination, as Luke’s next chapter [chapter 24 on the resurrected Lord] makes clear. Paradise is, rather, the blissful garden where God’s people rest prior to the resurrection” (41; emphasis added) Later the author clarified: “‘Today you will be with me in Paradise.’ There will still, of course, be a future completion involving ultimate resurrection. . . . Jesus, after all, didn’t rise again ‘today,’ that is, on Good Friday. Luke must have understood him to be referring to a state-of-being in paradise, which would be true, for him and for the man dying beside him, at once, that very day—in other words, prior to the resurrection.” Wright states that resurrection “wasn’t a way of talking about life after death. It was a way of talking about a new bodily life after whatever state of existence one might enter immediately upon death. It was, in other words, life after life after death” (150–51; emphasis in original).

The Prophet Joseph Smith, in speaking of the Greek word that Jesus would have used when he spoke of the thief’s place upon his immediate departure—probably the word Hades—offered his own commentary on this episode (Luke 23:39–43) by suggesting that what Jesus actually said to the penitent thief was, “This day thou shalt be with me in the world of spirits.” Joseph taught on another occasion that “the infidel will grasp at every straw for help until death stares him in the face, and then his infidelity takes its flight, for the realities
of the eternal world are resting upon him in mighty power; and when every earthly support and prop fails him, he then sensibly feels the eternal truths of the immortality of the soul. . . . Let this, then, prove as a warning to all not to procrastinate repentance, or wait till a death-bed, for it is the will of God that man should repent and serve Him in health, and in the strength and power of his mind, in order to secure his blessing, and not wait until he is called to die.”

A Corporeal Resurrection

Over thirty years ago I sat in a doctoral seminar on the Apostle Paul. There were, as I recall, about eight persons seated around the table with the professor, a secular Jew, at the head of the table. That particular day we were discussing 1 Corinthians 15 and Paul’s teachings on the Resurrection. About an hour into the three-hour session, it became quite clear to me that I was the only one in the room who believed that the resurrected body was a tangible, physical, material body, notwithstanding there were Roman Catholics, Southern Baptists, and a Pentecostal in the seminar. As I was wondering why, especially given the evidence in such resurrection narratives as Luke 24, I realized, first of all, that 1 Corinthians 15:42–44 was rendered as follows: The body “is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (emphasis added). And yet I knew that a “spiritual body” was a physical, material, immortal body not subject to death. Why? Because I was aware of Jesus’ postresurrection appearances, especially in Luke 24.

Further, this doctrine is taught plainly in Restoration scriptures. In addressing the wicked people of Ammonihah, Amulek explained, “The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt. Now, this restoration [of spirit and body] shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; . . . every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame.” Amulek then goes on to speak of the judgment linked to the resurrection, and then returns to this restoration, adding that “this mortal body is raised to an immortal body . . . that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption” (Alma 11:43–45; emphasis added). Or, as stated succinctly
in a modern revelation, “And the spirit and the body are the soul of man. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul. . . . For notwithstanding they die, they also shall rise again, a spiritual body” (D&C 88:15–16, 27; emphasis added).

In writing of the resurrected body as a transformed body, but a physical one nonetheless, Wright states: “It is of course Paul, in a much misunderstood passage in 1 Corinthians 15, who sets this out most clearly and to whom many, though not all, subsequent writers look back. He speaks of two sorts of body, the present one and the future one. He uses two key adjectives to describe these two bodies. Unfortunately, many translations get him radically wrong at this point, leading to the widespread supposition that for Paul the new body would be a spiritual body in the sense of a nonmaterial body, a body that in Jesus’ case wouldn’t have left an empty tomb behind it. It can be demonstrated in great detail, philosophically and exegetically, that this is precisely not what Paul meant. The contrast he is making is not between what we would mean by a present physical body and what we would mean by a future spiritual one, but between a present body animated by the normal human soul and a future body animated by God’s spirit” (43–44; emphasis added)

Elder Orson Pratt eloquently made the point as follows: “A Saint who is one in deed and truth, does not look for an immaterial heaven, but he expects a heaven with lands, houses, cities, vegetation, rivers, and animals; with thrones, temples, palaces, kings, princes, priests, and angels; with food, raiment, musical instruments, etc., all of which are material. Indeed, the Saints’ eternal home is a redeemed, glorified, celestial material creation, inhabited by glorified material beings, male and female, organized into families, embracing all the relationships of husbands and wives, parents and children, where sorrow, crying, pain, and death will be known no more.” On this earth, Elder Pratt continued, the Saints of God “expect to live, with body, parts, and holy passions; on it they expect to move and have their being.” In short, “materiality is indelibly stamped upon the very heaven of heavens, upon all the eternal creations; it is the very essence of all existence.”

After the Ascension

In the middle of chapter 4 (“The Strange Story of Easter”), the author introduces us to what he calls “an epistemology of hope.” “Faith in Jesus risen from the dead,” Wright declares, “transcends but includes what we call history and what we call science. Faith of this sort is not blind belief, which rejects all history and science. . . . Hope,
for the Christian, is not wishful thinking or mere blind optimism. It is a mode of knowing, a mode within which new things are possible, options are not shut down, new creation can happen.” Wright asserts that “the resurrection is not, as it were, a highly peculiar event within the present world (though it is that as well); it is, principally, the defining event of the new creation, the world that is being born with Jesus. If we are even to glimpse this new world, let alone enter it, we will need a different kind of knowing. . . . Hope is what you get when you suddenly realize that a different worldview is possible, a worldview in which the rich, the powerful, and the unscrupulous do not after all have the last word. The same worldview shift that is demanded by the resurrection of Jesus is the shift that will enable us to transform the world” (72–73, 75; emphasis in original).

It is not uncommon to speak to Christians of all types who believe that once Jesus Christ, who is God the Son, had finished his intercessory work on earth, had suffered and died for our sins, and had risen in glory and majesty from the dead, that he returned to heaven to sit on the right hand of the Father as an eternal spirit. This, of course, the scriptures do not teach, nor do Latter-day Saints believe it. The earliest reference in a sermon by Joseph Smith on the corporeality of God seems to be January 5, 1841. On that occasion William Clayton recorded the Prophet as saying, “That which is without body or parts is nothing. There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones.”

10 On March 9, 1841, he spoke of Jesus as the Mediator and the Holy Ghost as the Witness and Testator. He then declared that “the Son had a tabernacle and so had the Father.”

11 Finally, on April 2, 1843, in Ramus, Illinois, Joseph the Prophet delivered instructions on this matter that are the basis of Doctrine & Covenants 130:22: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost . . . is a personage of spirit.”

Wright remarks on the status of Jesus after his ascension into heaven:

The idea of the human Jesus now being in heaven, in his thoroughly embodied risen state, comes as a shock to many people, including many Christians. Sometimes this is because many people think that Jesus, having been divine, stopped being divine and became human, and then, having been human for a while, stopped being human and went back to being divine (at least, that’s what many people think many Christians are supposed to believe). More often it’s because our culture is so used to the Platonic idea that heaven is, by definition, a place of “spiritual,” nonmaterial reality so that the idea of a solid body
being not only present but also thoroughly at home there seems like a category mistake. (111)

Wright, of course, would not subscribe to the Latter-day Saint view of the corporeality of the Father, but we would agree with his exposition of Jesus’ resurrected body in heaven now.

**Here Comes Heaven**

One of the most important Christian myth-breaking points made by the author is that no one will go to heaven. That is, no one will be whisked away (or raptured away) from the earth to some celestial sphere, as many Protestant dispensationalists teach. No, heaven will be here, on earth, on this very planet. “The main truth,” Wright emphasizes, “is that he will come back to us” (124). Reminiscent to Latter-day Saints is the clear teaching in modern revelation that “the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it. Therefore, it [the earth] must needs be sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory; for after it hath filled the measure of its creation, it shall be crowned with glory, even with the presence of God the Father; that bodies who are of the celestial kingdom may possess it forever and ever; for, for this intent was it created, and for this intent are they [the people] sanctified” (D&C 88:17–20).

He explains further that the Greek word *parousia*, usually translated as “return” (meaning Jesus’ Second Coming) really means “presence”—that is, presence as opposed to absence. “The second meaning emerges when a person of high rank makes a visit to a subject state, particularly when a king or emperor visits a colony or province. The word for such a visit is royal presence: in Greek, *parousia*.” Wright continues, “Now suppose that Paul, and for that matter the rest of the early church, wanted to say two things. Suppose they wanted to say, first, that the Jesus they worshipped was near in spirit but absent in body but that one day he would be present in body and that then the whole world, themselves included, would know the sudden transforming power of that presence. A natural word to use for this would be *parousia*” (129). In addition, Wright challenges the typical conservative Evangelical view of the rapture, made popular through the enormously successful *Left Behind* series of books written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. “When Paul speaks of ‘meeting the Lord in the air,’ the point is precisely not—as in the popular rapture theology—
that the saved believers would then stay up in the air somewhere, away from earth. The point is that, having gone out to meet their returning Lord, they will escort him royally into his domain, that is, back to the place they have come from” (133). While Latter-day Saints believe that the righteous will be “caught up to meet” the Lord in the air at the time of his Second Coming in glory, the faithful will return to an earth that will have been cleansed and purified of all wickedness and wicked people, including Satan and his hosts, who will be bound. Christ will then reign on the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords for a millennium (see D&C 43:29–33; 63:49–52; 88:95–98).

One section of chapter 10 (“The Redemption of Our Bodies”) was especially provocative to me. In writing of the concept of men and women gaining immortality in the Resurrection, Wright noted: “In particular, this new body will be immortal. That is, it will have passed beyond death not just in the temporal sense (that it happens to have gone through a particular moment and event) but also in the ontological sense of no longer being subject to sickness, injury, decay, and death itself” (160). Ontology pertains to being. Wright appears to be suggesting that the resurrected body has indeed undergone a major ontological change, from corruptible to incorruptible, from natural to spiritual, from mortal to immortal. Could it be that the resurrected being, having been perfected in Christ (see Moroni 10:32; D&C 76:67), having become a joint heir with Christ (see Romans 8:17), having become a partaker of the divine nature (see 2 Peter 1:4), having become like God and being in a position to see him as he is (see 1 John 3:1–2)—could it be that he or she has undergone the kind of spiritual metamorphosis such that they have passed from humanity to divinity?

The Work of Grace

Without question, one of the most searing of the fiery darts launched at the Latter-day Saints by their Evangelical critics is that we are caught up in a kind of works righteousness, a belief that we must “work out our own salvation” and that Jesus will fill in the gaps. Certainly the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants teach otherwise (see, for example, 2 Nephi 2:3–4, 8; 10:24; 31:19; Moroni 6:4; D&C 3:20; 6:13; 14:7; 20:30–31). Attend for a moment to Wright’s words:

The new body will be a gift of God’s grace and love. However, there are several passages in the New Testament, not least in the words of Jesus himself, that speak of God’s future blessings in terms of reward.

. . . Many Christians find this uncomfortable. We have been taught that
we are justified by faith, not works, and, somehow, the very idea of a Christian for what we will get out of it is distasteful.

But the image of reward in the New Testament doesn’t work like that. It isn’t a matter of calculation, of doing a difficult job in order to be paid a wage. It is much more like working at a friendship or a marriage in order to enjoy the other person’s company more fully. It is more like practicing golf in order that we can go out on the course and hit the ball in the right direction. . . . The reward is . . . always far in abundance beyond any sense of direct or equivalent payment. (161–62)

Later, in chapter 13 (“Building for the Kingdom”), Wright continues this line of thinking. “Many people,” he states, “faced with the challenge to work for God’s kingdom in the present, will at once object. ‘Doesn’t that sound,’ they will ask, ‘as though you’re trying to build God’s kingdom by your own efforts?’ Well, if it does sound like that, I’m sorry. It wasn’t meant like that.” Wright adds that since we have been created in the image of Deity, “God intends his wise, creative, loving presence and power to be reflected—imaged, if you like—into his world through his human creatures. He has enlisted us to act as his stewards in the project of creation.” That is, “through the work of Jesus and the power of the Spirit, he equips humans to help in the work of getting the project back on track. So the objection about us trying to build God’s kingdom by our own efforts, though it seems humble and pious, can actually be a way of hiding from responsibility, of keeping one’s head well down when the boss is looking for volunteers” (207; emphasis added).

As to how the works of righteousness fit within the grand scheme of things, how they relate to the ultimate establishment of God’s kingdom on earth, Wright concludes:

Every act of love, gratitude, and kindness; every work of art or music inspired by the love of God and delight in the beauty of his creation; every minute spent teaching a severely handicapped child to read or to walk; every act of care and nurture, of comfort and support, for one’s fellow human beings and for that matter one’s nonhuman creatures; and of course every prayer, all Spirit-led teaching, every deed that spreads the gospel, builds up the church, embraces and embodies holiness rather than corruption, and makes the name of Jesus honored in the world—all of this will find its way, through the resurrecting power of God, into the new creation that God will one day make. (208)

For Wright there is no place in the life of a true follower of Christ for “cheap grace,” for “easy believism,” or for “grace gone wild.” Jesus meant what he said when he declared, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15) and when he set forth the invitation
to discipleship, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily [denounce ungodliness and worldly lusts—Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:26], and follow me” (Luke 9:23). “Some kinds of evangelism in the past,” Wright notes, “implied that the main thing is to sign on, to pray a particular prayer, which results in the assurance that one is safely on the way to heaven—and failed to mention, to the frustration of pastors and teachers who then tried to look after such converts, the fact that following Jesus means just that, following Jesus, not checking a box that says ‘Jesus’ and then sitting back as though it’s all done. To speak, rather, of Jesus’ lordship and the new creation, which results from his victory on Calvary and at Easter, implies at once that to confess him as Lord and to believe that God raised him from the dead is to allow one’s entire life to be reshaped by him, knowing that though this will be painful from time to time, it will be the way not to a diminished or cramped human existence but to genuine human life in the present and to complete, glorious resurrected human life in the future” (229–30; emphasis added).

As an Anglican, not far removed from the Roman Catholic view of the necessity of the sacraments, Wright argues that many in the Christian world have focused much on conversion and rebirth and regeneration but have attempted to do so without requiring baptism. To be so bold as to state that baptism is essential, Protestants often say, is to attempt to supplement the finished work of Jesus Christ, to add requisite works on our part to his substitutionary atoning sacrifice. From a Latter-day Saint perspective, this is flawed thinking: repentance and baptism and righteous works are the products of one’s acceptance of Christ, the faithfulness that manifests true faith, the means by which we receive the proffered gift, the manner by which the Atonement is appropriated. Baptism is “the sign and means of leaving behind the old life and beginning the new, of identifying with the death and resurrection of Jesus himself.” Further, “What has proved much harder to do, in those movements that have stressed the new birth as a vital spiritual experience, is to articulate a theology of baptism that goes with it, as it obviously does in the New Testament. Evangelicalism’s inability to do this left the door wide open to the various theologies of the Spirit baptism that have characterized Pentecostalism” (228, 271).

Our Destiny with Charity

Perhaps no section of Surprised by Hope proved more poignant to me and expanded my understanding more dramatically than a portion of chapter 15 (“Reshaping the Church for Mission: Living the
Future”), in which Wright spoke of the nature of men and women who will inhabit the resurrected world, God’s world, composed of glorified, immortal men and women. He emphasized that the actions we perform as a part of our Christian task today—good things that we often do, but do for less than heavenly motives, such as out of duty or responsibility—will in that day be performed for very different reasons. “We all know”—in today’s world—“that it’s no good simply telling people to love one another. One more exhortation to love, to patience, to forgiveness, may remind us of our duty. But as long as we think of it as duty, we aren’t very likely to do it.

“The point of 1 Corinthians 13 is that love is not our duty; it is our destiny. It is the language Jesus spoke, and we are called to speak it so that we can converse with him. It is the food they eat in God’s new world, and we must acquire the taste for it here and now. It is the music God has written for all his creatures to sing, and we are called to learn it and practice it now so as to be ready when the conductor brings down his baton. It is the resurrection life, and the resurrected Jesus calls us to begin living it with him and for him right now. Love is at the very heart of the surprise of hope: people who truly hope as the resurrection encourages us to hope will be people enabled to love in a new way. Conversely, people who are living by this rule of love will be people who are learning more deeply how to hope” (287–88).

Who Becomes Immortal?

Now, to be sure, Latter-day Saints should not look upon Wright’s writings as affirmations of our theology. There were, throughout the book, a few doctrinal matters with which I as a Latter-day Saint took issue, but I emphasize that there were very few.

First, on pages 28 and 161 Wright draws the conclusion—as I suppose he should, based on 1 Timothy 6:16 and 2 Timothy 1:10—that immortality is a gift granted to men and women by God through the atoning mercies of Jesus Christ; that because of Christ’s intercession all who receive him will gain immortality and eternal life hereafter. Here Latter-day Saints part company with Wright and with traditional Christianity in general. Latter-day Saints believe that each of us is already immortal, that we lived before we were born, and that we did not suddenly spring into existence at birth, but rather, “intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, “We say that God himself is a self-existent being. Who told you so? It is correct enough; but how did it get into your heads? Who told you that man did not
exist in like manner upon the same principles? Man does exist upon the same principles. . . . The mind or the intelligence which man possesses is co-equal [co-eval or co-eternal] with God himself.”

In the Joseph Smith Translation of 1 Timothy 6:14–16, Paul encourages his beloved missionary companion to “keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, to whom be honor and power everlasting; whom no man hath seen, nor can see, unto whom no man can approach, only he who hath the light and the hope of immortality dwelling in him.” 2 Timothy 1:10 explains that Christ has brought “life and immortality to light through the gospel.” This is referring to resurrected, glorified immortality, which comes to us through one’s acceptance of and faithful observance of the principles and ordinances of the gospel.

Forgiveness and Cleansing beyond the Grave

Second, in arguing that the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is unscriptural, Wright reminds readers that as “the reformers insisted, bodily death itself is the destruction of the sinful person. . . . Death itself gets rid of all that’s still sinful; this isn’t magic but good theology. There is nothing then left to purge.” Further, “it’s the present life that is meant to function as a purgatory. The sufferings of the present time, not of some postmortem state, are the valley through which we have to pass in order to reach the glorious future” (170–71). We would certainly agree that “this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” and that our task is, through repentance and the application of the Atonement, to seek to obtain and retain a remission of sins (Mosiah 4:11–12, 26), acknowledging that “that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your [spirit] body in that eternal world” (Alma 34:32, 34). Simply stated, repentance and refinement and improvement and sanctification go forward after this life in the postmortal spirit world (D&C 138:19, 31–34, 58). In the language of Elder Melvin J. Ballard: “Do not let any of us imagine that we can go down to the grave not having overcome the corruptions of the flesh and then lose in the grave all our sins and evil tendencies. They will be with us. They will be with the spirit when separated from the body. . . . The point I have in mind is that we are sentencing ourselves to long periods of bondage, separating our spirits from our bodies, or we are
shortening that period, according to the way in which we overcome and master ourselves.”

The Communion of the Saints

Finally, in chapter 11 (“Purgatory, Paradise, Hell”), Wright indicates that he finds no particular problem with the concept of mortals praying for or in behalf of departed loved ones, all as a part of the doctrine mentioned in the Apostle’s Creed as the “communion of the saints.” “Love passes into prayer,” he writes; “we still love them; why not hold them, in that love, before God?” But then he goes on to describe his discomfort with what he terms an unscriptural and potentially dangerous idea that those on the other side are praying for us (172–73). Because of the Latter-day Saint perspective on the nearness of those who have gone beyond and because we believe so strongly that life and love and learning are forever, we find comfort in the teachings of President Joseph F. Smith at the April 1916 general conference:

> Sometimes the Lord expands our vision from this point of view and this side of the veil, so that we feel and seem to realize that we can look beyond the thin veil which separates us from that other sphere. If we can see, by the enlightening influence of the Spirit of God and through the words that have been spoken by the holy prophets of God, beyond the veil that separates us from the spirit world, surely those who have passed beyond, can see more clearly through the veil back here to us than it is possible for us to see to them from our sphere of action.

> I believe we move and have our being in the presence of heavenly messengers and of heavenly beings. We are not separate from them. We begin to realize, more and more fully, as we become acquainted with the principles of the gospel, as they have been revealed anew in this dispensation, that we are closely related to our kindred, to our ancestors, to our friends and associates and co-laborers who have preceded us into the spirit world. We can not forget them; we do not cease to love them; we always hold them in our hearts, in memory. . . . How much more certain it is and reasonable and consistent to believe that those who have been faithful, who have gone beyond and are still engaged in the work for the salvation of the souls of men, . . . can see us better than we can see them; that they know us better than we know them. They have advanced; we are advancing; we are growing as they have grown; we are reaching the goal that they have attained unto; and therefore, I claim that we live in their presence, they see us, they are solicitous for our welfare, they love us now more than ever. For now they see the dangers that beset us; they can comprehend, better than ever before, the weaknesses that are liable to mislead us into dark and forbidden paths. They see the temptations and the evils that beset us in life and the proneness
of mortal beings to yield to temptation and to do wrong; hence their solicitude for us, and their love for us, and their desire for our well being, must be greater than that which we feel for ourselves.

Conclusion

Reading Surprised by Hope renewed for me the scriptural injunction to “seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118; emphasis added). To put it bluntly, this is one of the best books I have read in thirty years, and those who know me know that I read a great deal. What a delight it is to turn each page, knowing that the writer has done his homework, put all of his ducks in a row, and chosen powerful prose to elucidate his message. The book was intellectually challenging, but it was also spiritually stimulating, confirming my hope in the reality of the risen Lord. “The power of the gospel,” Wright explains, “lies not in the offer of a new spirituality or religious experience, not in the threat of hellfire (certainly not in the threat of being ‘left behind’), which can be removed if only the hearer checks this box, says this prayer, raises a hand, or whatever, but in the powerful announcement that God is God, that Jesus is Lord, that the powers of evil have been defeated, that God’s new world has begun. This announcement, stated as a fact about the way the world is rather than as an appeal about the way you might like your life, your emotions, or your bank balance to be, is the foundation of everything else” (227).

Notes

7. Smith, *Teachings*, 309; see also 310.
Serving Students: 
A Conversation with Chad H. Webb

Chad H. Webb and Kenneth L. Alford

Chad H. Webb serves as the administrator for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion.
Kenneth L. Alford (ken_alford@byu.edu) is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU.

Alford: What would you like readers to know about you?
Webb: Most importantly, my love for our Father in Heaven, my desire to serve him, and my love for my wife and children. As far as my responsibility with seminaries and institutes, I think my sole ambition is to do whatever we can to help teachers and bless the youth of the Church. Seminaries and institutes exist to bless and serve our students. I just want to do the best I can to serve Heavenly Father and to provide for the needs of our teachers and students.

Alford: I’m guessing that your current assignment as administrator for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion came as a surprise to you. What were your first thoughts?
Webb: I felt surprised and overwhelmed. In fact, when I was asked, I don’t think I answered yes because I couldn’t speak. My mouth opened, but I didn’t say anything. Before I could say anything, Elder Johnson said, “Well, let’s go call your wife.” When we got on the phone with her, I still don’t think I had said anything. It was pretty overwhelming and humbling. Later I went into my office and called my wife again and told her how overwhelmed and nervous I was, and she said, “In every case, the Lord has been with you, and he will be again. There’s just no reason to be nervous.” I’ve leaned on that and a few feelings that I had after that. I really do trust that it’s Heavenly Father’s work and that he is in charge. I also have great trust in our teachers.
I have confidence that things will move forward because Heavenly Father is in charge.

**Alford:** How did you decide that you wanted to spend your career serving in the Church’s seminary and institute programs? I’m always curious how that happens.

**Webb:** I think it was a number of small things more than one big thing. I had a really wonderful experience as a sophomore in high school in a seminary class studying the New Testament, and as a sixteen-year-old, I remember thinking, “I want to do for somebody else what that teacher just did for me.” I had a number of wonderful teachers that made me interested in seminary. I guess on some level, though, I forgot about that because when I was in college, I didn’t know that’s what I wanted to be. About a year after my mission, I was going to the College of Eastern Utah and attending institute there. The institute director asked if I would substitute teach his classes for a couple of days while he went to a convention. I taught a few classes in the following days and that was enough; when he came back, I was waiting outside of his office and asked, “How do I get this job?”

**Alford:** What does the road look like that has led you to your current assignment?

**Webb:** I started in the Salt Lake West area teaching at the Magna Seminary and at the Taylorsville Seminary. I was then invited to be a coordinator on the East Coast. After coordinating in the northern Virginia and Washington DC area for four years, I was asked to serve as a preservice trainer at the Ogden Institute. After one year there, I was appointed as manager for the seminary and institute preservice programs in the United States. Next I was asked to be an assistant administrator for one year with Elder Paul Johnson and one year with Gary Moore before being asked to serve as the administrator last year.

**Alford:** How did serving as a coordinator outside of Utah change your perspective on the seminary and institute programs?

**Webb:** When I started as a seminary teacher, I saw only one aspect of seminary and institute and that was the whole world to me. As a coordinator, I saw seminary and institute volunteers and what they do. Did you know that today there are more students being taught by volunteers than there are by full-time teachers? Another thing that serving as a coordinator did for me was to help me see the good teachers that are there; witnessing their sacrifice and dedication really changed me. They serve their students willingly without complaint, and I was blessed to see that.
I’ve seen many aspects of Church education, including one part we don’t talk about often: our primary and secondary schools in the Pacific Islands and Mexico. It has been a blessing to see what’s going on in the Church schools and to meet those teachers and administrators. It is an incredible blessing to see all of the wonderful people around the world blessing the youth of the Church.

Alford: What are some of the major responsibilities of your current position?

Webb: I think, again, it starts with the students. Our responsibility is to provide seminary and institute for the youth and young adults all over the world. Our hope is that we will teach the scriptures, by the Spirit, so that lives will be blessed. Last year there were almost seven hundred thousand students enrolled. We have large programs from released-time to daily and home-study classes and have as many institute students now as we do seminary students, so it is important to train our teachers and provide the resources that they need to be successful. Another important aspect is the desire we have to include more students—to find ways to invite students to participate and to attend our programs. I think those are the big responsibilities we have, and we do that under the direction of the Board of Education.

Alford: Could you share some of the feelings that the senior leaders of the Church have regarding the seminary and institute programs?

Webb: I don’t want to speak for them, but every indication I get is that they are very appreciative of what’s happening. They believe the seminary and institute programs are a wonderful blessing to the young people of the Church. They are very encouraging. When you think about what it takes to provide teachers, buildings, and resources to support these programs, it says a lot about the Brethren’s feelings for the youth of the Church. The Church Board of Education is not a token board. They truly oversee the major decisions within our programs, and we do the best we can to carry out their direction and counsel.

It’s a wonderful blessing to sit in meetings with the Executive Committee of the Board of Education. It’s wonderful to watch them; they certainly lead and guide our programs. I think my appreciation for the fact that there is a prophet on the earth has grown. My testimony of living prophets continues to be strengthened, but more than anything, my appreciation that Heavenly Father would send priesthood keys to the earth and provide a prophet on the earth continues to grow.

Alford: What is the most rewarding part of your current assignment?

Webb: It’s definitely the people I get to work with. It’s really wonderful to go to work and be surrounded with people who are so firmly
rooted in the gospel, live with so much faith, and at the same time are so bright and capable. It’s a wonderful balance of intellectual capacity and simple faith that is fun to watch. I love traveling and being with our teachers all over the world. I love seeing the students. It’s wonderful to go into some small village in a remote part of the world to a daily seminary class and watch students with their scriptures talking about the gospel. I’ve been to countries where the Church is very new. I had an experience recently in a country where the Church has only been established for eleven years. During a fireside with a couple hundred seminary students, the seminary choir came up and sang “I Know That My Redeemer Lives”—this in a country that is not primarily Christian. I spoke with some of the seminary students after the fireside, and they told stories of how they recently joined the Church. They had just heard the name of Jesus Christ within the last year, and here they were bearing testimony of him through their music. Those are experiences I will treasure for a long time.

Alford: Where do the challenges lie right now?

Webb: I think it still comes back to the students. In what ways can we serve them better? How can we reach more of them? What can we do to bless their lives? The world is becoming a more complicated place. What can we do to help deepen their conversion and prepare them for the future? I believe that Heavenly Father has a mission for this generation, and we need to prepare them for the things that are coming so that they will have an opportunity to bless the world. Those are the things that I try to think about.

Alford: What are your thoughts regarding the Teaching Emphasis?

Webb: The Teaching Emphasis is an attempt to incorporate and emphasize those principles of learning that we believe will lead to deepened conversion—to help the gospel go from a young person’s head to their heart. We’re not saying that what we have done in the past was not right or that there’s a new way of doing things. What we are suggesting is that we should continue to do all of the good things we’ve always done, as well as working to identify additional principles of learning that will deepen conversion, protect our students against the influences of the world, and prepare them for what the Lord is expecting of them.

The biggest change in our approach would probably come down to the role of the student. Is the student actively participating? Is the student discovering things? Are students talking about ways the gospel blesses their lives? Are they sharing their own experiences with gospel principles? Those kinds of experiences with the scriptures and with
their peers will help to take gospel principles into their hearts and will prepare them to be able to share it with others.

**Alford:** Would you share a favorite teaching experience?

**Webb:** Like any teacher who’s ever taught seminary or institute, I have some wonderful memories of students who came in rather apathetic or maybe even a little rebellious and who changed over the course of time. Most times, it had nothing to do with me as the teacher, but it was a marvelous blessing to watch those changes occur.

In some ways, the best experiences in teaching are probably when I meet students several years later. It’s just wonderful to have them come up and say, “Guess what I’ve done with my life!” That’s the best part of teaching—to see how the gospel has blessed their life. I had an experience like that in an airport not too long ago. A former student approached me years after he had been in my class. He told me that when he was a junior in high school he had never learned to read. No one had known his secret because he had been able to hide it so well. He told me that while he was sitting in a seminary class, the Spirit had whispered to him, “You can learn to read if you get help.” He went directly from class to his high school counselor and admitted that he couldn’t read. The Spirit worked on him in a way that I couldn’t. He got the help he needed and was able to learn to read. That one moment in class changed his life forever.

I am always amazed how the Holy Ghost can adapt an experience to meet personal needs. The best memories I have with teaching have been to watch the Holy Ghost fulfill his role in blessing individuals according to their needs.

**Alford:** It’s not uncommon for new seminary and institute teachers, especially volunteer teachers, to feel overwhelmed when they first receive their calling. What advice would you give to newly called teachers?

**Webb:** I would remind them that Heavenly Father is in charge. He loves their students and wants to bless them. He cares about success in our classroom even more than we do. I would remind them of Proverbs 3:5, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” Heavenly Father will make us more capable than we otherwise would be. His classroom is bigger than ours, and he’s working on these young people and helping them, independent of us. If we’ll do our part, he’ll magnify us and allow us to be an instrument in blessing them.

In “The Charted Course,” President J. Reuben Clark Jr. said our latitude and longitude is that we are to deepen faith and testimony in the Savior, Jesus Christ, in Joseph Smith, and in the Restoration. We
should measure everything that we try to accomplish in the seminary or institute classroom against that. We have to make a choice every day of what to teach, and then we have to make a choice of how we’re going to teach it. Every day we should keep that in mind and say, “Will this learning activity or this way of teaching from the scriptures that I’m choosing deepen faith and testimony in the Savior and in the Restoration?” We should stay very focused on that as the outcome.

Sometimes we confuse the means with the end, and we get caught up in teaching methodology and other things. I recommend relaxing a bit and reminding ourselves that we’re here to teach the scriptures in a way that will help our young people to deepen their faith and testimony. If we stay true to that, then we’ll be on the right path. I would also encourage them to simply love their students. We’re there to serve students. If we will love our students and teach them the gospel purely, Heavenly Father will magnify us, and we will do just fine.

Alford: Teachers sometimes feel frustrated because they feel they are not being effective. What thoughts can you share with teachers on that topic?

Webb: We cannot always recognize the effect we are having. Sometimes the results don’t manifest themselves until years later. Think of Enos in the wilderness saying, “I started to think about what I was taught by my father, and it sunk deep into my heart.” It isn’t always while students are sitting in a seminary or institute classroom that the key experiences take place. We need to be patient and know that Heavenly Father is teaching these students beyond what we’re able to do.

We play a role that we cannot always identify or measure, nor should we want to measure how much of the influence came from seminary. We get to play a part in adding drops to their lamps. I would say be patient and not worry too much if you can’t put your finger on what you have done to make a difference in the life of a student.

Alford: As I look back to when I was a seminary student in the 1970s and compare it to today, I can see a marked change in the way the scriptures are used in gospel classrooms. What do you think that’s doing for students today?

Webb: There was a time, not too long ago, when we did not teach sequentially from the scriptures. We taught conceptually and kind of supplemented lessons with the scriptures. Students would come to class not knowing whether or not they were going to use their scriptures in class that day. A generation ago, people seldom brought scriptures to church, and now it’s rare to see anyone without them. The scriptures have become the central text from which we teach our courses. That’s true in seminary and also in institute.
We would hope that no matter what the course of study is that students will still learn from the scriptures, because there is power in the word of God. There is power that comes from studying the scriptures and the words of living prophets that’s different; it’s different than any other way of teaching. It is central to our commission to teach the scriptures.

There is a difference between teaching the scriptures and teaching about the scriptures. Our students need to hear the prophets testify. If I wanted to help a young person who was considering going on a mission and I could have him sit down for twenty minutes with the Apostle Paul or with Ammon or one of the other great missionaries from the scriptures, I would be crazy not to give them that opportunity. Or if I want to help a young person repent, how wonderful it would be for them to have an interview with Alma the Younger or someone else in the scriptures who thoroughly understands that process. The scriptures provide those opportunities. Our students should hear the prophets speak to them and testify to them every day in our classrooms. We have to teach the scriptures.

Alford: What can seminary and institute teachers, volunteer as well as full-time teachers, do to strengthen communication channels with their local priesthood leaders?

Webb: I think the more we can align ourselves under the direction of priesthood keys, the more we will be able to bless the young people. That is the bottom line. So the advice I would give to people is to work closely with priesthood leaders and communicate the best we can. We are there to serve, to receive counsel, and to act the best we can under those priesthood keys. Gary Moore, my predecessor, uses the analogy of a dump truck, which I think is a good one. When a priesthood leader sees a seminary or institute teacher coming, do they see them as a dump truck coming to unload all of their problems, saying, “Here, Bishop, fix this”? Or are they coming to take away problems and to be part of the solution? I think it would be ideal if a priesthood leader sees us coming and says, “Oh good, here’s some help.” If they see us and think, “Oh, no. What problem are they going to give me now?” then we’re serving them inappropriately.

Alford: What can parents do to help and support their children who are attending seminary and institute?

Webb: First, I would say that parents should know what their children are studying; know so that they can ask, “What are you learning in seminary?” Have those talks around the dinner table. We are trying to do some things with the Teaching Emphasis that will give students an
opportunity to explain gospel principles and share their experiences both in and out of the classroom. The more opportunities our young people have, even around the dinner table, to talk about gospel principles and explain in their own words what they’ve learned, or to teach a family home evening lesson, the better off they will be. To be able to express gospel principles is part of the experience we hope they are having.

We send a message to our children with everything that we do about how important we feel certain things are. If we ignore their participation in seminary or institute, we are sending a message that we think it’s less important to us than other things. I wouldn’t suggest that I can tell parents what to do, but I would ask them to stop and consider, “What message am I sending to my children about gospel study and about other things associated with the Church and their importance in my life by the way I talk about them and treat them?” I would also encourage parents to communicate with their local seminary and institute people. The more they get on the phone or go to parent-teacher conferences or do whatever they can to talk, the better off everyone is. I think increased communication blesses everyone involved.

**Alford:** Who has been the greatest influence on you and the way you teach?

**Webb:** Actually, I’d start with my parents. My dad was a public school teacher for many years, and I think he is a very good teacher. Also, he was a teacher in our home. Both of my parents love the gospel. They work hard and care about the right things. We talked a lot about the gospel around our dinner table. Mom would always come back from Education Week or something else and couldn’t wait to tell us what she had learned. There was just that environment in our home that the gospel is wonderful, exciting, and fun to talk about. I think a lot of it started there.

I would hesitate to name any names in my experience with seminary and institute faculties because I’d leave people off the list. From the very beginning, principals, area directors, and other faculty have been wonderful. I have a long list of people who have taught and mentored me.

**Alford:** Who are your heroes?

**Webb:** Some of them are people in history whom I’d love to emulate. I also have people very close to me who are my heroes. Honestly, my wife is one of my heroes. She’s one of the brightest people I know, and she’s just so balanced and has so much wisdom and love for people.
My heroes are also the young people in the Church who, while living in a really difficult world, stand up for what’s right. I can’t name them by name, but in my mind I have pictures of young people in seminary classes bearing testimony and standing up to peer pressure and opposition. Anyone who will do the right thing, who will love and accept other people, who will serve other people, and who will try to follow the Savior—those people are my heroes.

Alford: Every seminary and institute teacher wants their students to feel the Spirit every day in class. What are your thoughts on this subject?

Webb: I think it starts with who we are—that we’re living a life that qualifies us for the influence of the Holy Ghost. The more we speak of the Savior, the more the Holy Ghost is able to confirm what we teach. If we appropriately, carefully, and reverently talk about the Savior and testify of him, the more the Spirit will be present in our classrooms.

The Doctrine and Covenants teaches us that the Spirit will be given by the prayer of faith. We have to plead with Heavenly Father for the Spirit in our classroom before that gift will be given. Like every teacher, I’ve had the experience of having a first-hour class go really well and think, “Oh, I did better than I thought. I guess I’m pretty good at this one,” and then the next class goes terribly. It’s because we forgot that we have to ask for his help and rely on that help and not upon our own abilities. The Spirit is given as a gift; it’s not something we can compel or force. We need to be careful and trust Heavenly Father that he will give his Spirit when he chooses.

We can certainly do some things, though, that can help create an environment conducive to the Holy Ghost. Part of it’s in our relationships—the way we treat and respect our students. I think if we see them as children of God who are hungry and thirsty for the knowledge of what the scriptures have to offer, then I think we will teach them differently—more in a way that would invite the Spirit. Certainly if we teach from the scriptures, there’s power in the scriptures that invites the Spirit. There’s also power in testimony. The more we testify and the more often our students testify to each other, the more of an endowment of the Spirit will be in our classrooms.

Alford: What are some of the most important lessons that you have personally learned from teaching?

Webb: I have learned that Heavenly Father is involved in our lives. He cares about each one of us individually. He is patient and quick to forgive, and he gives second chances to people who are humble and willing to try. His ability to reach hearts and change people’s lives far
exceeds our ability. I’ve seen absolute miracles that would not have happened if Heavenly Father had not intervened. I’ve learned to trust him and rely on him. It’s his work, his gospel, his scriptures, and it’s a privilege for us to be a small part in that.

Alford: How has the blessing of working in this great program strengthened your testimony of this latter-day work?

Webb: I can see Heavenly Father’s hand involved in it. There are experiences that demonstrate that Heavenly Father is involved in every aspect of Church education. Teachers are certainly blessed by teaching; we probably learn more than our students. That has certainly been true for me. The opportunity to study the scriptures and to think about how to present them to someone else helps you understand the gospel better. What a blessing it is to be asked to do that every day. You cannot help but deepen your testimony of the gospel, of the promises, and of the covenants that he has given to us. My experiences have strengthened my testimony of and appreciation for Jesus Christ and his restored gospel. I know that it is true, and I am more grateful for the gospel in my life than I can express. RE
New Publications

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**Days Never to Be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery**

This book is a compilation of selected presentations from the annual BYU Church History Symposium hosted by BYU Religious Education. Oliver Cowdery was a primary character in the early days of the Church, both before and after its organization. The events he was involved with are significant to the history of the Church. This book explores his life and the many important roles he filled. He was the principal scribe for the Book of Mormon, and he witnessed the heavens opened and the gospel of Jesus Christ restored. As Oliver himself described, “These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom!”

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2742-2, Retail: $24.95
Champion of Liberty: John Taylor

BYU Religious Studies Center announces the release of *Champion of Liberty: John Taylor*, a compilation of presentations from the annual BYU Church History Symposium. The purpose of this book is to honor the great legacy of John Taylor and the contributions he made to the Church during his lifetime. As the leader of the Church, John Taylor led by “present and immediate revelation,” proclaiming on several occasions, “Thus saith the Lord.” This book contains a number of revelations he received that have never been published before, bringing together all known revelations received by John Taylor.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2736-1, Retail: $24.95

By Study and by Faith: Selections from the Religious Educator

Launched in 2000 by former dean Robert L. Millet, the *Religious Educator* serves the needs and interests of those who study and teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. In celebration of its tenth year, the editors have selected some of the outstanding contributions. Among the authors are Elder D. Todd Christofferson, Elder Jay E. Jensen, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, Richard E. Bennett, Thomas A. Wayment, and several others. This volume is highlighted with a number of color images.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2718-7, Retail: $11.95

Teach One Another Words of Wisdom: Selections from the Religious Educator

The *Religious Educator*, a publication of BYU’s Religious Studies Center, is a journal where Church leaders and teachers publish thoughtful essays for those who study and teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. The editors of this compilation selected some of the outstanding contributions from past issues to celebrate the *Religious Educator*’s tenth year of publication. This volume features outstanding articles by Elder Robert D. Hales, Elder Richard G. Scott, Elder Tad R. Callister, J. R. Kearl, Brent L. Top, Kathy Kipp Clayton, and others.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2717-0, Retail: $8.95
The Colonia Juárez Temple: A Prophet’s Inspiration

This book contains the fascinating story of the Colonia Juárez Chihuahua Mexico Temple, including the inspiration President Gordon B. Hinckley received, while visiting Colonia Juárez, to build smaller-sized temples throughout the world. This widely visual book highlights the process, the progress, and the sacrifice of the faithful Saints of the colonies who helped build this beautiful temple.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2727-9, Retail: $29.95

To Save the Lost: An Easter Celebration

Easter is a wonderful time to recall Jesus’s mission to the least, the last, and the lost, for he said, “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” Not surprisingly, we discover that he sent his disciples to the “lost sheep,” and thus their mission of finding the lost is a natural extension of his mission. Some of Jesus’ most memorable teaching moments have to do with finding the lost. This volume contains the papers delivered at the 2008 and 2009 Brigham Young University Easter Conferences, which is a celebration of the life and atoning mission of Jesus Christ. We are honored to include articles from Elder Merrill J. Bateman, emeritus member of the Seventy, and Bonnie D. Parkin, former general Relief Society president.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2728-6, Retail: $14.95


This book examines such themes as the Atonement, grace, gifts of the Spirit, the condescension of God, and calling and election within the pages of the book of Acts through the Revelation of John. Using scriptures of the Restoration and teachings from the presiding authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it illuminates and clarifies these and other topics so that we may see things wondrous to our understanding and establish godly conduct.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2725-5, Retail: $25.95
A Land of Promise and Prophecy:
A. Theodore Tuttle in South America, 1960–1965

Though not a biography of Elder Tuttle, this book focuses on his activities in South America. Each mission in South America is discussed in relation to Elder Tuttle’s efforts and some of the issues and concerns of the time. This history focuses on the personalities and programs of the mission presidents and their wives, with particular emphasis on Elder A. Theodore Tuttle, because the changes that occurred during his time there were the product of these great men and women.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2713-2, Retail: $25.95

The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context,
The 37th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium

This book will help readers gain a better understanding of the background and development of Joseph Smith’s revelations. Written by scholars trained in a variety of fields, the articles in this volume will also help Latter-day Saints better appreciate the setting in which Joseph received revelations and the significant roles Joseph Smith’s revelations have played, and continue to play, in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

ISBN: 978-1-60641-015-8, Retail: $24.95


James Henry Martineau’s journals present the life of a Mormon convert, a pioneer, and an individual who dedicated his life to the service of his family, his country, and his Church. Martineau’s contributions to the settlements of northern and southern Utah, southern Idaho, southeast Arizona, and the Mormon colonies in northern Mexico are monumental. He was a civil engineer whose survey work left a lasting impression. Although not a prominent religious leader, he was a patriarch and was often in contact with or serving with those in authority. This volume offers a reflection of this common, yet uncommon, Latter-day Saint pioneer.

Upcoming Conferences

The Thirty-Eighth Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium

Scheduled to take place on October 30–31, 2009, this year’s Sperry Symposium will focus on “The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.” The keynote speaker, Elder C. Max Caldwell, will present in the Joseph Smith Building auditorium, Friday, October 29.

Visit rsc.byu.edu/comingsoonSperry.php for more information.

Student Symposium

The 2010 Religious Education Student Symposium will be held Friday, February 19, 2010, in the Wilkinson Center on BYU campus from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

Church History Symposium

The 2010 Church History Symposium, sponsored by Religious Education and the Religious Studies Center, will be held Friday, February 26, 2010, in the Harmon building on BYU campus. Topic to be announced.

The BYU Easter Conference

The 2010 Religious Education Easter Conference will be held on Saturday, March 27, 2010, in the Joseph Smith Building auditorium on BYU campus at 9 a.m. Visit easterconference.byu.edu for more information.
Staff Spotlight

Editorial Board Member

Brother Thomas L. Tyler is a resident of Provo, Utah, and the father of eight children. He grew up in Long Beach, California. He attended the Church College of Hawaii, where he received his BA in speech and dramatic arts. He received both a master’s and a doctorate degree from Brigham Young University in secondary education with a minor in LDS Church history.

He retired after thirty-nine years in the Church Educational System, where for the first eleven years he worked in curriculum production. During the last twelve years of his career, he supervised Church Education as a zone administrator in many areas of the United States and Latin America. For twenty-five years, he was a regular lecturer for BYU’s Division of Continuing Education in both the Know Your Religion and Education Week series. From 1990 to 1993, he served as a member of the general board of the Latter-day Saint Student Association.

Student Editorial Intern

Jonathon R. Owen was born in Mesa, Arizona, and has lived most of his life in the Salt Lake area. He first worked at the Religious Studies Center as a BYU undergraduate. He received his bachelor’s degree in English language with an emphasis in editing. He then spent three years in the “real world,” working as a technical writer, editor, and production artist before returning to Brigham Young University to work on a master’s degree in linguistics. He currently works as a typesetter and as the editing team lead at the RSC. He lives in Spanish Fork with his wife, Ruth, and his two adorable and very busy little boys.

Student Editorial Intern

Daniel O. McClellan graduated from BYU in April 2009 with a BA in ancient Near Eastern studies and a minor in Greek. He is currently reading for a master of studies degree in Jewish studies at the University of Oxford and in November will present a paper on the Greek translation of Exodus in the Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible section at the 2009 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. For two years, Daniel was editor in chief of Studia Antiqua, BYU’s student journal for the study of the ancient world. Recently he aided Dr. Donald W. Parry in the preparation of the critical apparatus for sections of the Biblia Hebraica Quinta, the new academic edition of the Hebrew Bible. Although he has a handicap of 2.8, he likes to tell people he is a scratch golfer.
Submission Guidelines

The Religious Educator serves the needs and interests of those who study and teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ on a regular basis. The distinct focuses are on teaching the gospel; publishing studies on scripture, doctrine, and Church history; and sharing outstanding devotional essays. The contributions to each issue are carefully reviewed and edited by experienced teachers, writers, and scholars. The beliefs of the respective authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Complete author guidelines, including suitable topics, are provided at tre.byu.edu. All manuscripts should be submitted electronically to rsc@byu.edu. Hard-copy submissions are accepted but not encouraged. Send hard-copy submissions to the editorial office at the address listed below.

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

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

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

Editorial Questions

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