A Historian by Yearning: A Conversation with Elder Marlin K. Jensen
Elder Marlin K. Jensen and David F. Boone

The Creation: An Introduction to Our Relationship to God
Michael A. Goodman

Night of Blood and Horror: Thoughts on the Trolley Square Shootings
Elder Alexander B. Morrison

Old Testament Relevancy Reaffirmed by Restoration Scripture
Scott C. Esplin

Teaching Old Testament Laws
Lauren Ellison

Promoting Peculiarity: Different Editions of For the Strength of Youth
Brent D. Fillmore

The Power of Student Discovery and Sharing
John Hilton III

From Calvary to Cumorah: What Mormon History Means to Me
Richard E. Bennett

The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity
Philip Jenkins

The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Roundtable Discussion Celebrating the Sixtieth Anniversary of Their Discovery, Part 1
Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Donald W. Parry, Dana M. Pike, and David Rolph Seely

"[Doctrine and Covenants] section 21 and the command to keep a record were revealed on the day the Church was organized. I think that fact alone evidences the significance Church history ought to merit in our lives."
“[Doctrine and Covenants] section 21 and the command to keep a record were revealed on the day the Church was organized. I think that fact alone evidences the significance Church history ought to merit in our lives.”

Elder Marlin K. Jensen
Sixty years ago, in 1947, two Ta’amireh shepherds climbed the limestone cliffs above the shores of the Dead Sea searching for a stray goat. One of the shepherds threw a rock into a cave, hoping to scare the goat from its hiding place. Instead the rock shattered something at the bottom of the cave. Mohammed edh-Dhib, a teenager, investigated the strange sound, thinking he may have come upon hidden treasure. But instead of gold or silver, he found ten clay jars. In one were some leather scrolls that he could not read. These scrolls and others found shortly thereafter ended up in the hands of an antiquities dealer in Bethlehem, and the rest is history. The young shepherd could never have realized at the time that his discovery would change the maps of scholarship as much as the Arab-Israeli conflict was changing the political maps of the region. In the end, the scrolls were a stunning treasure after all. To celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery, I invited three colleagues to join me in a roundtable discussion on the significance and meaning of perhaps the most important archaeological discovery of the twentieth century. We are publishing the first installment in this issue, and will follow with the second in the first issue in 2008.

We turn our attention from ancient history to the history of the Church by providing an insightful interview with Elder Marlin K. Jensen, Church historian-recorder and member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. We follow up Elder Jensen’s interview with a thoughtful essay by Richard E. Bennett, professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU, “From Calvary to Cumorah: What Mormon History Means to Me.”

Elder Alexander B. Morrison ponders the improbability of life in a modern world where in a short few moment lives are lost and our sense of safety is shattered. He shares some general principles about life, death, and forgiveness after the February 2007 Trolley Square shooting in Salt Lake City.

We also include some other wonderful essays focused on teaching and, in particular, teaching the Old Testament, the CES curriculum for the academic year 2007–8.

Near the end of this issue we publish our first contribution from a scholar of another faith, a talk given at BYU by Philip Jenkins, distinguished professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, looking to the future, “The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity.”

So there you have it—an issue dealing with the past, present, and future. Enjoy!

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel
Editor-in-Chief
Contents

The Religious Educator
Volume 8 Number 3 • 2007

1 A Historian by Yearning: A Conversation with Elder Marlin K. Jensen
Elder Marlin K. Jensen and David F. Boone

15 The Creation: An Introduction to Our Relationship to God
Michael A. Goodman

31 Night of Blood and Horror: Thoughts on the Trolley Square Shootings
Elder Alexander B. Morrison

39 Old Testament Relevancy Reaffirmed by Restoration Scripture
Scott C. Esplin

51 Teaching Old Testament Laws
Robert E. Lund

65 Mothers: Heroes, Then and Now
Lauren Ellison

75 Promoting Peculiarity: Different Editions of For the Strength of Youth
Brent D. Fillmore

89 The Power of Student Discovery and Sharing
John Hilton III

101 From Calvary to Cumorah: What Mormon History Means to Me
Richard E. Bennett

113 The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity
Philip Jenkins

127 The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Roundtable Discussion Celebrating the Sixtieth Anniversary of Their Discovery, Part 1
Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Donald W. Parry, Dana M. Pike, and David Rolph Seely

147 New Publications

149 Upcoming Conferences

151 Staff Spotlight
“In looking back, we obtain a sense of identity that enables us to deal successfully with the present and maintain hope for the future.”

Elder Marlin K. Jensen
Elder Marlin K. Jensen

Courtesy of Visual Resources Library
© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
Elder Marlin K. Jensen and David F. Boone

Elder Marlin K. Jensen is Church historian and recorder and a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy.

David F. Boone (david_boone@byu.edu) is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU.

Boone: Elder Jensen, would you begin by telling us of your own life and experiences and what you feel has helped to prepare you in your calling as the Church historian and recorder.

Jensen: To begin, I’ll acknowledge I’m becoming an old man. I have lived a long time and have personally experienced a lot of history. I grew up in Huntsville, Utah, which is generally best known for being the birthplace of President David O. McKay. He was such a commanding figure in that small community during my youth that my interest in the history of the Church and its leaders was stimulated early on. When I returned from my mission to Germany in 1964, I began to build a modest Church history library. At BYU I majored in German and minored in history, intending at one time to obtain an advanced degree and teach at the university level. However, several experiences at the end of my undergraduate work, including a long conversation I had with Judge Monroe McKay during a horseback ride, convinced me to go to law school.

I ended up the next fall at the University of Utah College of Law, where I earned a Juris Doctor degree. My legal training certainly helps with my current assignment. Thinking clearly and rigorously, understanding the structure of logical (and illogical) arguments, appreciating how words can facilitate or obstruct communication, and being able to weigh evidence are critical legal skills that are also essential to professional historians.
After law school I pursued what I would call a country law practice, living on a family farm in Huntsville and practicing in Ogden in small firms or on my own for a time. This approach to the practice of law provided a little money but more importantly some freedom. With some of that freedom I bought time and used it to read and involve myself a little in historical endeavors.

My legal career lasted nineteen years, and now my service with the Quorums of Seventy has extended to nearly eighteen years. Happily, during this period of full-time Church service, I served for a time more than ten years ago as assistant executive director in the Church Historical Department and later for several years as the executive director. Then, when I returned from a three-year European assignment in the summer of 2004, I was called to be the executive director of the Family and Church History Department.

In the spring of 2005, just prior to April conference, President Hinckley called me to the office of Church historian and recorder. I was very humbled by the prophet’s call but did have the presence of mind to ask President Hinckley what his expectations of me were. He said, “Read the scriptures and do your duty.”

So, that was my orientation to the office of Church historian and recorder, and I’ve been trying to do what President Hinckley suggested. Together with Elders Gary J. Coleman and Sheldon F. Child, assistant executive directors, and some very able staff members, I have been studying scriptural passages that pertain to the work of the historian and recorder. I feel we have gained valuable insights into the purpose of history and the keeping of records in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I continue to feel inadequate. As I replied to a similar question in an interview with the Church News, “I am really not a historian except by yearning.” I’m comforted in my shortcomings, however, by the knowledge that as important as they are, professional training and experience alone are not sufficient qualifications to pursue the work of Church history. More important is the influence of the Holy Ghost, which refines, focuses, and inspires us to do better work than would have been otherwise possible.

I also draw consolation from being surrounded by exceptional associates. Richard E. Turley Jr., for example, is the managing director of the Family and Church History Department. He is also a lawyer by training but is certainly one of the brightest and best-read scholars in the Church. He has a profound grasp of Church history and an understanding of doctrine to go with it. He is very able and is a wonderful asset to the Lord’s work.
I might also point out that the Family and Church History Department, as its name implies, is a combination of what was once two departments. Each half of the department has its own associate managing director who leads the day-to-day work of family or Church history. In the case of Church history, Steven L. Olsen, who has a PhD in anthropology from the University of Chicago, is the associate managing director. He is also a very capable and thoughtful person. He is assisted by several dozen committed, professionally trained staff, many with advanced degrees from various disciplines, all of whom add skill and value to the work of Church history.

**Boone:** Do you have any insights or thoughts on the significance or direction of Doctrine and Covenants 21, verse 1—“Behold, there shall be a record kept among you”—and what that means to us and how it applies to the membership of the Church generally?

**Jensen:** Section 21 and the command to keep a record were revealed on the day the Church was organized. I think that fact alone evidences the significance Church history ought to merit in our lives. We often speak of the importance of doctrine and ordinances in the gospel of Jesus Christ, but I think the extensive use of historical narrative by the prophets who wrote our scriptures is also worth noting. Perhaps both doctrinal and historical content contribute to the scriptures functioning as “the word of the Lord . . . and the power of God unto salvation” (D&C 68:4).

Moreover, without the benefit of memory, our eternal perspective is seriously diminished. Occasionally the newspapers report on someone who through an accident or otherwise has lost his or her memory. Such victims of amnesia have great difficulty relating to the present, much less the future, until they recover some of their past.

Book of Mormon readers know that “remembering” is a concept that comes up again and again in that sacred book. The passage I have come to appreciate most since becoming Church historian is “And now, O man, remember, and perish not” (Mosiah 4:30). That plea from King Benjamin makes a pretty good case for the value of Church history.

But there are other reasons to concern ourselves with remembering. One is the idea that for our Father in Heaven—as it says in at least two places in scripture—“all things are present before mine eyes” (D&C 38:2; see also D&C 130:7). God is simultaneously aware of all things—past, present, and future. This comports with the scriptural definition of truth, which is a “knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24). If our quest as God’s children is to become like Him one day, then coming to know of “things as they were” provides us with a critical perspective.
Alma recognized the power of remembering “things as they were.” His incomparable sermon in Alma 5 (punctuated by a series of soul-stirring questions) begins with the question, “Have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers?” (Alma 5:6). The starting point for Alma’s efforts to motivate Church members to greater faithfulness was to take them back to their past. In looking back, we obtain a sense of identity that enables us to deal successfully with the present and maintain hope for the future.

I have one other reflection to share on Doctrine and Covenants 21:1. As every lawyer knows, if you are trying to defraud someone, the first thing you do is destroy the pertinent records. If Joseph Smith had intended to mislead the world, why would he have published a revelation commanding that “a record [be] kept”? As a result of that revelation, we have probably the best-kept records and the most extensive archival collections of any religious organization of comparable size on earth. To me, that’s strong evidence that Joseph Smith was a true prophet and desired to preserve a true record of the Restoration. As busy as he was and with all of the demands made of him, he exerted great effort from the beginning to ensure future generations would have a record of the Church’s history.

Boone: That is a great insight. Since your brief interview with President Hinckley was really pointed, specific, and direct, what have you determined in terms of your responsibilities and duties and job description as a Church historian?

Jensen: After long and prayerful consideration of pertinent scriptural passages by both the assigned General Authorities and Church history staff members, a scriptural mandate has been articulated. We feel the purpose of Church history is to help Church members make and keep their sacred covenants. The achievement of this purpose is to be accomplished in three ways:

First, Church history (in its various manifestations, that is, publications, historical sites, museum exhibits, and so forth) is to witness to the truths of the Restoration. Because our history is so rich, there are many people, places, and things we could be concerned about. Focusing on the core truths of the Restoration will guide our efforts to prioritize and accomplish what we can within the resource limitations that exist.

Second, Church history is to help us remember, in Book of Mormon terms, “the great things that the Lord [has] done for [our] fathers” (Ether 7:27). This notion is bolstered by Moroni’s admonition that before praying to know the truth of the Book of Mormon we should get ourselves in the proper spiritual frame of mind by reflecting
on all of the things God has done for His children from the time of Adam until the present day “and ponder it in [our] hearts” (Moroni 10:3). Note that the antecedent of “it” is all the things God has done for His children. Church history is to help us retain a consciousness of these things in our minds and hearts as an essential part of our personal conversion. It’s a powerful, as well as a humbling, concept.

Finally, Church history is to preserve the revealed order of the kingdom. What we have in mind here is the preservation of the revelations, documents, procedures, processes, patterns, and so on that provide order and continuity for the exercising of priesthood keys, for the proper functioning of priesthood quorums, for the performance of ordinances, and so forth—those things that are essential to salvation in the kingdom of God.

This perspective of Church history’s purposes and the role of the Church historian distinguishes our mission from the work being done by trained scholars in other research libraries, historical societies, archives, or museums. While aspiring to the highest professional standards, we who labor in the Church’s historical enterprise must seek to build faith and also bring souls to Christ. This is a noble and lofty ambition, one not easily achieved and perhaps not fully appreciated by our professional colleagues. Nevertheless, we feel it is our mandate and must be pursued.

**Boone:** You have commented extensively on the work of the Church historian. Is there anything more you would like to say about the office of Church recorder?

**Jensen:** The functions of recorder and historian are complementary. Originally, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, and their successor historian-recorders kept a historical record but also recorded such things as membership records, minutes of meetings, patriarchal blessings, and ordination certificates for priesthood offices. Over the years, for valid administrative reasons, some of these recording functions have been taken over by the Presiding Bishopric’s Office, particularly the Member and Statistical Records Division.

Nevertheless, there is still much to be done as Church recorder. In this information age, a significant duty I have is to chair the Records Management Committee of the Church. This committee is charged with creating the policies, processes, and systems that will help manage and preserve essential Church records. This includes everything from First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve meeting minutes and business transactions of Church departments to annual historical reports from the ecclesiastical units of this global Church. Because probably 60
to 70 percent of Church business is now conducted electronically, just helping create systems and procedures for the content management, preservation, and eventual disposal or retention of electronic records could take more than this recorder’s lifetime!

To me, the most solemn duty of the Church recorder is to receive from the Temple Department a record of the temple ordinances that have been performed in all temples of the Church. To assist with the preservation of these sacred records is something that has implications for time and eternity. Joseph Smith taught that “whatsoever you record on earth shall be recorded in heaven” (D&C 128:8).

**Boone:** Have you had any thoughts since you have been in this office about why you and why now and the significance of a historian-recorder being sustained when it hasn’t been done for a number of years previously?

**Jensen:** I really don’t know why the office went unfilled for a few years—actually since Elder Dean L. Larsen was released in 1997. I do know, however, that during those years Elder D. Todd Christofferson, who served as executive director of the Family and Church History Department, left nothing undone. Because the office is a constitutional or scriptural one, I think the title, if I can be worthy of it, lends a certain credence and authority to what those of us working in the Historical Department do.

This is, by the way, a very exciting time for Church history. One evidence of that is the First Presidency’s approval of a new Church History Library, which is currently under construction in Salt Lake City on the block east of the Conference Center. It will be ready for occupancy sometime in 2009. The building will total about two hundred fifty thousand square feet of space. It evidences the importance placed by the First Presidency and the Twelve on the keeping of records and the providing of access to those records.

On the content side, the Joseph Smith Papers Project being carried out under Historical Department leadership is one of the most significant historical projects of our generation. Project workers are compiling all of the critical papers, journals, diaries, sermons, business papers, legal papers, and revelations Joseph Smith produced, received, or dictated during his lifetime. It will be a ten- to fifteen-year project resulting in the publication of two dozen or more volumes and the electronic publication of several more.

In addition, a trio of historians—Richard E. Turley Jr., Ronald W. Walker, and Glen M. Leonard—working with Historical Department staff assistance, are finishing a landmark volume on the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Along with the Utah War, that tragic event has its
150th anniversary during 2007, and publication of the book sometime during this year by Oxford University Press will be a significant event.

Another development I feel supports the need for an authoritative voice for Church history at this time is the current interest in academic circles in Mormon Studies, of which Church history is an important part. Utah Valley State College and Claremont Graduate University have recently established Mormon Studies programs. Utah State University has begun a Religious Studies program that includes an examination of Mormonism and its history. Not long ago I met Douglas Davies, a scholar not of our faith who has founded a Mormon Studies program at the University of Durham in England. He holds an annual symposium on developments in Mormonism. I know that scholars at the University of Wyoming are considering the founding of a Mormon Studies program there. So there is obviously much going on in the academic world that makes the office of Church historian needful and relevant.

I also want to point out that in discharging the responsibilities of this office, I am guided and counseled by two members of the Quorum of the Twelve, Elders Russell M. Nelson and Dallin H. Oaks, who are appointed by the First Presidency to serve as Church history advisers. We meet regularly with these wise and experienced men and are blessed to have the benefit of their prophetic insights. They in turn can readily access the First Presidency on issues requiring their approval. I have great confidence in this process and know that if we follow it, Church history will be on solid ground.

**Boone:** You mentioned earlier that the Joseph Smith Papers Project will be the single most significant historical project of our generation. Why is that so?

**Jensen:** President Hinckley has said that everything we have in the Church is the lengthened shadow of Joseph Smith. He was the organizing force of what has become a global Church and the means of salvation for the entire human family. The study of his life and teachings is therefore of great interest and importance. To bring together the documents that represent his life’s work and to publish them with helpful annotation and contextual commentary will increase appreciation for his contribution to mankind. Hopefully it will also hasten the day when Joseph Smith is widely seen in his true identity as the great prophet of the Restoration. Certainly, in the future, any respectable scholar working on the beginnings of Church history will need to demonstrate a mastery of the content of these documents to be credible. Although the projected volumes will likely appeal primarily to a highly educated audience, they should also spawn a variety of derivative
products that will make information about Joseph Smith’s life available for interested parties of all educational levels.

Boone: What is your role in the process?

Jensen: My direct involvement is as chair of the editorial committee whose members review each volume as it is finalized for publication. The day-to-day work of supervising the project and of overseeing the papers is done primarily by Ronald K. Esplin, working under the direction of Steven L. Olsen and Jill Mulvay Derr. Many other talented historians and staff members have committed themselves to the success of this significant endeavor.

Boone: Elder Jensen, as we learn about and remember the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith, what are your personal feelings? What have you learned about the Prophet Joseph and his ministry?

Jensen: I stand in awe of Joseph. His actual ministry was relatively short. I look at what he accomplished in that brief time and am amazed. The results of the Joseph Smith Papers Project will give us even greater insight into his character and genius. I think at this point two things about him stand out for me.

One is how resolute Joseph was. I remember being in Nova Scotia while touring the Canada Halifax Mission a few years ago. I had never met a better mission president or group of missionaries. They were hardworking and worthy but were experiencing little success in the challenging Maritime Provinces of Canada. Finally in my attempts to support and encourage the missionaries, I remembered a quotation from the Prophet Joseph in which he said, “If I were sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia, with the Rocky Mountains piled on me, I would hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage, and I would come out on top.” That statement gave hope to that little band of missionaries, and it should give hope to all of us. Joseph Smith was definitely resolute, and we can be grateful he kept going in so many seemingly hopeless situations and came out on top.

His tenacity is impressive by any measure. Imagine him in prison. Think of the practical challenges of administering the Church with headquarters in Ohio and Missouri. Consider the effort involved in getting an orderly city to rise out of the swamps of western Illinois. And throughout these trying times he worked to be an acceptable husband and father. His gift of scripture to the world is a work of unsurpassed worth. And all of this was done under the most inconvenient and difficult of circumstances—even during times of outright opposition and persecution. It certainly makes me want to do the best I can and never complain or quibble about anything that comes my way.
The second point I wish to make about Joseph Smith is more personal. It is something that has its origin in the time my family and I served in the New York Rochester Mission (1993–95). Palmyra and the Sacred Grove are in that mission. We were frequently in the Sacred Grove and had occasion to think deeply about the First Vision. I have had a growing conviction since that time that Joseph’s honest sharing of his personal experience in the grove with God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is intended to teach us vital truths: a personal God does live; we can speak to Him in prayer; He will speak to us through the Holy Ghost and answer our prayers. This knowledge is critical, since when all is said and done, true religion consists of a relationship between each of us and our Heavenly Father, which only He and we really know about. There has to be an institutional Church with priesthood authority and saving ordinances and covenants, but all of that would be to little avail if there weren’t on the part of each of us a relationship with and feeling of accountability to a loving Heavenly Father. It is the strength of our religion, and we have Joseph Smith to thank for it.

Boone: What is the responsibility of professional historians, both members and nonmembers, in terms of reporting, recording, or preserving the history of the Church?

Jensen: I think it is to record and report Church history as honestly and accurately as possible. Nevertheless, the question is sometimes asked, “Do you tell everything?” To answer that question, I think we have to look to the purposes of Church history as we have distilled them from scripture. If we intend to witness to the truths of the Restoration, promote remembrance of God’s goodness to us, and preserve the revealed order of God’s kingdom, we are, in a real sense, building faith. I think in that process we must exercise discretion and good judgment in the telling of Church history. The audience for which the material is intended must also be taken into account.

A good guideline is provided by a statement I have heard Elder Dallin H. Oaks make, “Some things are true but not useful.” It’s really not that we have anything to hide—most facts concerning Church history are in the public domain in some form—it’s more a question of propriety and whether good will be done and faith increased if we tell it. Will it be useful?

I once read an essay entitled “What Ever Happened to Reticence?” The author made the point that it’s not unusual today to sit down to dinner with someone we have just met and within a half hour to know the intimate details of that person’s life—everything from recent surgeries to errant children! In Church history there’s good reason to be
reticent sometimes. Accurate history can be written without revealing every wart and freckle. Indeed, an unwarranted focus on small imperfections may distort history.

The responsibility we have to be judicious about the administration of historical material is also reflected in the standards we have established for access to the Church Archives. The principal restrictions deal with materials that have been catalogued as “private, sacred, or confidential.” Except for the sacred category (which typically has to do with the temple) these standards are similar to those of other collecting institutions. I know some feel the Church holds its collections a little more tightly than it should, but my observation is that we are very fair in allowing access to them.

**Boone:** What can the rank and file of the Church do to help preserve history?

**Jensen:** I think it was President Spencer W. Kimball who said that the history of the Church is really the history of its individual members. He is still remembered for urging us all to keep a record of our lives, and he left a wonderful set of journals himself. President Hinckley has also been a diligent journal keeper. So I suppose the most obvious answer to your question is that we should follow their examples by keeping journals and at some point compiling our entries into personal histories and eventually into family histories.

I also want to stress the significant role in preserving history played by Church leaders, clerks, and secretaries who are responsible for the annual histories that are to be submitted to Church headquarters by wards, stakes, and missions. These can be rich sources of local and regional history if thoughtfully and diligently compiled each year.

Quite frankly, our challenge as well as our opportunity is to raise the interest and involvement level of the average Church member in the subject of Church history. We are currently surveying various segments of our potential audience to determine which Church history offerings might be the most compelling and produce the personal engagement with Church history that we feel all Church members ought to have.

We are also working on a strategy for delivering Church history to a worldwide membership. The Internet has great potential, and our Church history Internet site (www.lds.org/churchhistory) is a good beginning. You can log on and take a virtual tour of Church historic sites, for instance. During 2006 we also established a Joseph Smith Web site (www.JosephSmith.net), which is very well designed and has had substantial use. We are also exploring ways to cooperate with the *Ensign* and *Liahona* magazines to produce regular articles on pertinent
historical topics. All of this and more, I hope, will awaken in Church members an appreciation for Church history and a desire to preserve their own family and local histories.

Someone said that a people can be no greater than its stories. I think the history of this Church from its inception to the present day consists of interesting, inspiring, and touching stories about exceptional, as well as ordinary, people. We don’t intend to rest until they have become well enough known to members throughout the world that they are used in priesthood and auxiliary lessons, recited regularly at dinner-table conversations, and told at family home evenings in every land where Latter-day Saints reside.

**Boone:** With the Church’s population balance more outside the United States, how do we help those in international areas recognize that the history we sometimes take for granted is their legacy, their history, their story?

**Jensen:** We know it is critical to consider the needs of the international Church members in all the planning and work we are doing. A few years ago, the Brethren sensed a need to provide additional historical information to Church members, and the fine volume *Our Heritage* was produced. It has been translated into over thirty-eight languages, and I know it is greatly appreciated by members living in international areas. But more needs to be done. We can’t expect international members to continue to send historical records, artifacts, and artwork to Salt Lake City to be stored in our archives or the basement of the museum unless we give something in return. As noted, some exporting of our historical treasures can occur in Church magazines and via the Internet. Many countries now have their own Church Web sites. As time and resources allow, we can provide historical material for these Web sites that will constitute modest Church histories for each country. Recently the First Presidency approved the establishment of a small museum at the Gadfield Elm Chapel in England. Opportunities to establish similar repositories in other international areas will undoubtedly arise.

We also feel an urgency to encourage local initiative in the gathering of historical materials and the writing of local, regional, and even countrywide histories. Some of this is occurring, but it needs to become more strategic and systematic. As you can see, there is yet much to accomplish.

**Boone:** Periodically we hear about handcart treks, commemorations of the Prophet Joseph Smith, or other activities taking place in areas outside the United States. But how do we teach the members in the United States about the history and experiences of the Saints in foreign lands?
Jensen: As talented as our staff people are and as generous with funding as the Brethren have been, we simply won’t be able to respond directly to every need that exists. We do hold the rich historical collections of the Church, but to turn these into the books, articles, Web pages, museum exhibits, or historical sites that potentially are needed in either the domestic or international Church is a very large undertaking.

I think much of our role has to be that of a facilitator, making the historical sources available, consulting and advising, but leaving much of the actual production work to others. Some good work is already being done. Just off the top of my head, I can think of fine histories written on the Church in Africa by Elder Alexander B. Morrison, in Russia by Gary Browning, in East Germany by Garold N. Davis, and in Mexico by F. Lamond Tullis. I would like to see more writing by native authors, but at least we’ve made a solid beginning.

There’s another issue here, however, dealing with a basic shortcoming in our technological world. There is so much information today and relatively so little knowledge. Studies and anecdotal information confirm that most adults rarely read more than one or two books a year. Our scripture reading habits as Church members may be better than that, but I doubt our Church history reading habits are. So even if we help produce narrative, artifactual, or virtual material, we still need to get a love of Church history into the hearts of our people so they will want to consume what is offered.

Boone: Elder Jensen, are there studies that need to be done by people who teach or study Church history? Are there studies we ought to be researching and writing on?

Jensen: Yes, the Church Archives contain a wealth of original sources waiting to be tapped. We hope soon to develop an approved plan for a more systematic approach to the writing of Church history. But in the meantime I invite any interested scholar from the Church Educational System, Brigham Young University, or elsewhere to contact our department for assistance in developing a project or for help with an existing one. We would be pleased to provide ideas, sources, and guidance to anyone seeking to write a major paper, a master’s thesis, or a doctoral dissertation.

To give some idea of how wide open the field is, just this past year our department has begun a cooperative effort with scholars from the Church Educational System to write an institutional history of Church education. From our point of view, it would be desirable if similar research and writing projects could be undertaken on the history of the Quorum of the Twelve, the Quorums of Seventy, and the Presiding
Bishopric, to enumerate just a few of the possibilities. Perhaps a history of the office of Church historian and recorder is also in order!

I want to emphasize that our resources aren’t reserved just for scholars and professional historians. We hope interested lay members, nonmembers, family historians, and those writing local unit histories will also take advantage of our facilities, collections, and talented staff.

**Boone:** Are there projects that the Brethren would prefer that religious educators or teachers not work on? Are there topics other than the sacred, private, and confidential that we should avoid?

**Jensen:** I can respond only for myself, but I know of no prohibitions that have been issued. It seems to me if the Brethren have authorized a “no holds barred” examination of the Mountain Meadows Massacre, any legitimate project not involving sacred, private, or confidential material might be considered.

**Boone:** A final question—what do you perceive the role of the Church History Department and the Church historian to be in the broader world of Mormon history?

**Jensen:** I see much good resulting when faithful historians, writers, and teachers add their leaven to the bread of Mormon history. Elder Neal A. Maxwell was fond of pointing out that we are not only to build up the kingdom of God but also to establish His righteousness (see D&C 1:16). His point was that for God’s kingdom to prosper, there must be a climate of general goodness or righteousness within which to operate and spread the gospel.

I think that notion applies to the climate we can help create for the advancement of Church history. The scholarship of incisive, faithful Mormon historians needs to be injected into the marketplace of ideas. Truth always does very well in that setting. I think the more receptive and open we are to a discussion of the historical conclusions of others, the more our own ideas will be considered. This creates a healthier climate for advancing God’s purposes and for truth to prevail in the long run.

© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

---

**Notes**

Notwithstanding Moses’s experience at the burning bush, he was still young in his understanding of the God of Israel at the beginning of his mission.
Teaching and learning about the Creation should be a spiritually edifying and awe-inspiring experience. It easily devolves, however, into much less. The Creation is a difficult matter to grasp. Elder Russell M. Nelson notes: “It is difficult for mortal minds to comprehend the majesty of the Creation. It is much easier for us to think about good things to eat or fun things to do. . . . The creation of man and woman was wondrous and great. So was the creation of the earth as their mortal dwelling place.”

If we don’t follow the Lord’s pattern for sharing the Creation as found in the scriptures, we risk missing the powerful influence that learning of the Creation can have in the lives of our students.

Each time the Lord shares a detailed account of the Creation (see Moses 2–3; Abraham 4–5) or shows a vision of His “creations” (see Moses 6), He accomplishes at least two purposes: (1) to introduce Himself and more fully teach us of His nature and (2) to help us better understand who we are in our relationship with Him. From the beginning, God and His prophets have followed this same pattern. Thus, the Lord’s inclusion of the account of the Creation throughout the scriptures serves, among other things, as a model of how we can help our students understand the majesty, power, and dominion of God and our relationship with Him. It is easy to get lost in the sequencing of events or the controversial aspects of the Creation or to do a cursory overview so we can get to the Fall or the Flood. How much better to teach the Creation account as the Lord and His prophets have for millennia—as recorded in the scriptures.
The circumstances surrounding the scriptural accounts of the Creation give us clues about how we might more fully use the Creation account to help our students draw nearer to God. A vision or description of the Creation can be found once in the book of Genesis and three times in the Pearl of Great Price (see Moses 1–3, 6; Abraham 3–5). Though each Creation account adds to our understanding, one of the difficulties we face in teaching the Creation from Genesis is lack of context. Genesis begins with a third-person narrative of a sequence of creative events. We are not told who is speaking or who the audience is. Nowhere in the ancient manuscripts is Moses mentioned as the author, nor is Jehovah identified as the narrator of the Creation account. This lack of context can easily be mirrored in our approach to teaching the Creation.

It is far better to begin with the context of the inspired version found in the book of Moses. The book of Moses begins with a first-person account of Jehovah speaking to one of His prophets, Moses. Moses’s experience begins with an introduction from Jehovah, including two dramatic visions of God’s creations. This led Moses to ask two simple questions: Why? and By what? (see Moses 1:30). In other words, Why was everything created? and How was it done? In answer to these questions, the Lord revealed more details.

The account in the book of Moses provides the context of when and where this revelation occurred. This context helps us understand why the revelation was given. Verse 1 tells us that Jehovah spoke with Moses on a high mountain, and verses 17 and 25 provide the rest of the needed context. We learn from verse 17 that this glorious revelation came to Moses after he received his call to redeem Israel at Sinai. Verse 25 tells us that Moses will “be made stronger than many waters,” a clear allusion to the parting of the Red Sea, a future event. In other words, Moses was in the midst of trying to redeem Israel at the time he received this revelation. An understanding of these circumstances helps us realize the difficult conditions in which Moses was called to labor. Though raised in the courts of Pharaoh by Pharaoh’s own daughter, Moses was forced to flee for his life as a result of killing an Egyptian taskmaster. Moses fled to Midian and began the life of a shepherd in exile (see Exodus 2:11–15). While living in these unsettling circumstances, he was called to deliver Israel.

Consider Moses’s situation. He was called to free Israel from one of the most powerful nations in the world. Pharaoh commanded a vast and mighty army. Moses was a shepherd. It hardly seemed possible for Moses to fulfill such a call in these circumstances. Moses needed to understand better what his resources were and, most importantly,
just who “I Am” was (see Exodus 3:14). Notwithstanding Moses’s experience at the burning bush, he was still young in his understanding of the God of Israel at the beginning of his mission. The household of Pharaoh believed in a pantheon of largely specialized deities. This likely would have been part of Moses’s upbringing. It seems clear that the Lord uses the Creation account to more fully introduce Himself to Moses—to help Moses understand who he was in relation to God.

Later in the book of Moses, the Lord revealed Himself to Enoch. Once again a prophet is called to accomplish a great task: to call a very wicked people to repentance and establish Zion. Enoch clearly felt overwhelmed at his call: “Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech; wherefore am I thy servant?” (Moses 6:31). Once again, that prophet was prepared for his mission through a vision of the “spirits that God had created” (Moses 6:36). As with Moses, an account of the Lord’s creations helped Enoch more fully understand who the Lord was and who Enoch was (a son of God). Interestingly, as Enoch began his ministry among a people who seem to have lost their knowledge of God, the first thing he taught, after revealing the very existence of God, was the Creation. He taught them: “The heavens he made; the earth is his footstool; and the foundation thereof is his. Behold, he laid it, an host of men hath he brought in upon the face thereof” (Moses 6:44).

We see this pattern repeated in the book of Abraham. Abraham lived with his idolatrous father amid a people who had abandoned the true worship of God. Like the people Enoch was called to teach, Abraham’s audience had lost their understanding of who God was. Abraham attempted to call both his family and those around them back to God but had no success. Abraham was ultimately saved from being offered as a sacrifice to heathen gods and directed to flee. As Abraham journeyed through the land of Canaan toward Egypt, the Lord appeared to him and, in Abraham’s words, “told me of the works which his hands had made; and he said unto me: My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I will show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof” (Abraham 3:11–12).

Once again, the Lord revealed Himself to His prophet and expanded that prophet’s understanding and readiness to accomplish a great task. The Lord told Abraham, “I show these things unto thee before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all these words” (Abraham
3:15). Once again, a prophet was to share what he learned about God through the Creation with the people he was sent to teach.

One last example of how the Lord’s servants have used the Creation is from the Book of Mormon. In this case, we don’t have a detailed description or vision of the Creation. We simply have the example of God’s servants using the Creation to introduce God to His children. Ammon and Aaron went to teach the Lamanites, a people who had lost most of their knowledge of the true and living God. When the time came for Ammon to teach Lamoni, the first thing Ammon did after establishing the reality of God was to teach Lamoni that God created all things. Ammon said:

Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit?
And he said, Yea.
And Ammon said: This is God. And Ammon said unto him again: Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in heaven and in the earth?
And he said: Yea. . . .
And Ammon said: Yea, and he looketh down upon all the children of men; and he knows all the thoughts and intents of the heart; for by his hand were they all created from the beginning. (Alma 18:26–32)

Aaron, his brother, followed the same model when he taught Lamoni’s father:

And the king said: Is God that Great Spirit that brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem?
And Aaron said unto him: Yea, he is that Great Spirit, and he created all things both in heaven and in earth. Believest thou this?
And he said: Yea, I believe that the Great Spirit created all things, and I desire that ye should tell me concerning all these things, and I will believe thy words.
And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the scriptures unto the king—how God created man after his own image. (Alma 22:9–12)

Through coming to know the true and living God and their relationship with Him, the Lamanites were prepared to throw off the veil of unbelief under which they had lived for almost five hundred years.

Thus, God and His prophets have used the Creation account to help us better understand who He is and who we are in relationship with Him. To better understand how following the Lord’s pattern in teaching the Creation can help our students, let us examine the principles of this pattern as found in the scriptures as well as from the words of our modern prophets.
An Introduction to God

The Lectures on Faith teach that without a correct understanding of God’s character, perfections, and attributes, we cannot exercise faith unto salvation. How can we obtain a correct understanding of God’s character? The Prophet Joseph indicated that the way to understand the nature of God is by going back to the beginning: the Creation.

He said: “In the first place, I wish to go back to the beginning—to the morn of creation. There is the starting point for us to look to, in order to understand and be fully acquainted with the mind, purposes and decrees of the Great Elohim, who sits in yonder heavens as he did at the creation of this world. It is necessary for us to have an understanding of God himself in the beginning. If we start right, it is easy to go right all the time; but if we start wrong, we may go wrong, and it be a hard matter to get right.”

When Jehovah introduced Himself to Moses in the “prologue to the creation” (see Moses 1), He shared several crucial aspects of his nature. In verse 3, He teaches us that He is almighty and endless—or infinite in nature. He continues in verse 6, teaching that He is omniscient. All these attributes are tied together and made more meaningful through the knowledge gained in verse 4: He is our Father. These verses serve as the beginning of the Lord’s introduction of Himself to Moses in this record.

God is almighty. Recalling the context of Moses’s introduction, we realize that he had already been called to free Israel from Pharaoh, one of the most powerful men on earth at the time. Evidence of Pharaoh’s might abounded from his powerful armies to his pyramids. How was Moses supposed to oppose such power? He couldn’t—at least not on his own. The answer lies in the power of Him who called Moses. It is one thing for the Lord simply to tell Moses that He is almighty. How much greater the impact to show Moses? Pharaoh builds pyramids, but God creates worlds. Pharaoh can slay thousands, but God can and did create “all the children of men which are, and which were created” (Moses 1:8), including Pharaoh. Other than the Atonement itself, is there a more awe-inspiring display of God’s almighty power than the Creation? In this light, freeing Israel doesn’t look so unlikely after all. It is still an unfair fight, but now the scales are tipped decidedly in favor of Moses’s success.

It may seem unnecessary to convince our students that God is almighty, because most have been taught this since they were young. In practice, however, we all seem to need a reminder of this important
truth just as much as Moses did. How many of us fail to heed the Lord’s counsel in our lives? Though it is doubtful that many would articulate the reason for our lack of obedience as disbelief that God has power to fulfill His promises, it nevertheless remains true that we at times trust in our own might (and mind) more than God’s. We believe that God has all power, but knowing our own imperfections, we doubt that He would exercise that power on our behalf. Obviously, cursory knowledge of God and His loving nature are not enough to move us to action.

Elder Richard G. Scott explains: “Sometimes, we foolishly recite facts about the Father and the Son, mechanically. . . . Yet they continue to love us perfectly, each one of us, individually. Yes, they are all-powerful and all-knowing; their works extend eternally, yet their love for each of us is personal, knowing, uncompromising, endless, perfect.” We must come to know that God not only desires our salvation but also has the power and the love to bring it to pass.

Elder Loren C. Dunn teaches: “Faith is the ability to recognize the Lord as all-powerful and the giver of all blessings. As King Benjamin put it: ‘Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth . . . ’ (Mosiah 4:9).” If God can create universes, He can help us with our day-to-day lives. As God had power to create us, He also has power to save us.

**God is infinite and eternal.** For God to create this temporal earth as well as the mortal inhabitants thereof, He must exist outside the boundaries and limitations of mortality. In other words, God must be infinite in nature. One definition of *infinite* is “having no boundaries or limits.” The God we worship transcends the bounds of this mortal life and is truly “without beginning of days or end of years” (Moses 1:3).

The Lord taught this profound truth to Joseph Smith: “There is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them” (D&C 20:17). God’s infinite and eternal nature extends beyond creating to saving. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that “the work of redemption must be infinite and eternal; it must be done by an infinite being; God himself must atone for the sins of the world.”

As God is infinite and eternal by nature, His creations also share in His infinite nature and have no end (see Moses 1:4–5, 29, 33, 35, 38; Abraham 3:12). This is true not only quantitatively (He continues to create) but also qualitatively (His creations have an infinite nature). We, as God’s children, though temporarily housed in mortal bodies,
are immortal beings. The Lord shared this truth with Abraham (see Abraham 3:21–26). Our immortal, infinite nature acts as a homing device. It beckons us to connect with our infinite Source. This is especially true when stretched to the limits of our capabilities.

Elder B. H. Roberts explains: “For the performance of extraordinary duties, for the accomplishment of high purposes, the soul, conscious of its own limitations, reaches out for help; deep calls to deep; the infinite in man seeks union with the infinite in God, and, on occasion, and when necessary for the achievement of God’s purposes, we have reason to believe that the Lord deigns to communicate his mind and will unto men.”

Not only is God infinite in His being but also He is infinite in all of His other attributes as well. It is vital to understand that when it comes to His children, there are no limits to God’s knowledge, power, or attributes. This understanding allows us to develop true faith in Him. There is nothing we will ever need from God for which He will be found wanting.

President Ezra Taft Benson teaches that true faith is made up of this trust: “Faith in Jesus Christ consists of complete reliance on Him. As God, He has infinite power, intelligence, and love. There is no human problem beyond His capacity to solve. Because He descended below all things (see D&C 122:8), He knows how to help us rise above our daily difficulties.”

Think of what knowing that God is infinite and eternal must have meant to Moses as he sought to redeem Israel from Egypt or to Abraham as he sought for the promised land. Think of what it can mean to our students as they try not only to survive but also to thrive in a world surfeited with evil. No wonder the Lord used the Creation to help both Abraham and Moses understand who they were! It will likewise help our students get to know God’s infinite nature, capacity, and desire to bring to pass our immortality and eternal life.

God is omniscient. After the Lord said that He was all-powerful and infinite, He said, “All things are present with me, for I know them all” (Moses 1:6). God knows all there is to know to save His children. He knows the nature of all things because He created all things.

Elder James E. Talmage likewise teaches that “God is Omniscient—By Him matter has been organized and energy directed. He is therefore the Creator of all things that are created; and ‘Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.’ His power and His wisdom are alike incomprehensible to man, for they are infinite. Being Himself eternal and perfect, His knowledge cannot be otherwise
than infinite.” The Creation account thus becomes an eloquent witness of God’s omniscience.

It was essential for Moses, Abraham, and Enoch to know that God knows all things. What if God were only guessing or hoping that Moses would succeed in the work God had called him to do? How could Moses, or for that matter any of us, have faith in a God who might one day say, “Oops, I must have been mistaken.” This is true not only for our day-to-day needs but also for our eternal needs.

Elder Oscar W. McConkie, father of Bruce R. McConkie, once asked, “How can a man have faith enough to have salvation if he does not believe that God is all-powerful, or that he knows all things?” As President Harold B. Lee explains, this knowledge is the beginning point of any relationship with God: “Now, if you will just keep that in mind [that God is all powerful and omniscient] you have a beginning point, you have a relationship with Him. We are His son, His daughter. He knows us. He knows the very things and the times before appointed, and the place where we would live, and the times in which we would live. So in Him only can we place full trust.”

Like Moses, Enoch, and Abraham, we must know that God has all knowledge; only then can we exercise sufficient faith to do what is required of us. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explains:

At times, we are taken to the very edge of our faith; we teeter at the edge of our trust. Perhaps, even as Jesus did on the cross, we in our own small way may feel forgotten and forsaken. To go to the very edge is possible, of course, only when we believe in an omniscient and omnipotent God. When we understand that all things are present before His eyes and that He knows all things past, present, and future, then we can trust ourselves to Him as we clearly could not to a less than omniscient god who is off somewhere in the firmament doing further research. (D&C 38:2; Moses 1:6.) “The Lord knoweth all things from the beginning; wherefore, he prepareth a way to accomplish all his works among the children of men; for behold, he hath all power unto the fulfilling of all his words.”

Some sincere individuals question whether God can know all things. It has been suggested that God’s knowledge of all things is limited to His creations. Whether it is argued that God knows all things or just all things pertaining to His creations, the results are the same for us. We can have faith that He knows all things pertaining to our salvation and thus have explicit faith in Him. Though it may be impossible to understand how God knows all things, we have the testimony of scriptures and many of his prophets. Possibly the clearest statement on the subject comes
from the *Lectures on Faith*: “Without the knowledge of all things God would not be able to save any portion of his creatures; for it is by reason of the knowledge which he has of all things, from the beginning to the end, that enables him to give that understanding to his creatures by which they are made partakers of eternal life; and if it were not for the idea existing in the minds of men that God has all knowledge it would be impossible for them to exercise faith in him.”

How important it is for our students to understand this foundational truth! Elder Richard L. Evans says:

> Think what it would be worth to students, to young people who are torn between conflicting theories and teachings that change from time to time, with the many disagreements there are even among the experts, to be encouraged to search, to seek for truth, to know that the Lord God, whose infinite intelligence embraces the whole universe, is the source of all truth, and to know that there is no point or purpose in losing faith because of conflicting theories, because time and patience and research and revelation will sometime see them all resolved. After all, eternity is a long time, and there is infinitely much that men do not know. Why be disturbed about the little that we think we know. Many theories once thought to be true have since been set aside, and others will be.\(^{18}\)

*God is our Father.* We learn one truth regarding the nature of God through the Creation account more clearly than almost anything else: God is our Father. After telling Moses that He is almighty, infinite, and omniscient, God gave Moses this stunningly simple yet important revelation: “Behold, thou art my son” (Moses 1:4). Throughout the Creation accounts, we are assured that God is our Father and that His work is our exaltation. In the books of Moses and Abraham, God continually refers to Moses and Abraham as “my son” (see Moses 1:4, 6–7, 40; Abraham 1:17; 3:12). He is our Father, and we are His children. This final piece of revealed knowledge is the capstone that makes all else we know about Him life-altering. Without our having the knowledge that God is our Father, God’s almighty, infinite, and omniscient nature would not necessarily be helpful or comforting. What if an almighty God didn’t like us? What if His whole purpose and existence were not to lead us to exaltation? What if He did like us but was busy doing other things? How good it is to know that “God has no distracting hobbies off somewhere in the universe.”\(^{19}\)

The Lord informed Moses that, as our Father, God’s sole work is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Everything else is a lower priority.\(^{20}\) As Elder Dennis E. Simmons explains: “He has already achieved godhood. Now His only
objective is to help us—to enable us to return to Him and be like Him and live His kind of life eternally.” He loves us and will do everything possible to help us become like Him and return home to live with Him. This knowledge, combined with the other attributes of God already discovered or deepened through the Creation account, should give us the courage and strength to do all that God requires of us.

President Marion G. Romney says, “Having such knowledge, one is assured that God, although infinite and eternal, the framer of heavens and the earth and all things that in them are, being the possessor of all power, all wisdom, and all understanding, being more intelligent than all other beings, is, nevertheless an individual—an understanding, kind, and loving parent ready to hear and minister to the needs of his children—that he is not merely some unthinkable, unknowable, indefinable, far-off, distant force.”

An Introduction to Ourselves

Through more fully comprehending the nature of God, we are better able to understand our own nature. We must comprehend our own nature if we are to live up to the potential within us. President Boyd K. Packer teaches that “we all live far below our privileges.” Part of the challenge is that at times we lack a correct understanding of our nature. By studying the Creation account, we come to understand our true nature more fully. This helps us live worthy and true to our full potential. Three aspects of our nature that the Creation accounts illuminate are that we are God’s children, that we have a dual nature, and that we have a work to accomplish in this life.

We are God’s children. The corresponding doctrine to God being our Father is that we are His children. In the beginning, the Lord said to Adam, “Behold, thou art my son” (Moses 1:4). The Lord also declared to Enoch: “Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons” (Moses 6:68). God refers to Moses, or Moses refers to himself, as a son of God seven times in the book of Moses. Finally, in the book of Abraham, the Lord also refers to Abraham as “my son” (Abraham 3:12). President Marion G. Romney teaches that this is the most important knowledge available to mortals. Such knowledge is beyond the ken of the uninspired mind. Neither logic, science, philosophy, nor any other field of worldly learning has ever been, or ever will be, able to find it out. . . . Fortunately for us, as has already been shown, it has been so revealed repeatedly from Adam until today. The aspirations, desires, and motivations of one who accepts, believes, and
by the power of the Holy Spirit obtains a witness to the truth that he is a begotten son or daughter unto God differs from the aspirations of him who believes otherwise, as the growing vine differs from the severed branch.25

Once we gain a basic knowledge of our divine heritage, we must deepen our understanding of what this actually means in our daily life. How often have most members of the Church sung the words to the children’s hymn “I Am a Child of God” without really drinking deeply of the meaning? President Gordon B. Hinckley asks us if we really understand the significance of this doctrine: “I challenge every one of you who can hear me to rise to the divinity within you. Do we really realize what it means to be a child of God, to have within us something of the divine nature? . . . We can either subdue the divine nature and hide it so that it finds no expression in our lives, or we can bring it to the front and let it shine through all that we do.”26 Very few places in the scriptures provide a better opportunity to emphasize and deepen an understanding of our divine heritage than the Creation accounts. In each one, God consistently emphasizes that we are His children and that the entire purpose of the Creation is our exaltation.

A deep and abiding testimony that we are children of God will help us and our students live up to the “infinite capacities to grow spiritually and become more like Him.”27 It is a knowledge that protects as well as directs. Our spiritual security increases as we come to sense more deeply our identity as a child of God.

Sheri L. Dew teaches that “the more clearly we understand our divine destiny, the more immune we become to Satan.”28 This is evident in how Moses was able to overcome Satan’s attack in the first chapter of the book of Moses (see Moses 1:12–23). One other benefit that comes to us as a result of understanding our divine parentage is we treat those around us differently. How we treat each other is determined by who we think we are.29 As Elder Maxwell teaches, “We learn who other mortals really are—our spiritual brothers and sisters, not functions, rivals, or enemies.”30

We are dual beings. In Moses 3, we learn that we were created spiritually before we were created physically (see Moses 3:1–9). Each of us lived with our heavenly parents as spirit beings before we were born on this earth.31 This means that in addition to having a physical, mortal body, we each have an eternal spirit. Even more elemental than this, before our birth as spirit children of heavenly parents, we existed coeternally with God as intelligences.32 Truly, we are much more than mere mortals. Our birth into mortality is simply the clothing of our
immortal spirits with a physical, mortal body. This truth, beautifully taught through the scriptural Creation accounts as well as through the words of our modern prophets, is vitally important for a correct understanding of our true nature. Sadly, far too few of us recognize this important truth.\(^{33}\)

Our dual nature, spiritual as well as physical, connects us to God. President David O. McKay teaches that “at some period of his life everyone is possessed with an irresistible desire to know his relationship to the Infinite. He realizes that he is not just a physical object that is to be tossed for a short time from bank to bank, only to be submerged finally in the everflowing stream of life. There is something within him which urges him to rise above himself, to control his environment, to master the body and all things physical and live in a higher and more beautiful world.”\(^{34}\) This truth helps us understand why “we sometimes feel out of harmony or in conflict” in this physical world we currently inhabit.\(^{35}\) As has been said, we are not physical beings trying to have a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a temporary mortal experience.

*We have a work to do.* Each time God related the Creation account to Enoch, Abraham, and Moses, it was in connection with a mission or a work they were required to accomplish. Enoch was to create Zion, Abraham was to establish a covenant with God that would be passed on to all God’s children, and Moses was to redeem Israel from Egypt. A closer look at each of these “missions” reveals that they are all simply subsets of God’s ultimate work, the eternal exaltation of His children. God’s work and glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Through coming to know more clearly the nature of God as well as our own nature, we are better prepared to assist in this glorious work.

It should come as no surprise that our work is to become partners with our Heavenly Father in our own as well as in our brothers’ and sisters’ exaltation. If our goal is to become like Him, we must “think what he thinks, to feel what he feels, to have the power he possesses, to comprehend the truths he understands, and to do what he does.”\(^{36}\) As Elder Maxwell notes, “For us, the goal is clearly to make God’s work our own.”\(^{37}\)

This partnership is nothing new. Elder John A. Widtsoe teaches that we entered this partnership in our premortal life: “In . . . the day of the great council, we made a certain agreement with the Almighty. The Lord proposed a plan, conceived by him. We accepted it. Since the plan is intended for all men, we became parties to the salvation of every person under that plan. We agreed, right then and there, to be not only
saviours for ourselves but measurably, saviours for the whole human family. We went into a partnership with the Lord. The working out of the plan became then not merely the Father’s work, and the Saviour’s work, but also our work.”38

Conclusion

Elder McConkie teaches that the truths about God and the plan of salvation are not gained by the wisdom of men. They are had by us “because God has spoken in this day, and has given these truths again, by the same direct revelation that he gave them in times of old.”39

The revelations of God’s creative work, both in Genesis and more particularly in the Pearl of Great Price, make it possible for us to come to know God and His plan in ways that lead us to greatly marvel and wonder. If we are to “grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created [us]” (Mosiah 4:12), what better material to study than His revealed accounts of the Creation? Though we have much to choose from when we study and teach the Creation, we will be wise if we follow the example of the Lord and His prophets in how they have used the Creation in the scriptures. Each time the Lord has shared an account of the Creation through vision or word, it has been in the context of more fully introducing Himself to His prophets and preparing them for a great work. Through these accounts, we come to see God in all of His majesty, power, and dominion. It can and should truly be an awe-inspiring and spiritually life-changing experience.38

Notes

34. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, October 1928, 37.
Night of Blood and Horror: Thoughts on the Trolley Square Shootings

Elder Alexander B. Morrison

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

Soon after the collapse of the Teton Dam in 1976, President Spencer W. Kimball spoke at an extraordinary meeting in Rexburg, Idaho, close to the area of destruction and suffering. Beginning his message of compassion and consolation, the prophet proclaimed, “I know there are times when you would want to give up, or to weep, or to yield, but you have got to stand steady as an example to others.”1 His words serve as a somber reminder of the stark truth that we live in a world of unpredictable death and violence, a world where tears and suffering are commonplace and where temporal safety cannot be assumed nor assured.

Early in the evening of February 12, 2007, a man walked into Trolley Square, a shopping mall in Salt Lake City, and began firing a shotgun at patrons, apparently at random. Within a few minutes, five innocent shoppers were killed and four others seriously wounded. Thanks to the quick and courageous efforts of law enforcement officers, including an off-duty policeman from Ogden, Utah, who was having an early Valentine’s Day dinner at the mall with his wife, the shooter was killed before harming other bystanders. He was identified as an eighteen-year-old Bosnian refugee who had lived in Salt Lake City for several years, having escaped the violence and bloodshed of his native country.

The whole affair, from first to last shot, lasted only six minutes, but the effects left the whole community shell-shocked and will reverberate throughout the years. Healing is a slow and uneven process at best. Still, we should not despair. From pain and sorrow can come patience, faith, humility, and enhanced understanding of the purposes of life and death.
The primary effect on survivors of a tragedy such as this is a sense of loss: the literal loss of a life on the part of family and friends of the victims, coupled with a perceived loss of safety, security, and control—for the victims and the community as a whole. What we have considered as the fundamental truths on which we all base our perceptions of reality are shaken, and we experience a decreased sense of peace, or as some have put it, a disruption in our internal homeostasis.

To help reclaim the sense of peace that we all desire in our daily lives, there are important lessons to be learned from this tragedy. These lessons apply to all of us, those directly affected and community members alike. Unless we learn to apply them wisely, the sheer horror of the event and others of similar ilk may crush us. But that need not be so. I believe the lessons to be learned include the following.

**Our Perspective Changes the Meaning of the Experience**

Even amid tears and sorrow, eternal principles prevail. It is so easy to forget when caught up in a maelstrom of pain and grief, of blood and suffering, that death is not the end of existence. Our lives are not bounded by the cradle on one end and the grave on the other. We are eternal beings for whom our “second estate” is but a way-stop on an eternal journey, schooling intended to bring us closer to God and help us become more like Him.

Were we mortals able to close the doors upon sorrow and distress—to banish forever suffering, disappointment, and injustice—we would, perhaps unwittingly, destroy the fundamental principle upon which a war was fought in heaven and upon which all human development rests. To force all to be righteous, to do away with wickedness, foolishness, or evil—by force if necessary—would destroy moral agency and annul the whole of the Father’s great plan of happiness. The truth is that, from an eternal perspective, the adversity which tries our souls and the times which call us to stumble alone through deep waters of sorrow, confused and uncomprehending, are essential to our eternal progression. As Elder Orson F. Whitney eloquently stated: “No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God . . . and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire.”

2
As we think of the innocent dead and wounded, their dreams and aspirations for tomorrow forever altered, how easy it would be to cry in our agony, “How could God do this to the innocent? Why didn’t He prevent it? Has He the power to do so?” Of course He has the power—He is omnipotent, possessing all power to save us from pain, to protect us, even to shield us from death if He will. But He will not. I believe that although He is not the cause, He permits tragedy to occur, knowing that suffering, even death itself, opens the doors to glorious opportunities while maintaining the vital principle of moral agency.

It is not that I—or anyone else either—know exactly why God does what He does. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8). But with Nephi of old, I cling to one sure and certain truth: I do not know the meaning of all things, but “I know that he [God] loveth his children” (1 Nephi 11:17). Someday, when we are further along in our eternal journey, when we are wiser and better able to understand God and His ways, when we are blessed with an eternal perspective and not shackled by the myopia of mortality, I am confident we will know with perfect clarity that which we now see as “through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12). We can take comfort from that, even as we admit that we don’t always know why bad things happen to good people.

Provide Opportunities to Talk About What Happened

It is important for all of us to understand that venting intense emotions through tears or words is an important part of healing. No one who has witnessed the results of mass criminal violence is unaffected by it. Those who witness the violent death or serious injury of others or who suffer the murder of a loved one have a likelihood of intense and prolonged emotional, behavioral, and physical reactions causing high levels of distress. Though effects usually fade over time, periods of difficulty may occur intermittently for years to come. Though usually seen in less dramatic fashion, these effects extend outward like ripples in a dark pond, affecting the whole community of innocent and unsuspecting people.

Thus, if we are to heal as individuals and as a community, we must do all that we can to encourage people of all ages to talk frankly and honestly about their feelings and fears regarding what happened at Trolley Square. Parents especially must seize every opportunity, regardless of the time it takes, to listen carefully to their children. In doing so, they must listen not only to what is said about frightening and confusing events but also to the emotions behind what is said and to the worries and fears which, though perhaps unexpressed initially,
need to be verbalized and not repressed if healing is to occur. This is best done by talking, sharing, and comparing. It is a time for expressing love, affection, and gratitude for others. It is a time when families can draw closer together and when parents can admit that they too were frightened and confused and that there are no easy answers to events which seem so monstrously unfair and random.

C. S. Lewis’s wise advice to parents of children struggling to understand a world that is often frightening and confusing bears repetition:

Those who say that children must not be frightened may mean two things. They may mean (1) that we must not do anything likely to give the child those haunting, disabling, pathological fears against which ordinary courage is helpless: in fact, phobias. His mind must, if possible, be kept clear of things he can’t bear to think of. Or they may mean (2) that we must try to keep out of his mind the knowledge that he is born into a world of death, violence, wounds, adventure, heroism and cowardice, good and evil. If they mean the first I agree with them: but not if they mean the second. The second would indeed be to give children a false impression and feed them on escapism in the bad sense. There is something ludicrous in the idea of so educating a generation which is born to the . . . atomic bomb. Since it is so likely that they will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of brave knights and heroic courage. Otherwise you are making their destiny not brighter but darker.

Though it is not only wise but necessary to talk about the frightening events which have left us confused and apprehensive, it is also unwise to suggest either that such terrible things could never happen to your family members or that what happened to others is of no real consequence because they were strangers to us. One of the greatest truths in all scripture is the reminder that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26). What happened to strangers of course matters to all of us! They are our brothers and sisters, bound to us by the indissoluble ties of shared humanity and filial responsibility. We must—if we are ever to overcome the fears which separate us from others—weep and mourn together, share each other’s burdens and sorrows, pray for each other, give and receive comfort as needed, and, in the process, realize more fully than ever before that we are all the children of God (see Mosiah 18:8–10).

It is important to note that there is a difference between calm discussion and candid admission of fears and anxieties on the one hand, and morbid, pathological pandering to fear and horror on the other. We must, if we are to help heal each other, cling to the first and resolutely reject the second. As C. S. Lewis wisely said, “Since it is so likely that [children] will meet cruel enemies, let them at least have heard of
brave knights and heroic courage.” So parents and other adults should take care to make certain that the children for whom they are responsible learn of the multitude of heroes, both honored and unsung, in the tragic events of February 12, 2007. There are, of course, many: police officers, nurses, shoppers, shopkeepers—the list is too long to recount. They are the “brave knights” of whom Lewis spoke, who deserve to be honored by all of us.

**Reestablish Family Patterns**

Though there certainly “is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1), we must do all we can—after taking the time needed to mourn, weep, pray, listen deeply, and admit our fears—to then reestablish family patterns. After the collapse of the Teton Dam, President Kimball asked parents to “gather their children around them in family home evenings in which they can share their fears, their joys, and their experiences . . . and to plan together for the future.” Said he, “We cannot overstress the importance of reestablishing family patterns.” Part of the reestablishment of family routines is the need for wholesome recreation that restores and soothes troubled hearts and souls.

None of this should be considered an attempt to cut short the time needed to mourn, grieve, and counsel together. Far from it: we must not cut short the questioning and the grieving. We must not do an injustice to everyone involved by being too ready to run ahead with life as usual. But that being said, we help to instill hope and restore trust as we build upon the spiritual bedrock of prayer, blessings, family councils, and so on. I reiterate: even in tragedy, eternal principles prevail!

**Avoid Blaming the Perpetrator or Anyone Else**

Feelings of anger after an episode of violence, which by its very nature is frightening and confusing, are natural responses to the stress involved. But only in refusing to play the “blame game” can we ever find peace. It is not the responsibility or even the right of any of us to attempt to ascribe motives to the young man who was the Trolley Square gunman. I believe we will never really know in this life why he did what he did. He is dead and cannot tell us. He left no papers or journals. As Christians, we must pray for his soul and for his grieving, confused family, who will never in this world, I think, fully understand his motives.

It does no good to play pseudo-psychological games as to his motives. The horrors of blood and violence he had witnessed as a
youngster in Bosnia may or may not have been significantly instrumental in conditioning him to commit similar violence just before his death. We simply don’t know, and it does little good to speculate.

Our task is both simple and profoundly difficult. Its essence is found in these words of the Almighty: “I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men” (D&C 64:10). Only as we do so—as individuals and as a community—can we heal and make sense of a world which, without forgiveness, would be a grim and grisly place, a veritable jungle indeed.

An integral part of not assigning blame must be a resolute intention not to stereotype or caricature the perpetrator of this violence. He did not kill because he was a Muslim or because he was a Bosnian. To assume so is to embrace the natural man, who is an enemy of God (see Mosiah 3:19) and who demands blood for blood and an eye for an eye. Furthermore, insulting a great religion and a great people is calumny of the worse sort.

Join in Symbolic Acts of Love and Concern That Help Heal the Community

How gratifying and reassuring it is to note that the people of Utah, as well as many from far away, have come forward with widespread expressions of love and offerings of help. These have been offered both to the families of victims and that of the perpetrator. Community events, including widely publicized and well-attended funerals, have helped to define the love and concern felt by all. Friends and family have celebrated the lives of the deceased, and various funds have been set up by local banks in aid of victims and their families. All of these efforts are of great importance not only for what they do but also for what they symbolize—a caring community that lays aside its differences and pulls together in a crisis for the common good.

In summary, we are still reeling in shock and disbelief in the aftermath of the terrible violence in Trolley Square. As we struggle to heal from the grievous harm done, let us all remember that even in the midst of tears and sorrow, eternal principles prevail. Only by accepting an eternal perspective on life can we overcome grief, horror, and disbelief and finally find peace. Essential parts of the healing process include providing opportunities to talk frankly and honestly about what happened, listening carefully to others, acknowledging their fears and our own, reestablishing family routines of prayer and councils, and learning to forgive unconditionally and without exception.
I deeply appreciate the comments of Fred Riley, Commissioner of Family Services, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Dr. Randy K. Hardman, both of whom read the manuscript and made wise comments, which significantly improved it.


Studying the scriptures of the Restoration together with the Old Testament can give us a powerful witness of the relevance of teachings given by the Lord throughout all dispensations.

Courtesy of Visual Resources Library
© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
Old Testament Relevancy Reaffirmed by Restoration Scripture

Scott C. Esplin

Scott C. Esplin (scott_esplin@byu.edu) is an assistant professor of Church history and doctrine.

Many modern readers of the Old Testament find seemingly obsolete religious practices such as strict dietary commands, animal sacrifice, temple worship, and availability of the priesthood difficult to understand. Because these things are so different from current practices in the Church, some readers find the Old Testament not only difficult to understand but also difficult to apply in our day.

However, though methods or procedures change, doctrines remain fixed. Although much has changed since the days of the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, additional revelation reaffirms the constancy and relevancy of their ancient teachings. Unfortunately, doctrines and principles common in ancient and modern scripture may be missed when they are studied in isolation from each other. Elder Neal A. Maxwell warns religious educators about this hazard: “Sometimes I fear that we teach the scriptures in isolation from each other, when in fact, if you will make multiple use of them . . . you will not only make the teaching moment more significant but you will also be witnessing to the congruency and relevance of all the scriptures. You will find, as one would expect, a powerful conceptual consistency that flows throughout all the scriptures, sometimes even verbatim language, because they come from the same source.” Studying the scriptures of the Restoration together with the Old Testament can give us a powerful witness of the relevance of teachings given by the Lord throughout all dispensations.
Concerning these common themes, Elder Russell M. Nelson testifies: “Constancy amid change is assured by heavenly personages, plans, and principles. Our trust can be safely anchored to them. They provide peace, eternal progression, hope, freedom, love, and joy to all who will be guided by them. They are true—now and forever.” Additional scripture serves as a second witness to many truths taught in the Old Testament, including God’s nature, His interaction with mankind, and His eternal plan.

**God’s Nature and His Interaction with Mankind**

Central among these constant “personages, plans, and principles” is the unchanging nature of God. His constancy is apparent early in the Old Testament story. Preparing ancient Israel for entrance into the promised land, Moses reminded his people, “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 7:9). In other words, God’s keeping covenants for “a thousand generations” means He is unchangeable. As the Lord stated through the prophet Malachi, “For I am the Lord, I change not” (Malachi 3:6).

Additional scripture reaffirms the Old Testament declaration about God’s constancy. After watching the fall of his civilization, Mormon testified to his son, Moroni, that God “is unchangeable from all eternity to all eternity” (Moroni 8:18). Latter-day revelation found in the Doctrine and Covenants confirms this doctrine. The Lord declared through the Prophet Joseph Smith that “by these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God” (D&C 20:17).

Moreover, because God is unchangeable, so are His love and efforts to save His children. The Psalmist declared that “the redemption of [a] soul is precious” (Psalm 49:8). Writing during Old Testament times, Alma similarly taught that souls in his day were “as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming” (Alma 39:17). Comparisons should exist, therefore, between the Old Testament and other scripture, paralleling God’s interactions with mankind. Scriptures and teachings by latter-day prophets help us identify these common interactions.

For example, one theme common in the standard works is God’s trying the faith of His people. Mormon parenthetically observed that “the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21; see also Ether 12:6). The principle abounds in Old Testament stories. Being closely pursued by the chari-
ots of Pharaoh, Moses and the children of Israel were commanded to “go forward” faithfully toward the Red Sea before the Lord parted the waves (see Exodus 14). Similarly, Joshua instructed the priests of Levi to dip their feet in the overflowing waters of Jordan while bearing the ark of the covenant before the Lord opened their way (see Joshua 3:13–17). Hezekiah watched the armies surround Jerusalem before the Lord fulfilled His promise of protection for Judah (see 2 Kings 18–19). Naaman, the Syrian captain, was required to dip seven times in the river Jordan before his flesh was healed of its leprosy (see 2 Kings 5). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faithfully stood their ground and were cast into the fury of the fiery flames before they walked with the Lord unharmed (see Daniel 3). A Book of Mormon scripture summarizes the lesson: “Ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith” (Ether 12:6; emphasis added).

**Trusting God’s timing.** Throughout the Old Testament and today, trusting God involves trusting His timing, omniscience, and power to save. Numerous examples both in the Old Testament and through additional revelation highlight the importance of trusting God’s timing. Abraham, the father of the faithful, spent his lifetime learning about faith in the Lord’s will and timing. Before leaving Haran, Abraham was promised posterity, even “the literal seed, or the seed of the body” (Abraham 2:11). Though already sixty-two years old when this promise was given (see v. 14), Abraham learned to rely on the Lord and His timing. After thirty-eight long years of waiting, Abraham and Sarah finally received Isaac, fulfilling the promise (see Genesis 21:5).

Waiting on the Lord’s timing for posterity is a theme common to Old Testament individuals. Like Abraham and Sarah, Elkanah and Hannah had to wait on the Lord for the gift of a child. Though they faithfully worshiped and sacrificed before the Lord, Hannah remained without child. “Year by year [she diligently] went up to the house of the Lord,” vowing and praying to the Lord for His will to be done (see 1 Samuel 1:7, 10–11). Finally, the Lord blessed Hannah for her righteous desire, and Samuel the prophet was born (see 1 Samuel 1).

Latter-day revelation confirms the Old Testament lesson that faith in the Lord includes faith in His timing. The Lord declared, “Sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will” (D&C 88:68; emphasis added). “The issue for us is trusting God enough to also trust His timing,” observed Elder Neal A. Maxwell. “If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His
plans unfold as He thinks best?” Elder Dallin H. Oaks summarizes the lesson: “Faith means trust—trust in God’s will, trust in His way of doing things, and trust in His timetable. We should not try to impose our timetable on His.”

**Trusting God’s personal knowledge of His children.** Related to faith in the Lord’s timing is faith in His knowledge of us as individuals. The Lord’s unfolding plans sometimes include lessons learned through personalized trial. “I assure you, my brothers and sisters, that our Heavenly Father is aware of us individually and collectively,” declared Elder M. Russell Ballard. “He understands the spiritual, physical, and emotional difficulties we face in the world today. In fact, they are all part of His plan for our eternal growth and development.”

God’s foreknowledge of the plight of His children is also evident throughout the Old Testament. “The Lord was with Joseph” during his service in the house of Potiphar, his imprisonment, and ultimately his rise to power in Pharaoh’s eyes (see Genesis 39:2–3, 21, 23; 41:38). Upon being reunited with his brothers years later, Joseph testified: “*God did send me* before you to preserve life. . . . And *God sent me* before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now *it was not you that sent me hither, but God*” (Genesis 45:5, 7–8; emphasis added). Joseph recognized God’s personal knowledge of him.

Latter-day Saint history and scripture record similar foreknowledge and intervention during periods of trial. When Martin Harris lost 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript, the Lord revealed His foreknowledge of the incident, having previously prepared the small plates of Nephi as a replacement for that which was lost (see 1 Nephi 9; D&C 10). When including the duplicate record in the book, Mormon testified: “I do this for a wise purpose; for thus it whispereth me, according to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord which is in me. And now, I do not know all things; but the Lord knoweth all things which are to come; wherefore he worketh in me to do according to his will” (Words of Mormon 1:7). Of His intervention, the Lord later revealed, “I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (D&C 10:43).

As it did for Joseph in Egypt and Joseph Smith with the lost manuscript, the foreknowledge of God during periods of trial gives Saints, both ancient and modern, faith to move forward. Through His omniscience, the Lord shapes difficult experiences for good. Lessons from both the Old Testament and other scripture verify this principle.
Trusting God’s omnipotence. Related to God’s omniscience is His power to intervene in life as His will and timing dictate. The Old Testament is replete with examples of the Lord’s divine intervention. Many of the examples previously mentioned and countless others highlight God’s being “mighty to save” (Isaiah 63:1). Old Testament prophets acting in the name of the “Almighty God” (Genesis 17:1) were given His power to stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, break mountains, divide seas, dry up waters, put at defiance the armies of nations, and even divide the earth (see Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:26, 30–31). “The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon” destroyed a Midianite army of over one hundred thousand with just three hundred men and a like number of trumpets, pitchers, and swords (see Judges 7–8). David defeated the giant Goliath, showing “all the earth . . . that there is a God in Israel” (1 Samuel 17:46). Through Elijah, God sent down fire from heaven, licking up wood, stone, and water, and causing the people to exclaim, “The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God” (1 Kings 18:38–39).

Additional scripture reiterates the reality of these miraculous demonstrations of God’s power and the possibility for their repetition today. Elder Oaks observes, “The protection promised to the faithful servants of God is a reality today as it was in Bible times.” Moroni likewise reasoned: “And if there were miracles wrought then, why has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being? And behold, I say unto you he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be God, and is a God of miracles” (Mormon 9:19). Thus, like the Old Testament record, restored scripture describes God’s freeing His servants from prison (see Alma 14), saving the righteous from destruction (see 3 Nephi 8–9), and delivering His prophet from affliction (see D&C 24:1). He promises to fight His children’s battles (see D&C 98:37), a reality verified throughout Church history. The divine hand that parted the Red Sea and held back the flooded Jordan declared of modern rivers and attempts to stop His will: “What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints” (D&C 121:33).

God’s Plan and Principles from the Old Testament

In addition to identifying characteristics common to God’s interactions with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and modern prophets, the Old Testament and latter-day scripture also share common principles of His
plan. For example, scriptures both ancient and modern contain numerous teachings on the eternal importance of families, the mission of the house of Israel, and the centrality of temple covenants. Studying latter-day revelation together with the Old Testament helps us recognize these common lessons and themes.

Eternal importance of families. A theme common to the Old Testament and other scripture is the divine role of families in the plan of salvation. All scripture, in fact, begins in a family context. The Old Testament introduces the Creation as being divinely designed for the placement of Adam and Eve on earth as an eternal family. The Old Testament regularly speaks of families and their challenges. Examples include Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob.

The New Testament begins the same way, with Joseph and Mary starting their family. Jesus Christ’s genealogy is included in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, thus highlighting the importance of extended family ties in God’s plan. Similarly, the Book of Mormon begins with Nephi and his “goodly parents” (1 Nephi 1:1). Like the beginning of the Bible, it too tells the story of a family divided by wickedness.

Two books in the Pearl of Great Price likewise begin with family. Abraham tells of his familial relationship, including the desire to have “the blessings of the fathers” (Abraham 1:2), and Joseph Smith initiates his history by summarizing his place in a family.

Finally, the Doctrine and Covenants solidifies the theme, beginning its story, like each of the other standard works, with the doctrine of eternal families. After the preface (D&C 1), the first chronological revelation given to Joseph Smith quotes Malachi’s prophecy of the return of Elijah with the power to seal families (see D&C 2).

Truly, eternal families are at the heart of the everlasting gospel message. Not only are they “central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children” but also they seem central in all books of scripture, including the Old Testament.

Covenants, temples, and their centrality in the gospel plan. Related to the theme of the eternal importance of families is the centrality of covenants and temples in God’s plan. The Old Testament is really the story of covenant, the word itself sometimes being rendered “testament” (see Bible Dictionary, “covenant,” 651). Paraphrasing Moses’s earlier declaration (see Deuteronomy 7:9), Solomon summarized the relationship among God, His children, and covenants in his temple dedicatory prayer: “Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart” (1 Kings 8:23).
The Old Testament is the story of God establishing His covenant. He made covenants with Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 9:21–25; 14:26–27; Genesis 17; Exodus 2:24). Additional scripture further teaches the importance of covenants, including the fulfillment of ancient promises. The Book of Mormon reveals that one of the foreordained missions of Joseph Smith was to bring the house of Israel to the knowledge of the covenants God made with their fathers (see 2 Nephi 3:7). The Doctrine and Covenants emphasizes that the Lord called Joseph Smith to reestablish His “everlasting covenant” (D&C 1:22). Similarly, Zion is promised to the “remnant of Jacob, and those who are heirs according to the covenant” (D&C 52:2).

The covenant established in the Old Testament, including gathering scattered Israel and restoring it with gospel blessings, is being fulfilled today. Unfortunately, many are ignorant of the Lord’s hand in this process. Elder Nelson observes: “The gathering of those remnants and the fulfilling of that divine covenant are occurring in our day. Yet this big picture is obscure to the eye of many who focus upon bargains at supermarkets and rankings of favorite football teams. Let us examine our place in God’s plan for his children and for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are part of a destiny known by relatively few people upon the earth.” That destiny includes the promised gathering of scattered Israel, accomplished by missionaries and members throughout the world. The Old Testament, supported by other scripture and revelation, helps us recognize this covenant and its modern fulfillment.

Related to the theme of covenants is the importance of temples. “The story of ancient Israel, the chosen people of God,” remarks Elder John A. Widtsoe, “centers upon their temples.” Temples dominate the Old Testament, from the Lord’s detailed instructions about the tabernacle to Solomon’s efforts to erect a permanent structure. Generations of faithful Israelites labored to build, preserve, and worship in these sacred edifices. Later, Old Testament prophets lamented the loss of the temple and recorded its rebuilding (see Lamentations 1–3; Ezra 3–6). Expanding the theme, Elder Widtsoe further observes, “All people of all ages have had temples in one form or another. When the history of human thought shall be written from the point of view of temple worship, it may well be found that temples and the work done in them have been the dominating influence in shaping human thought from the beginning of the race.”

Latter-day Saint beliefs in temple worship, says Elder Nelson, “compose another link between ancient and modern Israel.” These
ties are particularly strong between the modern Church and Solomon’s ancient temple. “The best known temple of ancient Israel,” continues Elder Nelson, “was Solomon’s temple. Its baptismal font and dedicatory prayer provide patterns that are employed for temples today. Old Testament scriptures refer to special clothing and ordinances that are associated with temples.” Individuals familiar with current temple worship resonate with the instructions given in the Old Testament regarding earlier temple service.

The Doctrine and Covenants helps us appreciate these ancient and modern connections. The Kirtland Temple dedicatory prayer, for example, begins with almost identical wording to the beginning of Solomon’s dedicatory prayer: “Thanks be to thy name, O Lord God of Israel, who keepest covenant and showest mercy unto thy servants who walk uprightly before thee, with all their hearts” (D&C 109:1; compare 1 Kings 8:23). Both prayers ask that God’s name be upon the house and its occupants and that the Lord will hear and forgive His people who worship therein (see D&C 109; 1 Kings 8). Later revelation about the Nauvoo Temple invited members to bring, as they did for Solomon’s temple anciently, gold, silver, precious stones, and trees to build a house worthy of God’s presence (see D&C 124:26–27; see also 1 Kings 6:21).

Scripture further notes that God’s people “are always commanded to build” these structures to His holy name (D&C 124:39). The Old Testament and modern revelation instruct us that temples and temple worship are central to the plan of salvation, across all ages of time. Joseph Smith summarizes, “All that were ever saved, were saved through the power of this great plan of redemption, as much before the coming of Christ as since.” Ordinances necessary for salvation today are the same as in any age of the world. These include temple covenants.

Old Testament Prophets and Events and Latter-day Scripture

In addition to being linked by common principles and themes, modern and ancient scripture are further tied together by frequent reference to Old Testament prophets and events. Old Testament persons and stories are frequently used as models for modern Saints. Furthermore, latter-day scripture expands our understanding of many difficult passages from the ancient record. Studying these texts together helps the reader appreciate their interdependence.

The Doctrine and Covenants refers to Old Testament personalities like Adam, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Uriah, Solomon, Isaiah, and Job. It also refers
to Old Testament stories, including the Fall of Adam and Eve, Enoch’s translation, Moses’s parting of the Red Sea, and Uzzah’s steadying the ark of the covenant. Whatever doubt the world casts on the historicity of the Fall, the Flood, and the Exodus or on the reality of Moses, Isaiah, and Job, latter-day revelation reaffirms biblical veracity.

Not only does latter-day scripture witness to the authenticity of biblical characters and accounts but also it often expands our understanding of them. The lives and events of the early patriarchs, including details of the Creation, Fall, and Flood, are expanded from cursory verses to whole chapters in the latter-day texts of Moses and Abraham. For example, the seven-verse summary of Enoch found in Genesis 5:18–24 is expanded to 119 verses in the Pearl of Great Price (see Moses 6:21–8:2). Likewise, details of the Lord’s confounding the languages at the Tower of Babel are expanded in the book of Ether. Furthermore, passages from the Doctrine and Covenants significantly enhance our understanding of Old Testament priesthood and practice (see D&C 84; 132). Finally, as Elder Nelson observes, “Abraham is mentioned in more verses of modern revelation than in all the verses of the Old Testament.”

Conversely, a working knowledge of the Old Testament helps modern Saints better understand all scripture. Nephi’s inspiring charge to “let us be strong like unto Moses” (1 Nephi 4:2) makes more sense if we are familiar with the faith of the Old Testament prophet. Diligent students of Isaiah better understand why both Nephi and the Lord would delight in his words (see 2 Nephi 25:5; 3 Nephi 23:1). The Lord’s Liberty Jail reminder that “thou art not yet as Job” (D&C 121:10) and His later command to “go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham” (D&C 132:32) mean more to readers if they are familiar with the faithful sacrifice of these Old Testament characters. Elder Maxwell encourages teachers to emphasize these links in their teaching. Doing so helps the reader appreciate the “high integration of concepts in the scriptures . . . [and] the editorial control of the Holy Spirit as various prophets gave utterances in centuries past. It wouldn’t hurt at all . . . for your students to see the literal relationships of the scriptures.” These relationships show that scriptural records confirm and witness of each other.

Conclusion

The Old Testament is an important foundational canon for Latter-day Saints. Its emphasis on the nature of God, His interactions with mankind, and the unchanging principles of the plan of salvation make
it essential to a full understanding of the gospel. Unfortunately, some of us overlook its importance. Elder Nelson observes: “Connections with the New Testament would be no surprise to any who understand the deep commitment to Jesus Christ held by members of this Church that bears his holy name. . . . But the connection between the Church and the Old Testament is less apparent.” Modern revelation helps us see these ties.

Additional scripture helps us appreciate the importance of the Old Testament and its messages—many of which are as applicable today as when prophets first uttered them millennia ago. The Old Testament has much to say about faith through adversity and about trusting God’s timing, omniscience, and power to save. In an era of eroding values and broken promises, the Old Testament emphasizes the divine importance of families, covenants, and temples. Its heroes provide role models for a society often misguided in whom it applauds. Using all scripture, teachers can help others recognize and apply these essential Old Testament themes. Challenging teachers to bring the Old Testament to life, Elder Maxwell summarizes, “I would hope that the students, as well as members of the Church whom you teach, will be able to discover for themselves that the Old Testament is new—new in the sense that its antiquity is filled with relevancy.”

Notes

1. Elder Packer observes, “While doctrines remain fixed, the methods or procedures do not” (in Conference Report, September–October 1989, 18; or Ensign, November 1989, 15).
8. For example, see the account of Zion’s Camp at the Fishing River in History of the Church, 2:103–5. In this instance, Joseph Smith tied their miraculous preservation to divine intervention by the God of the Old Testament: “When Jehovah fights [the enemies] would rather be absent” (104).
9. Elder Nelson observes: “The purposes of the Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement all converge on the sacred work done in temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The earth was created and the Church was restored to make possible the sealing of wife to husband, children to parents, families to progenitors, worlds without end” (in Conference Report, October 1996, 47; or Ensign, November 1996, 35). Similarly, Elder Robert D. Hales teaches: “From the earliest beginnings, God established the family and made it eternal. Adam and Eve were sealed in marriage for time and all eternity” (in Conference Report, October 1996, 86; or Ensign, November 1996, 64).


Teachers have a duty to understand the spiritual purposes of Old Testament laws and to help students discover modern applications of underlying principles.
Teaching Old Testament Laws

Robert E. Lund

Robert E. Lund (LundRE@ldschurch.org) works in college curriculum for the Church Educational System.

Why is it important to study Old Testament laws? Although some people dismiss them as lesser laws with no modern application, the Lord declared that there is a spiritual purpose for every law given (see D&C 29:34). Further, modern revelation commissions the gospel teacher to “teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible” (D&C 42:12). In addition, the law of Moses contains many elements currently found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe that teachers have a duty to understand the spiritual purposes of the law of Moses as well as the other laws in the Old Testament and to help students discover modern applications of underlying principles (see 1 Nephi 19:23).

One of the primary objectives of a gospel teacher is to help the learner have a successful experience studying the scriptures. This can be a particular challenge when students are studying the Pentateuch. After becoming accustomed to the narrative of Genesis, a teacher may be tempted to look only for the well-known stories in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, or Deuteronomy and completely avoid any of the laws. With some effort, however, gospel principles can be distilled from these laws, enhancing the scriptural experience of the learner.

This article offers assistance to teachers faced with the task of teaching Old Testament laws and finding relevant principles for their students. It also provides a few suggestions in an effort to help both the teacher and the learner be edified and rejoice together (see D&C 50:22).
Moses Was the Head of the Church and the Government

Moses was both the prophet and the chief government leader for the people. It is often difficult for modern readers of the Old Testament to keep in mind that, at this time, the children of Israel had a theocratic form of government—a stark contrast to the democratic environment of many nations today. The modern learner is prejudiced to keep civil and religious affairs separate. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, however, that during Moses’s time, there was no distinction between civil and ecclesiastical affairs: “When the children of Israel were chosen with Moses at their head, . . . their government was a theocracy. . . . [Moses] taught the people, in both civil and ecclesiastical affairs; they were both one, there was no distinction.”

The theocracy of the Old Testament is often a stumbling block for people when they are analyzing Old Testament laws. They usually read the Old Testament with the idea that all laws were purely religious in nature. To overcome this hurdle, the modern reader should sort through the Old Testament laws to determine whether a particular law was civil, religious, or both. Moses and the priests, who were also the judges, were required to put all Old Testament laws into effect, regardless of the civil or religious application. Some Old Testament laws were not part of the gospel of Jesus Christ but were given for civil purposes only. However, all the Old Testament laws were given to improve the condition of the people. President Joseph Fielding Smith comments that Moses was an instrument for God to help the children of Israel temporally and spiritually: “It is verily true that through [Moses] the Lord gave many laws and commandments for their government and spiritual development.” Moses not only instructed the priests to assist the people in their religious conduct but also taught them how to administer civil laws in equity and justice.

Classify Each Law and Identify Its Underlying Principle

The laws, commandments, rules, and teachings in the Old Testament can be understood better when classified into one of the following categories: (1) eternal laws, basic gospel truths that are in full force during any dispensation; (2) preparatory or carnal laws, commands that were done away with or fulfilled by the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 9:19; D&C 84:23–27); (3) criminal or civil laws, laws with penalties of death or monetary fines attached; or (4) health or social laws, laws designed to prevent the spread of diseases and govern dietary restrictions. Keep in mind that the law of Moses primarily
consists of the basic gospel truths and the preparatory or carnal commandments that were fulfilled by Jesus Christ. In addition, as their chief governmental leader, Moses instructed the people not to violate the criminal/civil laws or the health/social laws.

The advantage of organizing each law into a general category allows the learner to discover more easily its underlying principle. Yet classifying these laws poses some challenges. First, they are scattered throughout the Pentateuch. In addition, some laws overlap and fit into more than one classification. Notwithstanding these challenges, the following criteria will help determine a general category for each law. Once determined, it is easier for the teacher and the learner to understand the general purpose for the law and then discover relevant principles.

Eternal Commands Contained in the Law of Moses

Eternal laws are commandments that have been in force in all dispensations and are the basic laws of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These teachings predate the law of Moses, were emphasized during Jesus Christ’s mortal ministry, and are mentioned in modern revelation. These commandments are usually considered more spiritual in nature because they deal with our relationship to God and the treatment of others. Eternal laws are generally identifiable to Latter-day Saints because they are emphasized as part of the gospel in our day.

Some examples of eternal laws include loving God with all our heart (see Deuteronomy 6:5), loving our neighbor (see Leviticus 19:18), obeying the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:3–17; Deuteronomy 5:7–21), caring for the widows and fatherless (see Exodus 22:22–24; Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29), caring for the poor (see Deuteronomy 15:7–11), being chaste (see Leviticus 20:10), teaching the gospel to children (see Deuteronomy 6:7), being honest in dealings with others (see Leviticus 19:11), studying and pondering the scriptures (see Joshua 1:8), and becoming holy and pure (see Leviticus 19:2).

The following example shows how to analyze Mosaic laws to determine if they are eternal truths. Then, suggestions are provided on how to extract relevant gospel principles.

Consider the Ten Commandments. Are they eternal laws, or were they done away with after the Atonement of Jesus Christ? Are these Mosaic laws repeated in modern revelation? What have modern prophets said concerning the Ten Commandments?

When answering these questions, the learner will quickly realize that the Ten Commandments are in full force today and thus are likely eternal laws. Modern prophets, including President Gordon B. Hinckley,
have often referred to the eternal nature of the Ten Commandments, declaring they were given for “the salvation and . . . happiness of the children of Israel and for all of the generations which were to come after them.” Another reason the Ten Commandments are easily identifiable as eternal laws is that they have all been emphasized by the Lord in the Doctrine and Covenants. A brief analysis of the Ten Commandments reveals they were not unique to the Mosaic dispensation only, but they are eternal laws and the expected conduct for Saints in any age. Once Mosaic laws are identified as eternal or as part of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the underlying principles can be identified and applied.

Modern scripture and the statements of latter-day prophets are some of the best tools to extract relevant principles couched in Mosaic laws. For example, the commandments “Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:13–14) are repeated in modern revelation with the following addition: “nor do anything like unto it” (D&C 59:6). This additional wording goes to the underlying principle of these eternal Mosaic laws. The command not to kill nor do anything like unto it teaches the principle of honoring life in all its stages, including the gestation period of the unborn. Mosaic laws also recognize the value of the gestation period as follows: “If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, . . . he shall be surely punished” (Exodus 21:22). The eternal law to not commit adultery nor anything like unto it emphasizes the law of chastity, including a ban on inappropriate touching or other such activities. Again, Mosaic laws also prohibited moral sins that were like unto adultery, showing the eternal nature of the law of chastity.

Another method of extracting relevant gospel principles from Mosaic laws is to restate “thou-shalt-not laws” into affirmative obligations. This technique can help reveal the underlying eternal principle in a Mosaic law. For example, the Mosaic law that sets forth a person’s duty to care for the widows and fatherless reads as follows: “Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, . . . I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot” (Exodus 22:22–24). James, the brother of the Lord, validates this same principle as an affirmative duty: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (James 1:27; see also D&C 83:5–6). Other examples of “thou-shalt-not” Mosaic laws are “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . . Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exodus 20:3–4, 7).
The restated affirmative duty is to “love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5; see also Luke 10:27–28). Many Mosaic laws were written in a negative manner as a prohibition, making the gospel principle less apparent. However, as shown above, when a law is restated as an affirmative duty, the gospel principle becomes clearer.

Excluding the ceremonial and carnal laws, much of the law of Moses is affirmed and practiced in our day as part of the fulness of the gospel and is applicable to Saints in any dispensation. By highlighting the eternal laws in the Pentateuch, teachers can help students have a more successful experience studying them.

Preparatory and Carnal Laws Contained in the Law of Moses

Some of the Mosaic laws that pertained to the many ceremonies and rituals were given to the children of Israel because of their failure to live the higher law. Abinadi explains: “And now I say unto you that it was expedient that there should be a law given to the children of Israel, yea, even a very strict law; for they were a stiffnecked people, quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember the Lord their God; therefore there was a law given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him” (Mosiah 13:29–30).

These laws were temporary and were done away with or fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Preparatory or carnal laws included animal sacrifice, ritual feasts, and some ceremonies that, although spiritual in nature, were fulfilled or ceased to be required after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many of these strict daily laws came as a result of ancient Israel’s failure to accept and obey the higher law (see D&C 84:17–28; Joseph Smith Translation, Exodus 34:1–2). Therefore, the Lord revealed to Moses a series of laws that included feasts, ceremonies, and rituals to remind the people more frequently of their covenants with God (see Mosiah 13:27–33). The feasts included the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Tabernacles (see Exodus 23:14–17; Deuteronomy 16:16), and the Feast of the Passover (see Exodus 12:27; Exodus 13:15). Animal sacrifices included the burnt offering (see Leviticus 1:9; Deuteronomy 33:10), sin offering, the trespass offering, and the peace offerings.

Rather than identify sundry minutiae for the learner when teaching these portions of the law of Moses, a teacher can focus on the symbolism of the ordinance and look for modern application. For example, when teaching Leviticus 1, the teacher could ask questions that would
facilitate learner discovery to the symbolic connection between the Savior and the animal being offered (male, without blemish, and so on). Or when teaching the Passover in Exodus 11–12, the teacher can help students find the symbolic similarities between the sacrament and the Passover meal, focusing on how Saints today can offer the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:19–22).

Although these Mosaic laws would end after the Savior’s mortal mission was complete, they were always accompanied by a reverential attitude of worship still applicable in our day: “Sacrifices were . . . accompanied by prayer, devotion, and dedication, and represented an acknowledgment on the part of the individual of his duty toward God, and also a thankfulness to the Lord for his life and blessings upon the earth.” Although many of these types of laws are complex and describe in detail the procedure of the ordinance, they convey an attitude of dignity in worship that can be readily identified. For example, anciently the location of the sacrificial ordinances was the temple; the temple itself is a symbol of dignity and reverence (see D&C 109; Leviticus 1).

Even though the Mosaic laws that pertained to animal sacrifices, offerings, feasts, and festivals were eventually done away with, the righteous were obedient to them. Nephi and Jacob practiced these temporary laws. For them, the instructive and spiritual purpose underlying each law was easy to identify. The heart of all these laws was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Nephi says, “We keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given” (2 Nephi 25:24–25).

Jacob says: “[The holy prophets] believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, and also we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him” (Jacob 4:5). All animal sacrifice symbolized the “great and last sacrifice” that would be made by the Lamb of God (Alma 34:13; see also Moses 5:4–8). Amulek teaches that after this event, “it is expedient there should be, a stop to the shedding of blood; then shall the law of Moses be fulfilled” (Alma 34:13).

Criminal and Civil Laws Contained in the Old Testament

Not every law recorded in the Old Testament was part of the law of Moses, nor did all Old Testament laws become the required religious practice in the dispensation of the fulness of times. Some laws pertained only to the criminal/civil code of Moses’s time.

Often, Old Testament laws combined the function of church and state. For instance, sexual misconduct was a sin before God but
also carried criminal penalties from the government. Moses not only restored the gospel to the children of Israel but also put in place a new legal system substantially different from what they had lived under for approximately four hundred years in Egypt. This means that Old Testament laws not only included some of the basic laws of the gospel (previously noted above as eternal laws) but also contained all the associated criminal and civil code required to govern a large nation. The criminal and civil code would certainly be needed given the many conflicts the people would have while in the wilderness and later in the promised land. Moses established a new government for the children of Israel, along with many religious, civil, and criminal laws.\(^\text{22}\)

When identifying principles underlying this category of Old Testament laws, a teacher should establish the need for every society to have and maintain civil and criminal laws. The following explanation given in modern revelation will help learners understand the purpose for these types of laws and their underlying principles: “[Governments should] secure to each individual . . . the right and control of property, and the protection of life. . . . All governments necessarily require civil officers and magistrates to enforce the laws of the same” (D&C 134:2–3). The purpose for a civil and criminal code could be stressed above the specific penalties of an Old Testament law.

Assisting the learner to recognize civil and criminal laws is generally not difficult, as these laws usually contain a monetary/property penalty or capital punishment. Explaining the rationale and seemingly harsh penalties of such laws, however, is usually more difficult. For a gospel teacher, class time may be better spent identifying relevant principles. For example, “He that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death” (Exodus 21:15). Rather than focus on the penalty,\(^\text{23}\) teachers could invite the learner to identify the basic principle this law teaches, which is (restated as an affirmative duty) to love and honor our parents and, of course, never smite them.

Another law states: “If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death” (Exodus 21:28–29).

Discussions about animal cruelty or the severity of capital punishment miss relevant principles. Rather, teachers could simply classify a particular law as part of the civil or criminal code of that time and move
on or, if needed, help the learner to identify a relevant principle. In this case, property owners have a duty to monitor their livestock. In addition, once the owner has been placed on notice that his ox has attacked others previously and fails to keep it tied up or fenced in, the owner will be held accountable for the actions of that animal (his property). There is no need to overanalyze this law in an attempt to find some deeply meaningful application. This often leads to conjecture and speculation.

Examples of civil and criminal laws are plentiful in the Pentateuch. They include negligence, murder, manslaughter, abortion, stealing, witchcraft, idol worship, adultery, homosexuality, and speech laws, such as blasphemy and cursing or reviling parents or the king. Some of these laws also overlap with the eternal laws. For example, murder is a violation of not only criminal law but also eternal law.

As teachers focus on building faith in the classroom when teaching these laws, it is often best to classify a law generally, help students understand the basic principles taught in the law, and then move on. The chapter headings often give the broad category, allowing learners to more easily discover general principles.

Health and Social Laws Contained in the Laws of Moses

Another set of laws closely associated with dispensational laws are the health and social regulations that made up a sizable portion of the Pentateuch. When faced with a health or social regulation, consider the basic reasons for the law, such as preventing the spread of disease or caring for the body. In addition, emphasize the spiritual blessings that come from obeying them, such as the companionship of the Holy Ghost, protection, revelations, and goodly appearance (see Daniel 1:13–17; D&C 89:17–21).

These laws or guidelines covered dietary restrictions in Moses’s day as well as social diseases, such as leprosy. For example, the ancient dietary restrictions detailed in Leviticus 11 set forth the clean and the unclean animals. At that time, the eating of swine was prohibited. Yet in our day, swine, along with several other animals formerly banned, are not prohibited under the current health code (see D&C 89). Both ancient and modern health codes, however, command a person to take good care of and honor the mortal body God created.

Social laws included such things as purification after childbirth (see Leviticus 12), leprosy (see Leviticus 13–14), and other potential diseases (see Leviticus 15). These purification laws encouraged the outer cleanliness of the woman and were always concluded with an offering unto the Lord (see Leviticus 12). Requiring the couple to go
before the Lord after childbirth placed a divine sanction on procreation as part of God’s plan. Given the principle that “children are an heritage of the Lord” (Psalm 127:3), a teacher could help students understand the reverence and holiness that attend birth and delivery.

The prevention of spreading disease and infection is the underlying basis of the laws. Consider the professional and prophetic commentary of Elder Russell M. Nelson, a medical doctor and member of the Quorum of the Twelve, concerning health standards set forth in Old Testament laws:

For centuries, lives of innumerable mothers and children were claimed by “childbirth fever”—infections unknowingly transmitted among the innocent by unwashed hands of attendants. . . .

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When any man hath a running issue out of his flesh, because of his issue he is unclean.

“And this shall be his uncleanness in his issue. . . .

“Every bed, whereon he lieth that hath the issue, is unclean: and every thing, whereon he sitteth, shall be unclean.

“And whosoever toucheth his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water. . . .

“And he that toucheth the flesh of him that hath the issue shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water” (Leviticus 15:1–5, 7; italics added.) . . .

“And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he . . . wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean” (15:13).

Thus our loving Heavenly Father had clearly revealed principles of clean technique in the handling of infected patients more than three thousand years ago! These scriptures are in complete harmony with modern medical guidelines. 28

As teachers help students classify Old Testament laws into general categories (eternal, preparatory or carnal, civil or criminal, health or social), learners will find relevant principles and be inspired as they study the Old Testament. Even with this classification system, however, some laws don’t seem to fit cleanly into any category.

Be Content Saying, “I Don’t Know”

Even after a diligent preparation to understand the scriptures, identifying difficult areas, and anticipating possible questions, a gospel teacher should not be afraid to respond, “I don’t know why this or that particular law was recorded.” The teacher who feels compelled to give a reason why every Old Testament law was given may be susceptible to conjecture. In addition, teaching every Old Testament law may
违犯保罗的指导，保罗警告导师不要偏离基本教义原则的正道（见希伯来书5:12–14；D&C 19:22）。

课堂教学中的推测是无益的，因为它对于某些规则和法律的目的没有探究，就像不寻常的健康法律，一夫多妻制，奴役，男性控制的离婚，祭司禁止与已婚女性结婚，嫉妒的审判，以及男女性别婴儿净化时间的不同。如果特定的法律或实践提出困扰学习者的问题，根据他们目前的灵性成熟度，推测可能进一步导致混乱。

当教师遇到他们不熟悉并且不能轻易识别出其背后原则的法律时，“我不知道”是一个可以接受的回答。当学习者能看出来教师在福音中感到自在，但仍不知道所有答案时，它帮助学生学习耐心，等待上帝进一步的启示和知识。

避免批评旧约法律

有时教师故意或无意地批评旧约法律。一些人错误地认为这些法律阻碍了人们的精神进步。其他人声称耶稣基督在山上讲道时批评了法律。任何贬低圣经或上帝赋予的法律，都是对圣灵的危险，因为它会削弱圣灵的影响。进一步地，批评经文的教师和学生都处于危险的境地。它给学生的讯息是，他们可以选择同意他们认为符合的经文，而不是接受这些经文为神圣的。

那些认为旧约法律阻碍了精神的进步的人没有理解上帝的旨意，也没有承认圣徒在基督降临之前的精神能力。很难想象以利户，雅各，阿比纳底，阿尔玛，或者成千上万的其他人，在旧约法律下没有精神更加成熟，或被阻止于某一方面。

有些人对旧约法律持负面看法，因为基督在山上讲道。在该布道中，耶稣基督恢复了这些法律的原始意图，纠正了那些扭曲或试图证明不道德行为的人。例如，当耶和华命令，“你不可与人通奸”，这条命令不仅适用于身体行为，也适用于思想。认为耶稣批评法律的想法往往来自对“你们听见古时人所说的…”的误读。
but I say unto you . . . ” (Matthew 5:27–28). The antecedent to them of old is not Moses but those who sought to excuse their sinful conduct allowed under the oral law or rabbinical tradition. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior did not come to “destroy the law” but rather to restore the original intent of the law and the underlying principles with each commandment (Matthew 5:17).

Another mistake sometimes made by a teacher is to superficially compare our modern legal system to the civil and criminal laws in the Old Testament. For example, many speculate that “free speech” rights were very limited in the Old Testament as compared with rights under the U.S. Constitution or some other form of democracy. Teachers should avoid merely pointing out a few verses that emphasize the severity of the punishment with speech violations. The flaw of highlighting one or two obscure passages creates a distorted view of the ancient laws and often leads to criticism. Demeaning Old Testament laws by comparing them to modern laws will not motivate the learner to study this portion of the scriptures.

Conclusion

Teachers and students of the gospel can delve into the laws of the Old Testament and enjoy finding many relevant principles that will inspire them to understand and appreciate these laws. Rather than avoid or fear teaching Old Testament laws, teachers can have confidence that they will have a successful experience teaching the laws contained in the Pentateuch. Hopefully, teachers will help their students succeed in discovering modern principles that are applicable to students’ lives as they study the laws of the Old Testament.

Notes

4. Referring to the eternal nature of the Ten Commandments, President Joseph Fielding Smith observes, “The Ten Commandments were in existence long before Moses’ time, and the Lord only renewed them in the days of Moses, just as he has done in our day” (Answers to Gospel Questions, 3:155).
6. All Ten Commandments have been revealed again in modern scriptures. The following table is adapted from the *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 135, showing the importance of the Ten Commandments in our day as part of the fulness of the gospel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commandment</th>
<th>Mosaic Reference</th>
<th>Modern Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 5:6-7</td>
<td>D&amp;C 76:1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 4:15-19</td>
<td>D&amp;C 1:15-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 5:11</td>
<td>D&amp;C 63:61-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 5:12-15</td>
<td>D&amp;C 59:9-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 5:18</td>
<td>D&amp;C 42:22-26, 74-81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Thou shalt not steal.</td>
<td>Deuteronomy 5:19</td>
<td>D&amp;C 42:20, 84-85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


8. Modern counsel confirms the eternal nature of the law of chastity: “Before marriage, do not do anything to arouse the powerful emotions that must be expressed only in marriage. Do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body, with or without clothing. Do not allow anyone to do that with you. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body” (*For the Strength of Youth* [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001], 26).

9. Other activities “like unto adultery” identified in the law of Moses included the forbidden practices of homosexuality, prostitution, and bestiality.


11. The Lord said, “And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, *your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away*, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings” (3 Nephi 9:19; emphasis added).

12. It should be noted that animal sacrifice did not begin with the law of Moses but with Adam (see Moses 5:5-8). The law of Moses likely codified the specifics of animal sacrifice and clarified the role of the priests.

13. Circumcision was also eventually done away as a formal law; see also note 26.

14. The Feast of Tabernacles (see Leviticus 23:34), or sometimes called Ingathering (see Exodus 23:16), was a joyous feast. See Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Feasts,” 673.
15. The Feast of Pentecost began fifty days (see Leviticus 23:16) after the Feast of the Passover. See Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Feasts,” 673.
22. Moses was a prophet and king to the people, unlike Joseph Smith. During the Restoration, the Lord had already raised up and established a government to enforce civil and criminal rights. To the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord said, “According to the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established, and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles” (D&C 101:77; see also vv. 78–80; D&C 109:54).
23. A learner may, however, want to conduct a deeper analysis of this criminal or civil law. If so, the key to interpreting this law rests on the word smiteth. If smiteth means murdered, then this law is no different than the previous law: “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death” (Exodus 21:12). If, however, smiteth was interpreted to mean a physical assault, then Exodus 21:15 acts as a guide for the ancient civil/criminal judge to consider capital punishment during the sentencing phase.
24. “Physical health laws” in our day restrict various dietary substances that were not prohibited anciently. The modern Word of Wisdom bans any alcoholic substance, including “any drug, chemical, or dangerous practice that is used to produce a sensation or ‘high’ can destroy your physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. These include hard drugs, prescription or over-the-counter medications that are abused, and household chemicals” (For the Strength of Youth, “Physical Health,” 37).
25. “In regard to the practice in Israel of purification of mothers when children were born and the offering of sacrifice of doves it should be remembered that this was a part of the law given to Moses. It was more a practice of a sanitary nature, not the cleansing of the mother because a sin had been committed. . . . Practices, such as the ‘purification’ of a mother did not exist before the time of Moses and ended when Christ fulfilled the law. We have never been commanded in this day to revive them” (Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979], 3:17).
26. Some scholars include circumcision as a health law. Because it is generally considered part of the covenant of Abraham, however, it should also be considered greater than a health law with deeper religious symbolism. The Apostles in Jerusalem discussed why the law of circumcision should be done away with after the Atonement and no longer required for new converts (see Acts 15).
27. Modern revelation confirms the sanctity of childbearing and requires parents to bring their children before the Lord and bless them (see D&C 20:70).
29. The trial of jealousy is contained in Numbers 5:11–31. It involves a unique function of the priest to administer bitter water to a wife accused by her husband of committing adultery.

30. If, however, discussion of the trial of jealousy or some other law becomes unavoidable, then we should follow the guidance of modern revelation: “Of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior” (D&C 19:31). For example, the teacher could focus on how the trial of jealousy highlights the need for honesty and repentance in the marriage relationship. In the end, the trial shows how forgiveness and faith in the Atonement can heal the marriage relationship and cleanse sin.


32. Like Abinadi before the priests of King Noah, the so-called spiritual leaders in Jesus Christ’s day were living in sin, claiming their understanding of the law of Moses would save them. These apostates worshiped the law above the Lord. Abinadi identifies this error and warns: “Now ye have said that salvation cometh by the law of Moses . . . ; but I say unto you, that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the law of Moses. And moreover, I say unto you, that salvation doth not come by the law alone; and were it not for the atonement, which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his people, that they must unavoidably perish, notwithstanding the law of Moses” (Mosiah 13:27–28). Likewise, Jesus Christ restored the original intent of the law that was meant to point their worship toward God.

33. Like most legal codes, the laws in the Old Testament contained the maximum punishment for any given crime—thus allowing judges to use wisdom and discretion when examining the facts to determine the severity of the penalty. Although some procedural rules may have changed on bringing forth evidence, many of the laws and their associated punishments are the same today as for ancient Israel.
Mothers: Heroes, Then and Now

Lauren Ellison

Lauren Ellison (firedots@hotmail.com) is a former institute and seminary teacher living in Saratoga Springs, Utah.

Heroes Then

The Old Testament is full of heroes, men and women who inspire us with their courage and nobility of purpose and who are willing to risk even their lives to serve God and His people. We love to read of their miraculous and courageous deeds: Moses’s parting the Red Sea, David’s slaying of Goliath, and Elijah’s calling down fire from heaven. But Elder Neal A. Maxwell once said, “Greatness is not measured by coverage in column inches, either in newspapers or in the scriptures.” He notes that “because theirs is the priesthood and leadership line,” we often focus on the men of God. “But paralleling that authority line,” he continues, “is a stream of righteous influence reflecting the remarkable women of God who have existed in all ages and dispensations.” He further states that “just as certain men were foreordained from before the foundations of the world, so were certain women appointed to certain tasks.”¹

The Old Testament suggests that Esther was one of those women—that she came “to the kingdom for such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). But the Old Testament tells of other women who, though less well known, also fulfilled their divine missions. We read about four of these women in Exodus 1:15–2:10.² Their greatness does not lie in “column inches” (each is mentioned in only a few verses), in name recognition (most people don’t recall their names), or in exceptional, miraculous deeds (anyone could follow their footsteps). Rather, theirs is a quiet courage,
a simple nobility, an often unheralded service. They are heroes because they are examples to all women of what it means to be a mother.

Only one of the four women mentioned in these verses is actually a biological mother, at least in the context of these scriptures. But Sheri L. Dew says, “As daughters of our Heavenly Father, and as daughters of Eve, we are all mothers and we have always been mothers. And we each have the responsibility to love and help lead the rising generation.” In other words, for women, the role of motherhood is eternal, extending from their premortal existence, throughout their lives here on earth, and into eternity. Motherhood is more than simply bearing children; motherhood describes women’s “divine nature and destiny” to love, lead, and nurture the rising generation.

Accepting and acting upon this role and responsibility of mothering, however, is not always easy. In ancient Egypt, difficulties arose when “there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph” (Exodus 1:8). This new king, fearing the growing prosperity and power of the Hebrews, issued a decree ordering the slaying of all male children born into Hebrew families (see vv. 9–16). Although there may have been others, the scriptures mention four women in particular who refused to comply. Who were these heroes who saved the children in defiance of Pharaoh’s command, and what gave them the strength to do so?

Puah and Shiphrah were the Hebrew midwives whom Pharaoh commanded, “When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, . . . if it be a son, then ye shall kill him” (Exodus 1:16). It must have been frightening to receive such a command from the most powerful man in their world. Their very lives could have depended on obeying him. But the midwives “feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive” (v. 17; emphasis added). When confronted by Pharaoh, they escaped punishment by saying, “The Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them” (v. 19). Because they feared, or honored, God over man—even over the king of Egypt—they had the courage to do the right, to save the children. “Therefore God dealt well with the midwives” (v. 20).

Next, we meet Jochebed. Though her name is not widely recognized, she is the mother of one of the most well known heroes of the Old Testament: the deliverer of Israel, the law-giver, Moses. When Jochebed bore her son, she saw that “he was a goodly child, [and] she hid him three months” (Exodus 2:2). The scripture does not tell us, as it does with the midwives, Jochebed’s motive for the risk she takes. But whenever I have taught this story, I have asked my class, “Why
would she do this?” Without fail, they have responded, “Because she loved him.” Perhaps she also saw, as mothers do, the great potential in this helpless infant she held in her arms.7 When she felt that love, saw that potential, she knew that any sacrifice was worth preserving his life. So when it became apparent that she could no longer hide him in her home, she placed him in an ark of bulrushes among the reeds along the bank of the river, where perhaps she suspected our next hero, Pharaoh’s daughter, would find him.

Often Jochebed is portrayed in movies as placing the ark into the current of the river, after which the baby floats precariously down-stream before being rescued by Pharaoh’s daughter. The scripture, however, does not say this is what occurred; it states that the infant was placed and discovered among the reeds along the banks of the river (see Exodus 2:3, 5; see also footnote 3a). This wording suggests to me that Jochebed acted deliberately—that her great love for her child and consequent desperation to save his life led her to carefully ponder her plan. Perhaps she knew that this was a place where Pharaoh’s daughter came to bathe—where men (especially soldiers) did not frequent. Perhaps she knew that Pharaoh’s daughter was a compassionate woman, likely to rescue an abandoned baby.

Pharaoh’s daughter (the scriptural account does not even tell us her name)8 soon discovered the weeping baby, whom she immediately recognized as one of the condemned Hebrew sons. She rescued him, the scripture says, because “she had compassion on him” (Exodus 2:6), which, Elder Maxwell observes, was a sign of her “divine maternal instincts.” At this point, Moses’s sister approached and asked, “Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?” (v. 7). Regardless of Pharaoh’s decree, she consented to the girl’s suggestion, “and the maid went and called the child’s mother” (v. 8). So the compassion of Pharaoh’s daughter extended not just to the child but also to the child’s mother; she even paid Jochebed for her service (see v. 9). Eventually, Pharaoh’s daughter took the child as her own son, giving him the name of Moses, perhaps intending to honor both his Hebrew and Egyptian heritage (see v. 10, footnote b).10

Puah, Shiphrah, Jochebed, and Pharaoh’s daughter are some of the remarkable women who exercised a “stream of righteous influence.” Their choices to be mothers in spite of difficult, even dangerous, circumstances saved the child Moses, and by so doing they shaped the history of a people and the religious faith of generations. They are heroes in the truest sense of the word—they defended the weak against the strong and showed that good can overcome evil. In the face of Pharaoh’s edict,
they quietly, faithfully, and courageously exercised their divine role as mothers. Fear and self-interest were swallowed up in faith, love, and compassion as they nurtured the children in their lives.

Heroes Now

Although modern challenges to mothering may be more subtle than Pharaoh’s decree, they are no less prevalent and powerful—and they require no less faith, love, and compassion to combat. Elder Richard G. Scott warned that in the adversary’s fight against the great plan of happiness, “one of Satan’s most effective approaches is to demean the role of wife and mother in the home.” One way this demeaning is accomplished is by our distorting women’s perceptions of both careers and motherhood. The virtues of the former are glorified; the trials of the latter are accentuated. For example, note the false dichotomy in this comment from a writer for Newsweek magazine: “As mothers many women face ‘choices’ on the order of: You can continue to pursue your professional dreams at the cost of abandoning your children to long hours of inadequate child care. Or: You can stay at home with your baby and live in a state of virtual, crazy-making isolation because you can’t afford a nanny.” Are careers really all dreams come true, and is motherhood really all “crazy-making isolation”?

Satan also demeans the role of mother by appealing to women’s pride in their education and talents. In a June 18, 2006, article in the Washington Post, a former professor at a prestigious university states: “The tasks of housekeeping and child rearing [are] not worthy of the full time and talents of intelligent and educated human beings. They do not require a great intellect, they are not honored.” The message here is that if a woman is educated and talented, mothering is a waste of her time—and if she is spending most of her time mothering, she probably isn’t very smart or talented.

Although the views expressed by these women may be extreme, the philosophies they espouse infiltrate our society to the point that even many Latter-day Saint women, faced with everyday tasks of motherhood and the world’s calls to achieve status, power, wealth, and self-fulfillment, sometimes wonder, “Is mothering really the most valuable use of my time and talents?” But the words of the prophets have been consistent and clear. It is the divine nature of women to mother, and through fulfilling this divine role, they will do the most good and achieve their greatest joy and satisfaction.

Consider these statements from Church leaders of this last dispensation. President Brigham Young asks: “Can you tell the amount of
good that the mothers and daughters in Israel are capable of doing? No, it is impossible. And the good they will do will follow them to all eternity.”

In 1942 the First Presidency declared motherhood “the highest, holiest service . . . assumed by mankind.”

More recently, President James E. Faust said to the women of the Church, “I truly believe you are instruments in the hands of God in your many roles, especially that of motherhood.”

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” declares, “By divine design, . . . mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children.”

And President Gordon B. Hinckley says: “Of all the joys of life, none other equals that of happy parenthood. Of all the responsibilities with which we struggle, none other is so serious. To rear children in an atmosphere of love, security, and faith is the most rewarding of all challenges. The good result from such efforts becomes life’s most satisfying compensation.”

Modern women can follow the words of these latter-day prophets by following the examples of their ancient sisters Puah, Shiphrah, Jochebed, and Pharaoh’s daughter, who taught us how to mother, even in difficult circumstances. We, too, can demonstrate courage in resisting worldly pressures, choosing instead to accept and embrace our roles as mothers. We, too, can exhibit nobility in the selfless service of nurturing children. Mothers may not gain name recognition or the praises of the world, but they are heroes to those whose lives they touch with their faith, love, and compassion. Here are just a few of their stories.

**Faith in God.** Diana is a wonderful example of honoring God more than man, as the Hebrew midwives did centuries ago. She had the faith to follow the prophets’ counsel to stay home with her young children despite pressure from her husband and others to use her considerable talents outside the home. Diana’s husband tells her story:

Diana and I have been happy nearly every day of our life together. I can only remember one time in which there has been friction in our home. This was when we were considering having Diana work outside of the home.

We had been married a year, and I had a job working twenty-five hours a week and was going to school full time. My take-home pay would not even cover our rent. I did not know what else to do and so instead of exhibiting faith, I took the “practical” approach and asked Diana to go back to work. She had a very understanding boss who would let her take the baby to work with her. This seemed like an ideal situation. In a worldly sense it was. The problem was we were not happy as a family. A few months later we decided that Diana should stop working. We struggled for a couple of months but soon found a
less expensive place to live and we have been happy ever since. Diana had the faith to do it the Lord’s way from the beginning; I had to be cajoled into doing it the right way.

Diana is a gifted speaker and presenter. All through high school and college she competed at a national level for debate. She is a national award winner in debate and is recognized as an expert in her field. For years she was asked to go back to help her team fine-tune their skills and improve in competitions. In high school she thought that she would have a high-profile job. She was looking into journalism, business, law, and many other highly skilled professions. As the years went by and she got closer to having a family, she had a change of heart and decided to dedicate herself to becoming the best mother possible.

Diana devoted the same time and energy that drove her to perfection in debate to developing the skills to be a great mother. She has read nearly every book in the county on homemaking, cooking, child development, and style. Not only does she know about the principles required to be a good mother, she also has the discipline to practice them on a daily basis. I know that my children will be blessed all of their lives because of what Diana teaches them both directly and by example.

Diana has been able to stay above the influence of the world to have a career. This has come through her dedication to daily scripture study, her personal goodness, soft heart, and ability to feel what other people are feeling. Diana would make any sacrifice for the good of our family.

I do not know if Diana would be considered a hero in today’s flashy sense. She is a hero to me in the fact that she dedicates her most precious resources for the good of our family.

Love. In his book, *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis tells of a fictional visitor to heaven who sees a beautiful woman approaching amidst throngs of joyful boys and girls singing her praises. In wonder, he asks his guide who she is.

“It’s someone ye’ll never have heard of,” replies the guide.

“And who are all these young men and women on each side?”

“They are her sons and daughters.”

“She must have had a very large family, Sir.”

“Every young man or boy that met her became her son. . . . Every girl that met her was her daughter,” the guide answers.

Lewis might have been describing Samantha, who, though she has no children of her own, loves all boys and girl as if they were her own. Samantha’s husband writes:

As I think about Samantha and her interactions with children, I am strongly impressed by the love that she has for all children. She treats each child as an individual who is just as important as everyone else. A child’s amount of life experience or education doesn’t determine the respect that Samantha gives them.
About a year ago Samantha and I were babysitting four young girls while their parents were away for the week. One night at dinner the youngest wasn’t hungry; she found it more fun to play with her food. Instead of getting mad with the mess she was making, Samantha recognized that at eighteen months old the young girl found it fascinating to pour the water from her drinking glass into her bowl and back again. So when dinner was over Samantha placed the girl in the kitchen sink, with the water running, and gave her what must have represented a wondrous assortment of cups, bowls, bottles, and spoons and simply let her explore. This kept her attention riveted for over an hour.

As a full-time preschool teacher, Samantha works with children every day. The friendships that she develops with her students aren’t restricted to the classroom. There have been times when Samantha has run across her students out shopping with their parents. Samantha stops and talks to each one. The children light up with the biggest smiles when they realize that their teacher recognizes them. Recently, Samantha even sent each one of her former students a card wishing them good luck starting kindergarten. She reminded them of the many things they had learned and let them know that she had confidence in them. Each one of them blossomed with the confidence that comes from realizing that someone else approves of them just like their parents do.

Samantha’s love of children also extends to teenagers. There have been times when teenage girls have called Samantha for advice with boys, school, or parents. She patiently listens to their concerns and never belittles their situation. Sometimes I hear her tell them that it is OK to be afraid or nervous and that it is OK to cry when you’re sad.

Finally, one last example of Samantha’s wonderful relationship with children happened just the other day. While I was working in the yard, I noticed two five-year-old girls shyly sitting on their bikes in the driveway. I asked them if there was something I could do for them. They timidly asked if my “um . . . sis . . . wife” was home. When I answered that she was, they asked, “Um . . . can . . . she play?” When I told Samantha, she dropped what she was doing, came outside, greeted them both by name, and then went on a bike ride with them.

Compassion. Brian’s mom, Peggy, was a beautiful example of mothering her own children and others’ children and of supporting other mothers in their responsibilities. She suffered much from health problems in her life. This might have led some to become self-absorbed, but Peggy always lived with compassion toward others. She was born with diabetes at a time when little was known about the disease. Her first two children died in infancy. The doctors told her that her medical condition would prohibit her from having any more children, but she wanted nothing more than to be a mother. Brian writes:

She gave birth to three boys who were terrors. As we reached our teens, our mother grew sicker. She lost her eyesight. Her kidneys
failed, and she went on dialysis. She was a wonderful mother and taught us much, but it became our turn to nurture her. Mom had a Church calling that she loved, so they would not release her from it. She was a Relief Society teacher. She would have us kids read her the lessons and prepare handouts for the class. We would read the lesson to her several times until she had it memorized. As I look back on that I know that we were helping her, but at the same time I know that she was teaching us kids the gospel.

The greatest thing that I remember of my mother was how she served. When I was fifteen years old, my mother had a heart attack and needed a quadruple bypass. She spent a little over six months in the hospital, recovering from her surgery. When she arrived home, she was extremely weak. One day she got a phone call from her dear friend, Cathy, who wanted to see how my mom was. As they talked on the phone, Cathy mentioned that her daughter was pregnant and she had no money to throw her a baby shower. As soon as they were off the phone, my mother began to organize a shower, which she threw for her friend’s daughter.

Six months later my mother passed away after living a life of greatness. As she was in the hospital a few days before she passed, she had a friend write her words to us kids. I still have my letter from her today. She left this world an angel and continues to mother me. She taught me some of the greatest attributes of life—to be positive through affliction and to be more like the Savior—and I thank her for it. Many years ago the First Presidency of the Church wrote, “Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by mankind. It places her who honors its holy calling and service next to the angels.” I love the saying, “A mother holds her children’s hands for a while, but their hearts forever.”

Conclusion

Puah, Shiphrah, and Diana are heroes because they had the faith and courage to honor God over man. Jochebed and Samantha are heroes because they showed love to children without selfishness. Pharaoh’s daughter and Peggy are heroes because, regardless of their own circumstances, they treated children with compassion. Each of us can follow their examples.

“Every one of us,” Sheri Dew states, “can show by word and by deed that the work of women in the Lord’s kingdom is magnificent and holy. . . . Never has there been a greater need for righteous mothers—mothers who bless their children with a sense of safety, security, and confidence about the future, mothers who teach their children where to find peace and truth and that the power of Jesus Christ is always stronger than the power of the adversary. . . . No woman who
understands the gospel would ever think that any other work is more important or would ever say, ‘I am just a mother,’ for mothers heal the souls of men.”

Notes

2. Moses’s sister is also mentioned within this block of scripture. If, as is commonly supposed, this sister is Miriam, most of her story is told elsewhere in Exodus. The stories of the other four are almost exclusively contained within this block, other than brief references such as Exodus 6:20 and Numbers 26:59, which simply mention Jochebed in genealogical context, and Acts 7:21, which refers to Pharaoh’s daughter rescuing and raising Moses. Because of this, I deal only with the four women mentioned.
5. This may have been a statement of fact. See Adam Clarke, Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible, Vol. I: Genesis-Deuteronomy (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1827–31), 295.
6. Though her name is not mentioned in Exodus 1 and 2, we learn her name in Exodus 6:20.
8. A Jewish tradition mentioned by Josephus is that her name was Thermouthis. See Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: Vol. I, 428; Clarke, Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible: Vol. I, 298.
10. This scripture implies that Pharaoh’s daughter was bilingual (see D. N. Freedman, ed., The Anchor Bible Dictionary [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 4:911). If so, this would lend support to the possibility that Jochebed deliberately placed her baby where Pharaoh’s daughter would find him. If Pharaoh’s daughter was bilingual, she probably had some interactions with the Hebrews; Jochebed may have known from personal experience or by word of mouth that Pharaoh’s daughter was a compassionate woman, perhaps sympathetic to the Hebrew plight.
19. Names have been changed.
24. Dew, “Are We Not All Mothers?” 97.
Promoting Peculiarity: Different Editions of For the Strength of Youth

Brent D. Fillmore

Brent D. Fillmore (FillmoreBD@ldschurch.org) is a manager at Church Educational System Communications.

The adjective peculiar is used in the scriptures to describe the Lord’s covenant people. After the children of Israel left Egypt, the Lord instructed Moses to tell them, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:5–6; emphasis added).

Over time, Moses’s people would be peculiar and would become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation only as they obeyed God’s voice. They were not to become odd, eccentric, or strange—although their obedience to His laws would make them different from the world. They were to become peculiar, which meant in both Hebrew and Greek, “property, wealth, private property, which is laid up or reserved; . . . select, precious, endeared; something exceedingly prized and [diligently] preserved.” They were to become His own treasured property. But to what end? For what purpose? Certainly they were not just supposed to be treasured for the sake of being treasured. Then and now, God wants His covenant people to be peculiar so they can do something. They have a mission they cannot fulfill unless they are His people—purified, preserved, peculiar, and thus owned by Him.

Something can be owned in at least three ways. (1) It can be created. The creator thus owns the creation. (2) It can be purchased. The buyer thus owns the item that was bought. (3) It can be given to
another. The receiver thus owns the gift. Thus, for a people to become owned, they would need to be created, purchased, or given. Each of these exchanges is addressed in the covenant relationship between God and man. The first two happen automatically. First, we were created by Him. Second, He has “bought” us through the Atonement, as the Apostle Paul taught: “[He] gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). Third, as we willingly cede our will to His, we quite literally give ourselves to Him. So a covenant people very literally can become the peculiar “property” of God.

Such a pure, peculiar people (see D&C 43:14; 100:16) would have ready access to the influence of heaven and would thus have increased capacity to “bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations” (Abraham 2:9). They would be more able to assist “all the families of the earth [to] be blessed . . . with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:11). “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deuteronomy 7:6). As they choose to become a holy people, He chooses them as a special people unto Him—chosen to assist Him in His work.

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that in all ages, “[God] gave revelations, wisely calculated to govern them in the peculiar situation and circumstances under which they were placed, and to enable them by authority to do the peculiar work which they were to perform.” As the living prophet in his day, Moses “sought diligently to sanctify his people” (D&C 84:23). He gave guidelines that would help his people become peculiar. In our day, living prophets also seek diligently to sanctify God’s people. They have provided similar guidelines to God’s covenant people in our day with the same purpose—that of helping them be peculiar so they can assist in His work. The teachings contained in the different editions of the For the Strength of Youth pamphlet are an example of how this is done in our day.

A Brief History of the For the Strength of Youth Pamphlet


Early Editions: 1965–72

In the first seventy or so years of the twentieth century, the youth program of the Church was carried out by the Young Men’s and Young
Women’s Mutual Improvement Associations (YMMIA and YWMIA). In the 1960s, a series of posters were generated with full-color illustrations called “Be Honest with Yourself.” These included such admonitions as “Virtue Is Its Own Reward,” “Great Men Pray,” and “Temple Marriage...
Is Forever.” Wallet- and purse-sized reproductions were distributed to the youth of the Church. In 1960, Church leaders launched the Era of Youth, an insert for youth in the monthly Improvement Era.

The Encyclopedia of Mormonism notes: “An elaborate June Conference was held in 1969, with many foreign countries represented. An early morning reception on Temple Square was followed by banquets, dance festivals, musicals, dramatic readings, road show presentations, camp training in the nearby mountains, athletic seminars, and testimony meetings.”

At this time, a committee representing several organizations at Church headquarters worked together to prepare the first edition of the For the Strength of Youth pamphlet printed in 1965. The First Presidency approved the publication, encouraging priesthood leaders to “familiarize themselves with the information in this book and [to] create an opportunity to distribute it in order to inform the youth and their parents of its contents. . . . A copy in the hands of every young person in each ward and branch will help them set higher goals and standards by which to live.”

In keeping with the concerns of the times, the 1965 edition contained headings on dress, manners, dating, dancing, and clean living. The headings “Propriety in All Things” and “Literature, TV, and Entertainment” were added in 1966. The text under “Literature, TV, and Entertainment” reads: “Youth should rigidly and energetically resist at all times, unclean stories, jokes, reading or printed matter, salacious films, objectionable TV programs, immodest or degrading advertising, and immoral material in any form. Such material is an affront to right living and clean thinking and must be rejected wherever one comes in contact with it in social experiences, in entertainment, or in school. Youth must assert themselves in making choices and demanding only that which is uplifting.”

Further explanations were provided on choice of music: “Moderate and modest music should always be played. When electronic bands or instruments are used, an extremely loud beat is discouraged because it is inconsistent with church standards. Musical lyrics should always be in good taste and sung in a dignified way.” Guidelines on acceptable and appropriate dancing and dance planning were included. In the 1972 edition, two First Presidency statements previously printed in the New Era were added to the sections on “Dress and Dating.”

Significant adjustments in Church organization and practice took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Partly responsible for these changes was the eighteen-year gap between the publication of the 1972 edition
and the 1990 edition. But this was a gap in publication, not in message. President Spencer W. Kimball became the President of the Church in December 1973. His teachings were used more and more extensively after he became President of the Church. He taught extensively about chastity, modesty, cleanliness, and so forth. The Church began to expand even more over the earth, and missionary work, temple work, and growth in membership leapt forward.

President Ezra Taft Benson became the President of the Church in November 1985. At his clarion call, the Book of Mormon began to flood the earth. The construction of temples continued. President Benson spoke in conference and in other settings to targeted audiences. These addresses were published and distributed in pamphlet form. The Young Women’s motto, “Stand for Truth and Righteousness,” and the logo, a torch with the profile of a young woman’s face, were introduced.

As the Church grew throughout the world, the influence of the adversary also grew. And with that influence, the ever-increasing need for greater peculiarity grew. It became clear that a concise statement of standards would be very helpful to the members of the Church. Efforts to put such a resource together had been ongoing during this time. The teachings of the prophets and others given during these years, together with organizational adjustments, provided a firm basis upon which a new edition of the pamphlet could be written.
1990 Edition

Ardeth G. Kapp, Young Women general president, explained why the next edition was published in 1990: “The title *For the Strength of Youth* is not new. It was previously published in 1965 under the direction of the First Presidency. But because of the trend toward immorality and other ills in society and also because of the expansion of the Church into new geographical areas over the years, a more comprehensive, more explicit statement of Church standards was needed.”

Elder Jack H. Goaslind, then Young Men general president, elaborated: “In the world our youth are growing up in, it’s easy, with all the media influences, for them to get a feeling that maybe the Lord has changed or softened on this or that. It’s easy for youth to think that maybe what was wrong when Mom and Dad were growing up isn’t wrong now, because there’s so much of the wrong going on. Youth are exposed to so much evil today. I think this pamphlet is an attempt to let them know that the Lord’s standards are the same now as they were when Mom and Dad were growing up, even though conditions were different in the days of Mom and Dad.”

The changes were many and significant, and the new edition was nineteen pages long. There were sections with the following headings: “Why Standards”; “Dating”; “Dress and Appearance”; “Friendship”; “Honesty”; “Language”; “Media: Movies, Television, Radio, Videocassettes, Books, and Magazines”; “Mental and Physical Health”; “Music and Dancing”; “Sexual Purity”; “Sunday Behavior”; “Spiritual Help”; “Repentance”; and “Conclusion: Worthiness and Service.”

Standards were emphasized from the scriptures and were cited directly. The pamphlet was made available in eighteen languages, and local Church leaders were instructed to distribute the pamphlets to each young person (ages twelve to eighteen) in their wards or branches and to the parents of all youth. Young men and young women graduating
from Primary were to receive the pamphlets as they entered the Young Men and Young Women programs. It was also recommended that the pamphlet go to all college-age Latter-day Saint students and to youth of high-school age.17

The First Presidency again emphasized the idea of peculiarity: “You are not just ordinary young men and women. You are choice spirits who have been held in reserve to come forth in this day when the temptations, responsibilities, and opportunities are the very greatest. You are at a critical time in your lives. This is a time for you not only to live righteously but also to set an example for your peers. As you seek to live the standards of the Church, you will be able to reach out and lift and build your brothers and sisters. . . . You will be fit and pure vessels to bear triumphantly the responsibilities of the kingdom of God in preparation for the second coming of our Savior.”18

2001 Edition

The 2001 edition of For the Strength of Youth incorporated a subtitle, “Fulfilling Our Duty to God.” The pamphlet was forty-four pages long. Included within it were four pictures of the Savior, a picture of the Salt Lake Temple, and various pictures of youth in a variety of settings. The cover had a picture of the three eastern spires of the Salt Lake Temple on a blue background. The text was updated to incorporate more teachings from Church leaders.19 At the end of the pamphlet was the January 2000 statement, “The Living Christ, The Testimony of the Apostles,” as well as the September 1995 statement, “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”


For the Strength of Youth, 2001
“Sabbath Day Observance”; “Tithes and Offerings”; “Physical Health”; “Service to Others”; and “Go Forward with Faith.” Each section heading had a scripture quoted and referenced beneath it. There was a deliberate focus on principles that provide a universal application of the standards contained in the pamphlet.20

The 2001 edition was published in connection with several other pieces of Church literature for youth. Efforts by the general Young Men and Young Women presidencies again coincided as the Personal Progress, Young Womanhood Recognition, and Duty to God programs were more fully correlated and promoted. The pamphlets of these programs matched each other in size, look, and feel, and all had the temple as their emblem. Both of these programs are based on standards set forth in For the Strength of Youth. A companion publication, True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference, was also made available.

The message from the First Presidency in the 2001 edition was emblematic of the idea that a peculiar people would be protected from the world, would become holy, and would thus be enabled to fulfill their mission:

Our beloved young men and women, we have great confidence in you. You are choice spirits who have come forth in this day when the responsibilities and opportunities, as well as the temptations, are the greatest. You are at the beginning of your journey through this mortal life. Your Heavenly Father wants your life to be joyful and to lead you back into His presence. The decisions you make now will determine much of what will follow during your life and throughout eternity.

Because the Lord loves you, He has given you commandments and the words of prophets to guide you on your journey. Some of the most important guidelines for your life are found in this pamphlet. We testify that these principles are true.

We promise that as you keep these standards and live by the truths in the scriptures, you will be able to do your life’s work with greater wisdom and skill and bear trials with greater courage. You will have the help of the Holy Ghost. You will feel good about yourself and will be a positive influence in the lives of others. You will be worthy to go to the temple to receive holy ordinances. These blessings and many more can be yours.

We pray for each of you. May you keep your minds and bodies clean from the sins of the world so you can do the great work that lies before you. We pray that you will be worthy to carry on the responsibilities of building the kingdom of God and preparing the world for the Second Coming of the Savior. . . .

When you do these things, the Lord will make much more out of your life than you can by yourself. He will increase your opportunities, expand your vision, and strengthen you. He will give you the help you need to meet your trials and challenges. You will find true joy as you
come to know your Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, and feel their love for you.\textsuperscript{21}

**Peculiarity—Ancient and Modern**

The Lord has always helped His covenant people to be peculiar by providing teachings and guidelines to help them fulfill His plan for them. The teachings and guidelines contained in the various editions of *For the Strength of Youth* help the Lord’s covenant people today to become peculiar in much the same way ancient teachings and guidelines helped ancient peoples. These teachings serve to protect modern Saints from the onslaught of the world. These teachings provide assistance in the process of becoming holy. As His covenant people choose to obey, they enter into a partnership with Him and become His—preserved, purchased, precious, purified, powerful, peculiar.

And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters; nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw.

And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together multitudes upon the face of all the earth, among all the nations of the Gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory. (1 Nephi 14:12–14)

Giving heed to the teachings of the living prophets will assist God’s people to be armed with righteousness and with power. Doing so will cause them to become “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.” They will then “shew forth the praises of him who hath called [them] out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9; emphasis added). \textsuperscript{RE}

---

**Notes**


2. “The submission of one’s will is really the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God’s altar. The many other things we ‘give,’ brothers and sisters,
are actually the things He has already given or loaned to us. However, when you and I finally submit ourselves, by letting our individual wills be swallowed up in God’s will, then we are really giving something to Him! It is the only possession which is truly ours to give!” (Neal A. Maxwell, in Conference Report, October 1995, 30; or “Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father,” Ensign, November 1995, 24).


4. These included the Ten Commandments, laws pertaining to integrity and godly conduct, various feasts and other ways to remember the Lord, donations of property, building the tabernacle, cleanliness and appropriate dress of Aaronic Priesthood holders, Sabbath day observance, repentance and forgiveness, caring for the poor, laws about what to and what not to eat and drink, and when to enter holy places, warnings not to be worldly, warnings about various evil practices, warnings about the worship of false gods, warnings about adultery, warnings about homosexuality, warnings about spiritualism, and warnings about other abominations. (See headings to many chapters in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.)


7. “The general officers of the Young Men’s and Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Associations, together with the Brigham Young University and the Church School System and a large group of representative youth of the Church” (introduction, 1965 edition).

The superintendent of the YMMIA from July 2, 1958, to October 6, 1962, was Joseph T. Bentley, with assistants Alvin R. Dyer, G. Carlos Smith, Marvin J. Ashton, Verl F. Scott, and Carl W. Buehner. From October 6, 1962, to September 17, 1969, the superintendent was G. Carlos Smith, with assistants Marvin J. Ashton, Carl W. Buehner, and George R. Hill. From September 17, 1969, to June 25, 1972, the superintendent was W. Jay Eldredge with assistants George R. Hill and George I. Cannon. The title was changed from superintendent to president, and from June 25, 1972, to November 9, 1972, President W. Jay Eldredge had George I. Cannon and Robert L. Backman as his counselors.

The president of the YWMIA from April 6, 1948, to September 30, 1961, was Bertha Stone Reeder, with counselors Emily Higgs Bennet and LaRue Carr Longden. From September 30, 1961, to November 9, 1972, the presidency consisted of Florence Smith Jacobsen, with counselors Margaret R. Jackson and Dorothy Porter Holt.

8. The signatures of David O. McKay, Hugh B. Brown, and N. Eldon Tanner followed the introduction. The 1966 edition included the signatures of Joseph Fielding Smith and Thorpe B. Isaacson, who had been appointed as additional counselors in the First Presidency by President David O. McKay in October of 1965. The 1972 edition included the signatures of Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, and N. Eldon Tanner.

10. The program encouraged youth committees to determine proper music, types of dancing, dress standards, and so forth. It also included a two-paragraph statement from President David O. McKay:

Many of the young people of our Church do not have any evil intentions in dancing current fad dances. However, we think the test of a proper dance is not whether the dancers have evil intentions, but whether the dance is of such dignity and propriety that, even to an onlooker, it suggests nothing but style and good grace. After all, young men and women of our Church should shun even the appearance of evil, and that is why we would very much prefer that you avoid the current trend of what, to many of us, appears to be vulgar dancing. There are too many fine things in this world for the young people to engage in without resorting to dances that are questionable. I hope that you will follow my advice by dancing in accordance with the standards described. You will find that when you accept these standards you will get much more joy and wholesome satisfaction than you do from the questionable dancing engaged in by many. (1966 edition, 14–16).

11. “The Church has not attempted to indicate just how long women’s or girls’ dresses should be nor whether they should wear pant suits” (“Policies and Procedures,” New Era, August 1971, 50). “We have advised our people that when going to the temple they should not wear slacks or miniskirts, or otherwise dress immodestly. We have not, however, felt it wise or necessary to give instructions on this subject relative to attendance at our Church meetings, although we do feel that on such occasions they should have in mind that they are in the house of the Lord and should conduct themselves accordingly” (Priesthood Bulletin, June 1971).

Under the heading “Dating,” two sentences that had been in the previous editions were replaced: “There should be no dating before the age of sixteen. Up to this time, social life should be limited to group activities.” These sentences were replaced by four new paragraphs taken from the New Era:

No dating activities should be planned for the Beehive girls and deacons (Scouts) in the programs of the Church. Supervised activities are planned for these young people to socialize together, learn the basics of dancing and the social graces, etc., as a foundation for future dating.

Mia Maid girls and teachers (Explorers) have many activities of a social nature planned for them, both in their school and Church programs, which they should enjoy in groups. They should avoid boy-girl single-dating relationships.

When young people enter senior high school (approximately Laurel, priest-Ensign age), they may appropriately date with the consent of their parents, who are the best judges as to whether they are mature and responsible enough for this kind of young-adult experience. It is generally advisable that they double-date with friends. Outside of the United States, where school terminology differs—after girls have been in the Mia Maid class two years and boys in the teacher-Explorer class two years—they may appropriately date with the consent of their parents, if customs of the country permit.
Youth should observe the policy of their social group (school and Church groups) and observe standards of dating for their particular group, provided that such standards meet the standards of the Church. This policy is for the protection of youth during their early teen years, allowing them to learn and develop adequately before assuming responsibilities of maturity. (“Policies and Procedures,” January 1971, 30)

In the 1990 edition, age-specific counsel on dating was updated: “In cultures where dating is appropriate, do not date until you are sixteen years old. Not all teenagers need to date or even want to. Many young people do not date during the teen years, because they are not interested, do not have opportunities, or simply want to delay forming serious relationships. Good friendships can be developed at every age” (7).

12. Among these were the following:

- In the early 1970s, a correlation program was introduced to integrate the efforts of many Church departments. The production of curricular materials and programs began to be centralized, and the responsibility for training began to shift to local priesthood leaders.

- President Harold B. Lee organized the Aaronic Priesthood Mutual Improvement Association under the direction of the Presiding Bishopric to provide leadership to the general Young Men and Young Women leaders.

- The First Quorum of the Seventy was organized in 1975.

- In February of 1977, it was announced that the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles would oversee ecclesiastical matters and that the Presiding Bishopric would oversee temporal affairs of the Church. As a part of this change in structure, the Aaronic Priesthood MIA was replaced by the general Young Men and general Young Women presidencies. These leaders served for the brief period between November 9, 1972, to June 23, 1974. The Young Women leaders were Ruth Hardy Funk, Hortense Hogan Child, and Ardeth Greene Kapp. The Young Men leaders were Robert L. Backman, LeGrand R. Curtis, and Jack H. Goaslind. President Backman (currently president of the Jordan River Temple) recalls that when President Lee called him to serve, President Lee said that he was being called to “prepare the young men of the Church for [the] Second Coming of the Savior” (interview with the author, October 2006). His presidency was released from these positions by President Spencer W. Kimball eighteen months later: “On June 23, 1974, the Aaronic Priesthood MIA was dissolved and was replaced by the Aaronic Priesthood and the Young Women directly under the stewardship of the Presiding Bishop. In April 1977, it was renamed the Young Men, and both it and the Young Women came under the direction of the Priesthood Department” (Deseret News 2001–2002 Church Almanac, 105).

- Beginning in October 1979, the presidency of the Young Men was composed of members of the Seventy.

- Area conferences were held throughout Central and South America.

- On June 8, 1978, a revelation was announced extending priesthood blessings to all worthy male members of the Church.

- In September 1979, a new edition of the King James Version of the Bible was published with Latter-day Saint study aids.
• On March 2, 1980, it was announced that ward meeting schedules would be consolidated.
• In September 1981, a new edition of the triple combination was published.

13. Examples include *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), and *President Kimball Speaks Out* (1981), which included teachings of President Kimball that had been published in Church magazines. It included chapters on morality, testimony, missionary work, service to others, profanity, personal journals, tithing, administration to the sick, and planning your life. He also frequently spoke to and taught audiences at Brigham Young University, the University of Utah, and Utah State University.

14. *To the Youth of the Noble Birthright, To the Young Women of the Church, To Young Men of the Priesthood, To the Fathers in Israel, To the Mothers in Zion, To the Home Teachers of the Church, To the Elderly in the Church, To the Children of the Church, To the Rising Generation, To the Single Adult Brethren of the Church, To the Single Adult Sisters of the Church.*

15. “The Lord’s Standards Haven’t Changed,” *Ensign*, September 1991, 7–8. This article is a transcript of an Ensign interview with then Young Men general president Elder Jack H. Goaslind and then Young Women general president Ardeth G. Kapp.

19. Many of the ideas presented by President Gordon B. Hinckley in his November 12, 2000, “A Prophet’s Prayer for Youth,” fireside were incorporated into the text.

20. It is instructive to examine the teachings in the 2001 edition. Note that there are particular statements of principle and practices based on those principles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Principles</th>
<th>Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>“Education will help you to be an influence for good in the world. . . .</td>
<td>“Be willing to work diligently and make sacrifices to obtain learning. . . . “Maintain an enthusiasm for learning throughout your life” (9).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Education is an investment that brings great rewards” (9).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Principles</td>
<td>Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>“When you are honest in every way, you build strength of character that will allow you to be of great service to God and others. You will be blessed with peace of mind and self-respect. When you are honest, you will be trusted by the Lord and by those around you” (31).</td>
<td>“Be honest in your job, giving a full amount of work for your pay. &quot;Don't rationalize that wrong is right, even though many people around you may think there is no harm in being dishonest” (31).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress and Appearance</td>
<td>“Through your dress and appearance, you can show the Lord that you know how precious your body is. You can show that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ. “Prophets of God have always counseled His children to dress modestly. The way you dress is a reflection of what you are on the inside. Your dress and grooming send messages about you to others and influence the way you and others act. When you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit and can exercise a good influence on those around you.”</td>
<td>“Never lower your dress standards for any occasion. ... “Do not disfigure yourself with tattoos or body piercings. If girls or women desire to have their ears pierced, they are encouraged to wear only one pair of modest earrings. “Show respect for the Lord and for yourself by dressing appropriately for Church meetings and activities, whether on Sunday or during the week. If you are not sure what is appropriate, ask your parents or leaders for help” (14–16).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Power of Student Discovery and Sharing

John Hilton III

John Hilton III (hiltonjo@ldces.org) is a Church Educational System coordinator in Miami, Florida.

A Chinese proverb states, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Rather than always “feed” our students, we can plan activities to help them learn how to feast for themselves on the scriptures.

In keeping with this idea, Elder David A. Bednar teaches, “An answer we discover or obtain through the exercise of faith, typically, is retained for a lifetime. The most important learnings of life are caught—not taught.” On another occasion, Elder Bednar was fielding questions from students in a religion class at Brigham Young University–Idaho. While answering a question, Elder Bednar quoted a scripture but did not cite a reference for it. When a student asked for the reference, Elder Bednar said, “If I tell you, you’ll never remember. If you discover it for yourself, you’ll never forget.” Powerful learning takes place when we discover truths for ourselves.

In addition to helping students find truth, it is important to let students share the truths they discover. Elder Richard G. Scott says it is important to “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.”

Consider the importance of student discovery and sharing as they relate to the following points from the Teaching Emphasis of the Church Educational System: “We are to help students . . . identify and understand the doctrines and principles found [in the scriptures], and . . . to
help students learn to explain, share, and testify of the doctrines and principles of the restored gospel.”

In this article, I will explore ways religious educators can increase the likelihood that their students will discover and share truth. But first I will address an important question about the task of the teacher.

The Task of the Teacher

Should teachers prepare lessons with the goal of imparting vital information via lecture or with the goal of helping students learn to make their own discoveries? How teachers respond to this question will significantly affect the way they teach.

Clearly, it is vital to maintain a balance between the teacher’s lecturing and the teacher’s facilitating discovery and participation. A teacher who is focused solely on helping students discover and participate should remember the following from the Teaching the Gospel handbook: “There are times . . . when the teacher needs to talk and the students need to listen. . . . Sometimes people talk about lecture or teacher instruction as if it were an undesirable method. This is not so when it is used correctly. Jesus often taught this way, as did many of the prophets.”

A teacher who is prone to only lecture might benefit from the next sentence of the handbook: “If [lecturing] is overused in the classroom—or, as in the case of some teachers, only used—it can reduce teaching effectiveness.”

Elder Richard G. Scott has repeatedly counseled religious educators regarding the importance of helping students participate in class. On one occasion he said, “Never, and I mean never, give a lecture where there is no student participation. A ‘talking head’ is the weakest form of class instruction.”

On another occasion, Elder Scott commented on how he sometimes conducted the Saturday evening sessions of stake conference. He asked a question and invited responses from the audience. He said he might talk for only “seven or eight minutes” of a forty-five-minute talk. Though Elder Scott could undoubtedly lecture brilliantly for forty-five minutes, he often chooses to use his class time differently—in engaging his students in the process of discovery and sharing.

Religious educators possess knowledge that is vital for their students. Communicating some of the information through lecturing can be an important part of a lesson plan—some things are more efficiently explained or summarized by the teacher. The teacher often has insights that the students will benefit from. In addition, the Holy Ghost can help students make discoveries through the teacher’s words.
At the same time, religious educators must not monopolize the conversation in the classroom. The heart of gospel learning is students connecting directly to the scriptures and the Spirit—not passively listening to the connections a teacher has already made.

Though a few may believe that the role of the teacher is solely to impart his or her knowledge, most gospel teachers would agree that teaching is much more than telling. Because students will likely internalize what they discover and say more than what they hear, the teacher has two essential tasks. The first is to “help students . . . identify and understand the doctrines and principles,” and the second is to help them “explain, share, and testify of [these] doctrines and principles.”

At the core of both of these tasks is the doctrine that the Holy Ghost “shall teach [us] all things” (John 14:26). The Holy Ghost must be present with the teacher in preparation and with the students and teacher in the classroom “that all may be edified together” (D&C 84:110). Providing students with time to discover and share from the scriptures will help them feel the Holy Ghost. I will now consider seven ways teachers can help facilitate student discovery and sharing.

Multiply and Extend Student Participation

First, multiply and extend participation. The Lord said, “Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege” (D&C 88:122). Our goal as teachers should be to help all the students in class express their gospel insights. This process can be challenging, particularly when classes are large or when students are not accustomed to sharing. The following suggestions may help increase participation:

*Have students respond to questions in writing.* Not only does this allow all students to participate but also it improves the possibility of their willingness to share verbally.

*Have students share with a partner or in small groups.* A teacher had students read verses from Doctrine and Covenants 3 and 10 and asked them to look for ways we can overcome the traps Satan lays for us. Then, the teacher asked the students to find somebody in the class they did not know very well and share with that person what they found. This simple technique gave every student in the class the opportunity to share—even in a large class.

*Create a space for students who are less prone to share.* At times teachers may find that the same students are consistently volunteering
to share, leaving some without the opportunity. After asking a question, a teacher could say, “I’d like to hear from somebody who has not yet had the opportunity to speak today.”

*Help students say a little more than they do at first.* A skillful teacher can also help draw additional insights from a student. For example, after a student responds to a question, the teacher could ask, “Could you say a little more about that?” or “What is an experience you have had that relates to what you just said?”

Naturally, each teacher will have his or her own challenges with respect to multiplying and extending student participation in the classroom. The key principle is that the teacher prayerfully seeks to know how to help “all . . . be edified of all” (D&C 88:122).

**Help Students Teach**

A second way to increase discovery and participation is to help students teach each other. Often, teachers say they learn more than their students from lessons taught. Why is this? Because teachers are the ones studying, synthesizing, and making connections between what they have learned in the past and what the scriptures are teaching them today. In addition, teachers share what they learned with the class, driving their discoveries deeper into their own hearts.

Religious educators can take advantage of this phenomenon by giving students opportunities to teach. For example, a few days before a class, a teacher could give a brief section of the curriculum to a student and ask him or her to prepare to teach that segment. Giving students the opportunity to teach can bring powerful spiritual experiences into the classroom. As Elder Robert D. Hales teaches, “Faith promoting incidents occur in teaching when students take a role in teaching and testifying to their peers.”

**Let Students Find What Is Meaningful to Them**

Third, let students find what is meaningful to them. A simple but powerful teaching technique is to ask students to read a few verses silently and mark phrases that stand out to them. This method puts students directly in contact with the scriptures and allows them the opportunity to connect with revelation in their own way.

The scriptures provide examples of this form of teaching. When the Savior taught a certain lawyer, He said, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” (Luke 10:26). In teaching Nephi, the angel asked, “What beholdest thou?” (1 Nephi 11:14; see also 1 Nephi 13:2).
Recently, I observed an institute teacher ask his students, “What beholdest thou?” when as a class they read Joseph Smith—History 1:5–15 aloud. Then, the teacher invited the students to silently reread the verses and carefully look for new insights. Though I had read those verses many times, as I reread them, I saw several things I had never seen before. The teacher then asked students to share what they found. Several students raised their hands; I was impressed by the depth and originality of their thoughts. The teacher then invited the students to read more carefully in their personal scripture study. These students were being taught how to fish.

**Have High Expectations**

A fourth way teachers can influence student discovery and participation is to raise their expectations of their students. For example, some teachers may hesitate to ask their students to read verses silently because they doubt that their students will actually read the assigned verses or even that their students will bring scriptures to class. It requires extra work and faith for a teacher to expect students to bring scriptures and to believe that the students want to learn, and the teacher risks being disappointed if the students do not rise to the expectations. Teachers cannot control what their students will do, but what the teachers expect of their students can make a significant difference in whether students find and apply truth. Elder Henry B. Eyring teaches the following:

> You can make it far more likely that [your students] will choose what will let them claim a constant companionship of the Spirit...

> It begins with expectations, yours and theirs. If you expect little, they will feel your lack of faith in them and in the Lord’s promised outpouring of the Spirit. If you communicate, by word or action or even by your tone of voice, that you doubt their spiritual capacity, they will doubt it. If you see in them... potential... they will at least have the chance to see it in themselves. Your choices of what you expect will have powerful effect on their choices of what to expect of themselves.\(^\text{11}\)

One early-morning seminary teacher chose to make her high expectations explicit to her students and their parents. They met together to discuss the CES *Teaching Emphasis*. In a subsequent class when students were reluctant to participate, she brought out a copy of the emphasis and reminded students of their responsibility to share and testify. She reported that the students began to participate more.

One institute teacher communicated higher standards in the form of a syllabus. He invited his students to write a paragraph each week about their personal scripture study. At first few students responded, but with
continued love and emphasis from the teacher, more and more students began writing their responses. Several students reported that their scripture study improved because they were asked to report on it.

Raising expectations can be hard for both teachers and students. Students who are used to passively listening to teachers may initially resist putting more effort into the class, and teachers who raise expectations might be tempted to lower them if they encounter opposition. But if teachers continue to expect the best from their students, students “will at least have the chance to see [high potential] in themselves.”

Get Excited about Students’ Ideas

Fifth, teachers can help their students discover by getting excited about students’ ideas. Sometimes a student will share an insight the teacher has never considered; other times students will discover what the teacher has already found. The teacher should get excited in both cases. Eleanor Duckworth, professor of education at Harvard University, writes, “I see no difference . . . between wonderful ideas that many other people have already had, and wonderful ideas that nobody has yet happened upon. . . . The more we help [students] to have their wonderful ideas and to feel good about themselves for having them, the more likely it is that they will some day happen upon wonderful ideas that no one else has happened upon before.”

In a class I took with Professor Duckworth, students were required to watch the moon on a regular basis and keep track of its shape and movement. Occasionally, we watched the moon together during class. One week we observed the moon from a courtyard adjacent to our classroom. The next week at the beginning of class we looked at the moon from a garden on the other side of the building. As class ended, Professor Duckworth and five or six students remained in the garden. It occurred to me that it would be interesting to look at the moon from where we had been the week before, to see what the moon looked like from that vantage point. When I told Professor Duckworth I was going to observe the moon from that spot, she seemed excited and told the other students, “John has a great idea. Come on. Let’s walk to the other area!”

Professor Duckworth herded all the students to the previous week’s spot. Her words and actions conveyed genuine enthusiasm about my idea. In reality, it probably was not such a great idea, but my teacher’s simply being excited about my idea motivated me to continue studying the moon more deeply—and I did!

Think of the enthusiasm the Spirit of the Lord demonstrated when Nephi gave an answer that the Spirit surely already knew! (see 1 Nephi
11:4–6). We can be equally excited about our students’ discoveries. As I teach, I’m sometimes tempted to respond to a student’s insight by saying, “Yeah, I had that idea” or “When I thought about that I . . . ” because I want to share my own wonderful ideas. It would be much better to get excited about their ideas and ask, “Could you explain what you mean? That sounds interesting!”

Give Students Assignments or Challenges to Do Outside of Class

A sixth way teachers can help their students discover and share is to give them challenges to do outside of class. The Teaching Emphasis of the Church Educational System states, “We are to help students develop a habit of daily scripture study. . . . We are to encourage [students to explain, share, and testify of gospel principles] outside of class with family and others.”14

There are many ways teachers can accomplish these objectives. One simple technique is to give a reading assignment for the next class with something specific for the students to find. For example, teachers could assign students to read Alma 5 and look for the number of questions Alma asks in the chapter. Teachers could also ask students to come to class prepared to share their three favorite questions from the chapter. And teachers could also ask their students to prepare a presentation for the next class or to set a specific goal related to one of the principles discussed in class.

One seminary teacher gave her students a daily challenge related to what they had studied in class that day. For example, after a class on gossiping, she challenged them over the next twenty-four hours to count the numbers of times they avoided gossip by walking away or changing the subject. Giving these challenges was not easy—it took additional thought to create assignments; also, this teacher took time to create and implement a variety of ways to follow up on these challenges. Some days she asked for volunteers to share what they had done. Other times she had students write down how they fulfilled the challenge, or she called a student the night before class to invite him or her to share.

This teacher was willing to take the risk that no students would take the challenge. It could be embarrassing for the teacher to ask, “Who took last night’s challenge?” and have nobody respond. But she did it anyway, and the days she got a response more than made up for the days she did not. Elder David A. Bednar teaches:

Consider how missionaries help investigators to learn by faith. Making and keeping spiritual commitments, such as studying and praying about the Book of Mormon, attending Church meetings, and keeping
the commandments, require an investigator to exercise faith and to act. 
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 those words are applied to the classroom, we might para-
phrase, “One of the fundamental roles of a teacher is to help students 
make and honor commitments—to act.” Giving students challenges 
to do outside of class, sincerely expecting them to complete those 
challenges, and following up with students are extra-mile efforts that 
help students discover that the scriptures really do apply to their lives. 
Teachers can then provide students time to share their experiences 
with the challenge, which can increase other students’ resolves to apply 
gospel principles in their lives.

Plan Lessons Sufficiently Ahead of Time

In the 2007 worldwide training broadcast, Elder Jeffrey R. Hol-
lund taught: “If I were going to teach a class on Sunday, I would read 
through and begin praying about that lesson the Sunday before. That 
gives me a full week to pray, to seek inspiration, to think, to read, and 
watch for real-life applications that will give vitality to my message. 
You won’t finalize the lesson that early, but you will be suprised to 
find how many things come to you during the week, how much God 
gives you—things that you will feel to use when you do finalize your 
preparation.” Teachers can help students make and share discoveries 
by planning lessons far enough in advance that they can give students 
time to participate. This advance preparation may be inconvenient, and 
it certainly requires careful planning, particularly for those who teach 
each day. But when a teacher prepares a lesson ahead of time, he or she 
can thoughtfully delegate parts of the lesson to students.

For example, at a recent faculty meeting, one institute teacher 
shared how he had set a goal to plan his lessons in advance to help 
increase student participation. As he prepared his lesson, he decided 
that class should begin with a discussion on the Fall. He contacted two 
of his students and invited them to do a topical study on the Fall and 
and to summarize their study in a three-minute talk during the next class. 
The students agreed, and the teacher observed that the few minutes the 
students shared their discoveries about the Fall were the most power-
ful of the class. If the teacher had finished his lesson preparation five
minutes before class began, he still could have asked students to share their insights on the Fall, but giving them advance notice gave them the opportunity to study outside of class and made their experience more positive.

Planning lessons in advance can also increase student participation by giving the teacher additional time to reflect on and improve the lesson plan. For example, a teacher may have planned a lesson in which he or she closes by summarizing the lesson and bearing testimony, but with time to review the lesson plan, that teacher might decide to ask a student to summarize the lesson and bear testimony, which would give the student the opportunity to “verbalize truths” as Elder Scott has encouraged.17

Questions

As teachers reflect on their teaching practice and ponder ways they can help students make discoveries and share what they learn, the teachers may have some of the following questions:

**How can teachers tell if they are helping their students discover and share?** Naturally, the best way for teachers to get feedback on how well they are doing is to ask the Lord in prayer. The following barometers may also help teachers recognize whether they are giving students sufficient opportunities to make discoveries and share what they learn. First, what percentage of time is the teacher talking? The more a teacher talks, the less likely it is that students are making their own connections to the scriptures. A second question teachers could ask themselves is, Are students given opportunities to make important discoveries? For example, are they reading scriptures looking for inconsequential facts, or are they looking for principles and doctrines that are meaningful to them? Third, how many students share what they learned? Teachers should creatively plan so they elicit participation from as many students as possible.

**Isn’t group work and sharing just a way to fill class time?** The principle to remember is that true learning happens when students “discover . . . through the exercise of faith.”18 It is true that the same methods that can be used to increase discovery and participation can also be used simply to fill class time. That does not mean the methods are bad but simply reflects the fact that teachers need to use them in such a way that helps students really learn.

**If I let students share their insights, won’t I lose control of my class and not be able to cover everything in my lesson?** This question raises two important issues. Some teachers worry that if they let students share...
with each other what they have discovered, the students will simply goof off and the teacher will lose control. Teachers with this concern can raise their expectations for the students. Most students, with proper structure, can discover truth from the scriptures that they value enough to share with others.

It is true that when teachers relinquish class time to students, teachers may not be able to cover everything they had planned. But, as Elder Scott explains, “Your highest priority is not to get through all the material if that means that it cannot be properly absorbed. Do what you are able to do with understanding. . . . If a key principle is understood, internalized, and made part of the students’ guidebooks for life, then the most important objective has been accomplished.”

Conclusion

Student discovery and sharing are vital components of learning. Therefore, teachers should help their students discover and share truths from the scriptures. This process takes preparation and class time; therefore, teachers may need to limit the amount of time they lecture. Teachers facilitate discovery and sharing when they multiply participation, help students teach, and let students connect directly with the scriptures by finding what is meaningful to them. Teachers also help their students by having high expectations and by being genuinely excited about their ideas. By giving their students challenges and by preparing their lessons in advance, teachers can help their students share in meaningful ways.

Increasing student discovery and sharing are not easy tasks; indeed, in some teaching situations, they may be quite difficult. It will take much prayerful pondering, work, and experimentation to learn what works best in individual classrooms. This effort will pay off as students no longer depend on the teacher for spiritual food but learn to take nourishment directly from the scriptures and the Spirit of the Lord.

Notes


4. Church Educational System, Teaching Emphasis (Salt Lake City: The
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003).
Photograph of Hill Cumorah by Kenneth R. Mays

Religious Education Image Archive, B44
From Calvary to Cumorah: What Mormon History Means to Me

Richard E. Bennett

Richard E. Bennett (richard_bennett@byu.edu) is a professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.

This presentation was made to a combined audience of Latter-day Saint and Evangelical Protestant scholars at a special interfaith dialogue conference held in Nauvoo on May 17, 2006.

Fifty years ago, when as a young boy I first visited Nauvoo and other Latter-day Saint historical sites, I wrote in my little diary such fleeting comments as “Went to Palmyra [New York] and slept on the Hill Cumorah” (July 23, 1956); “Arrived at Independence, Missouri, today. Saw the place where the Missouri Temple will be built” (July 1, 1956); and finally, “Saw the old Carthage Jail where the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred. Also we saw other historic sites of the Mormons in Nauvoo.”

Nauvoo was then a far cry from what it is today. There was no Nauvoo Restoration, Incorporated. There were no beautifully restored buildings, no Williamsburg-like effort to manicure and professionally preserve and restore the past, no missionary-oriented visitors’ center, and certainly no temple restoration as we see today. Rather, Nauvoo slumbered on the banks of the Mississippi—dusty, unkempt, and not at all sure if it had a future. Thanks to the work of a few far-sighted private members, some efforts were made to resurrect the past. And, of course, families like mine kept coming in ever-increasing numbers to connect with and revere the history of the Restoration.

In awakening to the city’s future, the leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints changed its policy and determined to invest in the future of Nauvoo by professionally restoring this site. Said
Elder Delbert L. Stapley of the Quorum of the Twelve in the early days of the Nauvoo restoration:

Many thousands in the Church today have no real understanding of the personality, power, and mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith and other Church leaders. By developing our understanding and appreciation of Church history, we gain perspective and strengthened sense of purpose. It will aid us in making present-day choices and in obtaining present-day testimonies. . . . History carries the torch of light from the past into the present and illuminates the future. . . . This approach to Church history at Nauvoo demonstrates that Church pioneers were real people, living in the real world of America. History can enable us to ease the transition from one type of living to another and increase our effectiveness in the work of the Kingdom of God. . . . [It] would allow the student to vicariously relive the lives and experiences of these faithful pioneers and to point the way toward increased devotion and perspective. . . . To appreciate the fruits of Mormonism, one must understand its roots.²

Also since that time, the intellectualization of Church history and the rise of what many term the “New Mormon History”³ have changed the intellectual landscape of our past and have invigorated the faith of some while sorely testing it in others.

A place of history such as Nauvoo provides us a timeout from our busy lives and hectic schedules to ponder on the gospel of Jesus Christ and the meaning of history. Nauvoo is a tangible, physical expression of the spiritual reality of the Restoration of the gospel, which in turn is the modern, downstream reiteration of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has power as a sacred place because it reminds members of the Church of the importance of their heritage, bringing the past to the present. Behind the buildings and the structures, beyond the pioneers and their families, and before the temple and the Red Brick Store is the First Vision of the Prophet Joseph Smith, which is a revelation anew of our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Fundamentally, if Nauvoo does not mean Christ, then it means very little.

Perhaps the best starting point to understand what sacred space can mean to all of us is to remember the imprint of the divine in our individual lives. From my experience, there are three essential elements to the sacred moments in my personal life: time, place, and person. I look back at the YMCA Hall on Elm Street in the hard-rock, heavy-drinking mining town of Sudbury, Ontario, where I was baptized on May 23, 1954. Although the building has been razed and the swimming pool, changing rooms, and doorways no longer exist, the memory remains, and thankfully the record attests that on that day my life changed forever. It will ever remain a sacred time to me.
So, too, the Sudbury Moose Hall on Pine Street, hardly a sacred place with its moose head, beer hall, and dancing floor—an established secularity in an irreverent setting—became a sacred spot for me. It was the place where Church meetings were held, where my testimony of the living gospel of Jesus Christ began to take root, and where I began to feel those “swelling motions,” as Alma discusses, and the power of conversion and testimony (Alma 32:28). Richard Mouw recalls something similar in the “gospel tent meetings” of his youth. “I can still smell the sawdust, and this aroma carries with it spiritual associations that have shaped my understanding of what it means to be a Christian human being. And I think it is important—not only for myself but for the evangelical movement in general—to keep smelling the sawdust.”

This will ever remain a sacred space to me. I am sure that to all of us there are such sacred moments and hallowed places in each of our individual lives that still stir our devotions and recollections.

And as for person, I came to know the Savior most intimately through my study of the scriptures. I remember reading Jesse Lyman Hurlbut’s Story of the Bible for Young and Old with its helpful illustrations. I was given my first Bible when I was ten. I can remember the smell of the leather, the cool crispness of the pages, and the warm invitation to read from them. I recall the many stories of Jesus taught to me in Sunday School and Primary by loving teachers. The Holy Bible, in my very early life, became the anchor of my faith, the authority of my life, my illuminated passageway to Christ, and a companion with prayer to personal revelation. The Bible made Christ the living person of my life. Not a collection of ethics, not a mere standard for living a good moral life, it was a call to Christ and to the Restoration of the gospel.

When I was eighteen, one of my greatest religious experiences came in my own grove of trees while working one day for the railroad in the wilds of Canada. That spiritual experience, with the Book of Mormon in hand, remains forever engraven in my heart as a witness not only of the book’s truthfulness but also of my Heavenly Father’s personal love and concern for me and His “tender mercies.” To me, the Bible and the Book of Mormon are far more than mere publications; they are living water from a living Christ. As one scripture in the Book of Mormon says of these things, “They [the plates of brass] have enlarged the memory of this people, yea, and convinced many of the error of their ways, and brought them to the knowledge of their God unto the salvation of their souls” (Alma 37:8; emphasis added).

There are no physical barriers to the operations of the Spirit of the Lord. Just as Paul could never disassociate his conversion from the
road to Damascus, so we, as members of the Church who have been touched by the grace of Christ and by the enticings of the Holy Spirit, can never disconnect ourselves from our own history in these sacred places. We find meaning for our living in the history of our lives—those times and places where God has entered in.

So, too, there is a compelling sense of Christian history that should reverence our collective experiences. From the accounts of the New Testament, such places as Calvary, Gethsemane, the Tomb, Mars Hill, and the Isle of Patmos are of lasting importance to us. We remember them for what literally happened there—what historically transpired. For those of us who have been converted, such locations mean more by the very infusion of our own experience. Places such as these teach us the mighty truth that Christianity, as the great Protestant scholar J. Gresham Machen has so well stated, “is more than just a way of life but a historical fact.” Faced with a growing opposition intent on socializing and secularizing the faith, Machen continues:

The great weapon with which the disciples of Jesus set out to conquer the world was not a mere comprehension of eternal principles; it was an historical message, an account of something that had recently happened, it was the message, “He is risen.”

The world was not to be evangelized by the spread of a wonderful new philosophy but would “be redeemed through the proclamation of an event. . . . Christianity is based, then, upon an account of something that happened. . . . Christianity is based on a real person and a real series of historical events in that Person’s life which, if He or they did not exist or happen means the end of Christianity.”

In more recent times, Adolf Koberle has likewise argued against what he calls the “nonhistorical trend of thought which, as our present age discloses all too clearly, constantly seeks to dominate not only philosophy but also theology. Today it is popular to say that faith is the historical event per se.” He continues by saying that “the proud spirit will always maintain that he can grasp the Absolute with equal immediacy at all points of history and that he is in no way dependent on any particular historical events for the appreciation of truth.” Koberle rejects such views with this argument: “If Jesus did not live, if He did not die on Golgotha, if the crucified one was not resurrected, then all existential appropriation of these things is left hanging in air. How is it possible, therefore, to disparage the ‘facts of salvation,’ to totally compress the objective occurrence into its subjective consummation in the life of the believer, when everything depends upon the fact that faith has firm ground beneath it because God has acted in Christ as the Saviour.”
So, too, Charles Colson has written: “What we need to understand about our faith is that it is not based on wise writings or philosophies or books written in so-called prophetic trances. It is not based on ideologies, which come and go. It is based on the facts of history, real events. . . . That’s what Christianity is: history.” Once again I quote from Machen: “Give up history and you can retain some things. You can retain a belief in God. But philosophical theism has never been a powerful force in the world. You can retain a lofty ethical ideal. But be perfectly clear about one point—you can never retain a gospel. For gospel means ‘good news,’ tidings, information about something that has happened. In other words, it means history. A gospel independent of history is simply a contradiction in terms.”

Latter-day Saints share this view of seeing Christianity historically—that Christ actually lived, died, and was resurrected and that the glad tidings of His Resurrection spawned a movement and a doctrine that continue to change lives. If there is one recurring theological constancy of the Book of Mormon, it is that Christ was born, that He lived and died in Jerusalem, that He was literally resurrected, and that His atoning sacrifice for sin happened in time and place. Abinadi prophesied some 150 years before Christ:

> And now if Christ had not come into the world, speaking of things to come as though they had already come, there could have been no redemption.

> And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection.

> But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ. He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death.

(Mosiah 16:6–9)

Elder LeGrand Richards writes of the Latter-day Saint understanding of the historicity of the risen Christ in the following Easter address given in 1955:

> The resurrection which we celebrate today has lost all its significance if Jesus did not retain his body following the resurrection. Why should some assume that he is now but a personage of spirit, while he declared so emphatically to the apostles: “For a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have”? Why did he take up his body from the tomb at all if the work he had to do following his crucifixion could have been done better while in the spirit only? Why did he not leave his body lying in the tomb? Where in the scriptures is there justification for the
belief that he has laid his body down again since he took it up from the
tomb. . . . Is it possible that our Lord has died a second time, that he
can be but a personage of spirit? If so, why do we celebrate Easter in
commemoration of his resurrection?¹¹

The Latter-day Saint view on the historicity of biblical Christianity
is similar in the way it views the Restoration. Just as Machen argues
that without Christianity’s history there is no real Christianity, so in
similar fashion Latter-day Saints argue that without the factual liter-
alness of our history, there is no Restoration. The First Vision—the
appearance of the Father and Son to Joseph Smith in a very real grove
of trees near Palmyra in upstate New York in the spring of 1820—actu-
ally happened, or Mormonism is a fraud. “Every claim that we make
concerning divine authority, every truth that we offer concerning the
validity of the work, all finds its root in the First Vision of the boy
prophet.”¹² Says President Gordon B. Hinckley: “That becomes the
hinge pin on which this whole cause turns. If the First Vision was true,
if it actually happened, then the Book of Mormon is true. Then we
have the priesthood. Then we have the Church organization and all of
the other keys and blessings of authority which we say we have. If the
First Vision did not occur, then we are involved in a great sham. It is
just that simple.”¹³

Such tangibilities in Latter-day Saint history include a book of
scripture written on actual plates of gold accompanied by a three-
dimensional object called the Urim and Thummim, the restoration of
priesthood by heavenly messengers on “the banks of the Susquehanna
River” in 1829, and the laying of heavenly hands on earthly bodies.
Just as the liberal mind recoils at having to see Christ as the center of
history—that “the accent of eternity should be placed upon this one
point of history”—so, too, many take offense at the Mormon emphasis
on the literality of the Restoration as what we might call the “second
point” of history.

Of course, the theology of Christian history, as Machen later said,
was not merely that Christ died—a historical fact—but that He died
for our sins. This becomes the doctrinal expression of the historical
reality—the personal appropriation of a long-ago event, the spiritual
capturing of a physical happening. Latter-day Saints agree with such
dogma but take it one vital step further. The Restoration of the
fulness of the gospel is not merely a historical fact but a doctrinal
necessity—that it happened for the endowment of our eternal life. The
fulness of Christ, the fulness of the gospel, its complete teachings and
ordinances, the supernal gift of the Holy Ghost made possible through
the restoration of divine authority—these constitute much of the doctrine of our history. These doctrinal truths make our historical facts invaluable, memorable, and tangible reminders of modern revelation and its supremacy in our restored faith. This is why we collectively seek to remember and keep sacred such places as Nauvoo. To separate these places, to disconnect the Sacred Grove or the Hill Cumorah from the Christ of the Bible is to build a historical memory that will inevitably fade. Ultimately, this place is sacred not just because of the pioneers, not merely because of Joseph Smith or his martyrdom, but because of the Christ of the Restoration who is the same as the Christ of the Resurrection. They are a continuum in one, from Calvary to Cumorah, from the River Jordan to the Mississippi.

There are, however, other compelling reasons why we Latter-day Saints revere these sacred sites. One of these surely must be that they point to the importance of the *institution* and the establishment of an actual organization, a church, a very corporeal expression of the gospel message. The restoration of the Church is of signal importance, for with it came authority and the multiplicity of rules and policies, levels of government and jurisdictions, hierarchies and bureaucracies—the very things that many who wish to humanize religion despise and cast away as irrelevant and obstructionist to the individual freedom of worship. Yet this has given weight and structure to the Restoration at a time when many other religions were downplaying the place of the ecclesiastical and the structures of Christian religion. Leonard I. Sweet spoke clearly of such modern trends when he wrote of the anti-institutionalism of the late 1960s: “For the first time in American religion, the authority of the church was widely discredited. Many Christians abandoned an understanding of the church as an institution that sets standards for society in favor of an institution that meets the needs of society, a change in definition that had shuddering consequences for the formation of religious and personal identity.”

Likewise, the restoration of such sites, and in particular the City of Joseph, or Nauvoo, points to the importance of *community* to the Latter-day Saints. Every careful reader of Latter-day Saint history and doctrine will recognize that although salvation is essentially an individual affair, much is accomplished collectively. The Saints did not come out west in individual migrations; rather, they came as a group or they did not come at all. As William Clayton penned in his famous hymn, “Come, Come Ye Saints,” it was always a sense of the collective, that “*We’ll* find the place.” Nauvoo represented a gathering to Zion of converts in great numbers, the building of a new city of believers. Nauvoo,
then, represents a community of Saints who shared common beliefs and values. Even in temple worship, Latter-day Saints go through in companies, not by themselves. Though Mormonism preaches individual salvation, it advocates interdependency on one another. Its emphasis on marriage, particularly eternal marriage and the family, speaks of family exaltation as much as if not more than of individual salvation. It is this community of believers, this family of support, that means so much to modern Mormon perspective. And with it has come a strong sense of tradition, family history, and even legacy. Some Latter-day Saints see more of this than anything else when visiting such places as Nauvoo. Many who have ancestry who lived and were persecuted here see in this the establishment of lasting family values—if not characteristics.

This emphasis on heritage, on preserving our legacy, has spared The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints against loss of identity, what Sweet calls “culturalist Christianity” in an age when promoting social causes has come to mean more than preserving historical consciousness. He says:

"What a religious tradition does with its past has everything to do with the establishment of a distinctive identity. The preservation and transmission of the tradition is an ineluctable obligation of the church. But culturalist Christianity discarded the cultivation of religious belief and the preservation of the heritage for social engagements in changing national and international society. . . . In the 1960s . . . the goal was not to prepare a new generation for the church but to promote social and personal values among the young and to translate religious symbols into ethical and political imperatives among the adults. . . . Thus Protestantism raised a generation of kids who were robbed of their history and without inheritance. . . . A tradition cannot long survive without a living memory. By failing to generate among church members a sense of living out their past, much of Protestantism cuts the cords of community in the present and endangered its survival."

No more sacred space exists in Mormonism than the holy temple. Such are sacred not only as monuments to our history, our sense of Christ and the Restoration, and our sense of working together as a consecrated people, but also as places for personal, individual revelation, covenant making, sanctification, and personal holiness and purity. Though the inscriptions on such buildings invariably say “Holiness to the Lord,” they are invitations to personal holiness, consecration, and sacrifice that no ordinary Church history site can ever afford.

The reconstruction of the Nauvoo Temple, its perfect restoration on the very historical site on which the original building once stood, is a combination of the collective and the individual memory. More than
any other site in the old city, it blends the present and the historical and gives embodiment to what it all spiritually means. So, too, the temples in Palmyra, New York, and certainly at Winter Quarters are attempts to capture our history for present spiritual commitment.

Not that such reconstruction came without discussion among those in the highest councils of the Church. Even with the work of President Joseph F. Smith in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to purchase historical properties, many modern Church leaders could not support such expenditures. Considered by some to be a nonintegral part of the mission of the Church, the preservation of such places as Nauvoo by the institution of the Church was slow in coming. Brigham Young tried desperately to sell the Nauvoo Temple to the Roman Catholic Church, and the temple lot in Independence and the Kirtland Temple were not retained in the desire to establish the Church in the West. Restoration of Church history sites would have to wait until the salvation of the Church was assured. All would come in order. Thanks to the vision, tireless efforts, and financial sacrifices of such modern preservation pioneers as Wilford Wood and Dr. LeRoy Kimball, Nauvoo is the classic expression of the inspiration of the rank-and-file membership who have insisted on remembering this place.

There are, of course, problems and pitfalls for a Church that insists on preserving its history. I mention but two. The first is in the very selectivity of what the institution chooses to remember and celebrate—that is, in deemphasizing some things that happened there. Here in Nauvoo, there is little in the corporate remembering, and even less in the missionary rendering, that will ever speak to such practices as plural marriage. It is as if such a practice never happened and was never part of the Prophet’s teachings. Such selectivity of what to remember and honor and what to discard may lead to a sense of misunderstanding, if not suspicion, for some followers of the faith. For when some of these truths come out—as they invariably have done and will continue to do—some members inevitably feel let down. In recent published attempts to engage the many critical interpretations of the motives and personality of the Prophet Joseph Smith in candid, professional, and even faith-supporting ways, several modern Latter-day Saint scholars have broached topics that the rank-and-file members know little about. What was best left unsaid by those wanting to project a modern image on our past has become for some an issue of honesty.

The point is, if we believe in literal history and the power of sacred places, excessive selectivity for corporate public image purposes may lead to a disservice in the long run. The reaction, for instance, to Rich-
ard L. Bushman’s biography of Joseph Smith, *Rough Stone Rolling*, by several Latter-day Saint readers is not one of objection but one of sus-
picion. Why has so little of this been told? Is it possible that the image
makers in art, film, and literature are doing a disservice to the faith-
building power of our own history? If the Restoration is, like the gospel
of the New Testament, history, then what history are we remembering?
One of Bushman’s contributions is to show that we take it all, warts
and all.

The second problem is somewhat the reverse: seeing what was
never there. Some time ago, a colleague of mine approached me with a
question. He had just read a chapter in one of my books dealing with
the succession of Brigham Young to the presidency of the Church in
the Kanesville (Iowa) Log Tabernacle in December 1847. “Why didn’t
you tell about the earthquake?” he wondered. “What earthquake?”
I asked. “The one some later said happened on that day in that place.
Surely it was a sign of God’s benediction.” I could only respond that
there may have been a retrospective account somewhere that spoke of
such things, but from my research into scores of contemporary letters,
diaries, and sermons, the Spirit of the Lord was in abundance without
any earthquake occurring. “But it’s such a faith-building story,” he
argued. “It had to have happened!”

I have reflected on our conversation many times since. Why is it,
I wonder, that many Latter-day Saints “go beyond the mark” in
wanting to believe in that which never happened, in seeking more
than truth, in relying on myth when fact and faith are ever sufficient?
Elder Bruce R. McConkie speaks of this tendency when discussing the
miracle of the 1978 revelation on the priesthood:

*Latter-day Saints have a complex: many of them desire to magnify
and build upon what has occurred, and they think of miraculous things.
And maybe some of them would like to believe that the Lord himself
was there [at the temple], or that the Prophet Joseph Smith came to
deliver the revelation, which was one of the possibilities. Well, these
things did not happen. The stories that go around to the contrary are
not factual or realistic or true, and you as teachers in the Church Edu-
cational System will be in a position to explain and to tell your students
that this thing came by the power of the Holy Ghost, and that all the
Brethren involved, the thirteen who were present, are independent
personal witnesses of the truth and divinity of what occurred.16*

None of us appreciates being purposely deceived. Bearing false
witness is both a crime and a sin. There are only hurt, sorrow, and
diminishment in lying and deception. Satan himself is called “the father
of lies” (2 Nephi 9:9). Why is it, then, that we hate lies but often love myths and the persistent believing in that which is not so? I believe that in doing so, we not only twist the truth but also destroy our faith for the simple reason that faith is based on truth. As the Apostle Peter said, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Alma added, “Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true” (Alma 32:21). Truth, not deception, is the bulwark of faith.

The dictionary defines myth as “a belief, opinion, or theory that is not based on fact or reality,” an “invented story,” or “made-up person or thing.” Mormon history, or rather Mormon memory, is strewn with such masquerades for truth and misconceptions of fact. Spurious accounts of the appearance of the Three Nephites are everywhere, blotting out those that may be genuine. There are even published accounts of oversize Nephite warriors who protected temple doors during the antipolygamy raids of the late nineteenth century. And as a child, I remember reading the book *Fate of the Persecutors*, which assigned the most cruel sufferings and ignominious deaths to those responsible for the Martyrdom. If they escaped justice from the courts of the land, surely they deserved divine punishment! Never mind that Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill have debunked these accounts in their excellent history, *Carthage Conspiracy*. The stories just have to be true.

Yet these pitfalls and problems are the price we are willing to pay for remembering our history and traditions. Much better we have these problems than those of the more serious kind: the loss of the sense of our history and heritage altogether. We can afford and must encourage differing interpretations, but we cannot afford relegating the glad tidings of Cumorah to moral relativism.

In the end, one thing unites Latter-day Saints and believing Christians of all other faiths, and that is a mutual recognition of what Timothy George calls “a true bottomless pit,” what Machen described as “the abyss between belief and unbelief,” namely, “those who believe in something, and the others who don’t.” As Christians, we all believe in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; we all share an “unflinching allegiance to the Holy Scriptures”; we all share in a mutual desire to live lives of personal purity and holiness in opposing the secularizing influences rampant in modern society, in protecting the sanctity of human life, in opposing the destruction of family values, and in spreading the good word of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
Notes

3. The term “New Mormon History” suggests a Renaissance-like return to original manuscripts with emphasis on revised interpretation, on seeing things as they really were, and on professional historical study.
18. N. B. Lundwall, comp., *The Fate of the Persecutors of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952).
The Next Christendom:
The Coming of Global Christianity

Philip Jenkins

Philip Jenkins (jpj1@psu.edu) is the distinguished professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University. His book The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity won the 2003 Christianity Today Book Award, the Gold Medallion Book Award, and the Theologos Book Award for the best academic book. His remarks below are adapted from his speech at BYU on October 19, 2006.

I would like to begin with an example of not just a prophecy but a prophecy that is empirically verifiable. This seventeenth-century prophecy came from a Roman Catholic Saint by the name of St. Vincent De Paul, who, back in the year 1640, was looking at the violent world around him. It was a world in which Catholics were killing Protestants, Protestants were killing Catholics, and Christians were killing Jews. He observed that Jesus said that His Church would last until the end of time, but He never once mentioned the word Europe. The Church of the future will be the church of South America, the church of Africa, the church of China and Japan. And I suggest that this is perhaps as close as we can get to an empirically verifiable prophecy. We may disagree with the influence of Christianity in Japan, though Japan has produced some very fine Christian writers, but otherwise Christianity is moving decisively to the Global South, to those three parts of the world.

It would be very easy to tell this story in terms of overwhelming numbers, and there is a great temptation to bludgeon people with statistics and numbers. I don’t want to do that, but some of these statistics really clamor for quotation to provide a rough framework of what’s happening. In the world today, there are approximately two billion Christians. Of those, the largest contingent, about 530 million,
live in Europe. Close behind is Latin America, with 510 million; Africa has about 390 million; and Asia has about 300 million. However, if we project that film forward into the future, the numbers change quite rapidly. By 2025, the title for the “most Christian” continent—the continent with the largest number of Christians—will be in competition between Africa and Latin America.

If we move further into the future, however, there is no doubt that by about 2050, Africa will win. In terms of population distribution, Christianity will be chiefly a religion of Africa and the African Diaspora, which will, in a sense, be the heartland of Christianity. Let me give you one projection for the countries in the world that will have the largest Christian populations by the year 2050; and, as one might say in this context, I do not claim this as gospel, but it is plausible. Where will the largest Christian populations be in 2050? At the head of the list will still be Europe, followed in no particular order by Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, the Congo, Ethiopia, the Philippines, and China.

If you ask older people, they might be able to tell you of something they remember from their youth called “western Christianity.” Whether it still exists is a matter of some debate. If I ask you to think, for example, of a typical Roman Catholic, what do you think of? What does that person look like? Well, bear in mind a couple of figures. Last year there were more Roman Catholic baptisms in the Philippines than in France, Spain, Italy, and Poland combined. These days, countries like Nigeria, the Philippines, and Mexico are exporting priests to countries that used to be the great heartlands of Catholic Christianity. You can go to Ireland and meet Nigerian priests because there are not enough Irish priests.

If the change I am describing were just a change of ethnicity or geography, then it would be interesting. But I suggest to you that it is actually a much more important change because the character of that Christianity as it moves south is also changing substantially.

I do not claim there is such a thing as a southern Christianity. The Christianities of the Global South are very diverse, but they have certain things in common that are of great interest and great significance for a church like The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This is because the kinds of Christianity that are succeeding across much of the Global South tend to be more traditional in their view of religious authority; they are charismatic in the sense of being open to ideas of dreams, prophecies, and visions; and they are deeply committed to ideas of healing. They are, in that sense, more supernaturally oriented.

We are already seeing some very telling gaps between northern and southern churches as numbers grow. For example, within the Anglican
Communion, there is a very interesting shift. The American branch of the Anglican Communion is the Episcopal Church. It is a very liberal body. A couple of years ago it appointed an actively gay bishop, much to the horror of the churches of the Global South—especially those churches in Africa—who protested very strongly.¹

The American Episcopal Church basically said, “Who are you to tell us this?” And the bishops of the Global South told them who they were to tell them this: “You in America, you have two million Episcopalians, and the number is going down fast. In Nigeria, back in 1975, we had five million Anglicans. Now we’ve got 20 million. It’s going to be 35 million by 2025. Of course, we are not the largest, we are not the only big church in the Anglican Communion. No, no, no! There are lots of others. There’s Uganda, there’s Kenya. The heart of the Church has moved south like many other churches and denominations, and when some of those churches look at what their liberal brethren in the North are doing, they are very disturbed.”

Some of the language in the Anglican debates has become very harsh. One recent statement from the Nigerian Church discussing the American Episcopal Church begins with the line, loosely quoted, “When a cancerous lump in the body has resisted all treatment, the time has come for it to be excised.” Some feel this is lacking in Christian charity. However, when people in the Global North look at some of these comments, they assume that perhaps churches in the Global South are backward, uneducated, and primitive—they have this very fundamentalist approach. But I want to suggest something different. I want to suggest that there are reasons, not just for conversion to Christianity and for the spread of Christianity but also for the particular kinds of Christianity that are growing. In short, I want to suggest that there are many features and characteristics of the societies into which Christianity is moving that give people a special taste, a special liking, a special preference for the Bible.

When you read the Bible, when you read the scriptures in a way that makes it seem like your book, describing your society, your reality, then it tends to give scripture more moral force. You can no longer use the argument, for example, that many Americans might use: “Well, what it says in the Old Testament is interesting historically, but it just describes such a different world. What does it have to do with us today?” If you are in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, it is exactly those parts of the Old Testament that have this kind of documentary relevance—where it seems to be describing your world—and so you tend to take the moral proscriptions very seriously.
Let me give you some examples of this. First, I think for many American and European Christians, the Old Testament is a puzzling book; it is a distant book. It is a book that is hard to take seriously as a direct kind of instruction. In much of Africa and in much of Asia, the main danger with the Old Testament is that it has too much appeal. It is difficult to make the argument that it is, in a sense, superseded by the New Testament. Why? Think about it. Imagine trying to preach the Bible in a society that knows about things like nomadism, paganism, polygamy, and blood sacrifice and that regards these as familiar parts of life. Even if a sophisticated urban African does not know these things firsthand, he or she has relatives and neighbors who do know these things. The Old Testament, therefore, describes this kind of world. If a church speaks the lesson of prophecy as a continuing force, that is something that has great relevance in a society that takes prophecy seriously.

To take one example, much Evangelical Christianity is based on the idea of atonement—the atoning death of Christ. I think for many Americans the idea that blood is shed for sin is a puzzling and even repulsive doctrine. If you try to preach this message in Africa, however, you are speaking to a society where blood sacrifice is a familiar reality. For those people, sacrificing a sheep or a goat is a very well-known part of life. When I talk to Evangelicals in this country, for example, we use terms like “power in the blood,” and I’m often tempted to ask them, “Have you ever seen a blood sacrifice? Have you ever smelt a blood sacrifice?” The answer usually is no. But it does give a great deal of power. There’s a great West African theologian by the name of Kwame Bediako who was doing a commentary on the letters of Paul, and he chose one letter particularly as being “Africa’s epistle” because it reads as if it were written directly to and for Africans. It was the epistle to the Hebrews. You think, “Well, why is that?”

What is the epistle to the Hebrews? It is an epistle that is all about the rituals of the Jewish temple, the sacrifices, and the rituals of the priests in the temple, which, for many Americans and many denominations, are archaic and puzzling—it’s a strange world.

But Africans know these ideas. When Africans read the book of Revelation and read about the altar, the lamb, the throne, and the blood, they relate because these are familiar things. These are things we know all about. So a large part of the message has already been conveyed. When you look at hymns in the contemporary Global South, you get this very strongly if you look at hymns in the contemporary Global South. Let me make what may sound like a strange observation. We are today living in the greatest age of Christian hymn writing. More hymns are being composed now and being sung now, but most of them
are not accessible to us as Americans because they’re in languages we
do not know. They are written in Yoruba; they are written in Luganda.
Some of the stories of these hymns are just remarkable.\(^5\)

One of the most powerful is called the “Tukutendereza Yesu,”
which is the great hymn of East African Christianity. The stories asso-
ciated with this hymn are amazing. You hear stories, for instance, of
African Christians who are on the point of being murdered by the
forces of a hostile army. They will sing this hymn, and the soldiers
about to kill them will join in before letting them go. This is a hymn of
enormous power. What is it about? It is about the power in the blood.
It is about atonement. It is about these ideas, which are Christian ideas,
that carry such special weight for that kind of audience because they
also speak to familiar, traditional ideas.\(^5\)

I make another observation. As Christianity moves to the Global
South, Christianity is also entering a world that is a very poor world.
If you want to think of the average Christian in the world today, then
think of, perhaps, a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a favela
(a shantytown in Brazil)—probably somebody who, by typical Ameri-
can standards, is inconceivably poor. When people like that read or
hear the stories in the Gospels, they hear about a world that is so
familiar to them—a world in which of course a poor woman who loses
a coin is going to ransack the house trying to find it because that’s all
she has to pay for her kids’ food that night.

Let me read you just one quick quote here from a novelist named
Francisco Goldman, writing about Guatemala: “Guatemala certainly
feels biblical. Sheep, swine, donkeys, serpents—these are everywhere, as
are centurions, all manner of wandering false prophets, Pharisees, lepers
and whores. The poor, rural, mainly Mayan landscape has an aura of the
miraculous. . . . [It] is the perfect backdrop for religious parables about
fields both barren and fertile, fruits and harvests, hunger and plenty.”\(^6\)

When you read the scriptures through Third World eyes or when
you read the scriptures through hungry eyes, you begin to realize some
things. You begin to realize how much of the Bible is about food.
Why? Well, because food is the most important thing in the world. If
you want to convey a lesson, a metaphor, you do it in terms of food;
you do it in terms of what John Lonsdale, a great African scholar, calls
“the imagery of the belly.”\(^7\)

If you want to talk about politics in the Global South, everything
is in terms of a bite. A bribe is a bite and so on.\(^8\) This was brought
home to me not long ago. I was talking to some West Africans about
this point, and they said, “There are many things in the Bible which
make great sense to us that perhaps don’t make much sense to Americans.” We came up with some obvious examples like the parable of the sower, and they said, “Oh, of course, the one which really carries all the weight is Psalm 126.” This much-quoted scripture includes the famous line, “He who goes out weeping, carrying seeds to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him” (NIV, Psalm 126:6). You sow in weeping; you reap in rejoicing. If you ever hear this scripture, it’s quite often used in the context of a funeral, and it’s associated with the idea of death and resurrection. But let me ask you, why do people sow in weeping? My West Africans had the answer. When Psalm 126 was composed, there had obviously been a famine, just like West Africa had two years ago. When there is a famine, you have a very limited amount of corn, and you have a choice: you can use the corn to make food to feed your children, or you can sow the seed corn and have it grow for next year. But to choose the second option, you literally have to take the corn out of the hands of your hungry children. So you sow in weeping, and then you rejoice when you bring home the sheaves.

In many parts of the world, people ask, “How are you?” and the response is, “Oh, my children are hungry”—because that is the time of year that the planting cycle begins. So when you have this in mind, when you have this image of food, you begin to look back at the New Testament to see how much is written about food. When, for example, people wanted to convey the image of the day of the Lord, this immeasurable glorious time when God would rule, how would they convey that image? It will be such an amazing time. It will be like a great banquet, where everyone has enough to eat. Can you imagine such a setting? Or even in the words of Mary, in the Gospel of Luke, “[God] filled the hungry with good things,” and the real bonus: “[He] has sent the rich away empty” (NIV, Luke 1:53).

How do you convey the reversal of the day of the Lord? Even the rich won’t have enough to eat, but the poor will. I would like to offer you a grace from a Chinese house church, and like many things that you see in Global South Christianity, this is the sort of prayer that could have been uttered in the earliest days of the Christian church: “Today’s food is not easy to come by. God gives it to us. . . . God protects us so that we can have the next meal.” The assumption is that you can rely on the meal you have—what’s on the table in front of you—but you cannot rely on the next meal.

Receiving the food from God is also associated with protection from other ills. The other thing you notice is just how much the Bible
is conditioned by famine, by stories of famine. I think most of us today only see or read stories about famine; it is something that we maybe see in the news or read about in the newspaper.

Imagine living in societies where famine is a frequent occurrence. Why did Joseph’s brothers go to Egypt? They had to—a time of famine arose. From such stories, we realize how much of the Bible is about famine.

One of the books of the Bible that is most beloved in Africa is the book of Ruth. Why is that? It’s a story about a society that’s being destroyed by famine, in which society has basically collapsed, in which the men have gone off to the city because they can, in which the women are left behind with the children so they can hold the society together, and in which society survives because people are loyal to each other as a result of familial obligations. I can’t think for a moment why something like that would carry so much weight in Africa, where it carries such a documentary relevance.

When you look at the Bible through Global South eyes, you almost begin to see a different Bible. There are passages within the Bible that perhaps do not carry so much weight for an American audience or a European audience, but in Africa or Asia, they carry so much more weight. One scripture I have rediscovered in the last couple of years is the epistle of James. Now the Epistle of James is one of these works that shows up in all sorts of places.

I think of one very appropriate reference—which is, of course, the spiritual odyssey of Joseph Smith, beginning when he read that Bible verse from the first chapter of James about praying to God and seeking wisdom. James has all sorts of passages that lead people on strange courses in their lives.

James is also one of the main providers of sermon texts in African churches. In one verse particularly, James says, “Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (NIV, James 4:14).

You read this in America, you read this in Europe, and we think it an interesting philosophy. Now read this in an African church where the average age of the congregation is about twenty, where the pastor is this ancient, gray-bearded old man of maybe twenty-eight, and where the average age of death in the community is thirty-eight. Your life is a mist, and passages like those in James carry a lot of weight.

A few years ago I heard a talk by an archbishop from central Africa. He described an interesting world, one which many Christians around the world would look at and say, “What a great situation!” He complained about being so overworked. He said, “It’s terrible; every
Sunday they will say to you, ‘Archbishop, come along to our village; we want to consecrate a new church here.’ You go along the road, and there are hundreds of people, and you go to this vast new church, and then they say, ‘Archbishop, while you’re in the area, can you consecrate another new church?’ The idea was that there are new churches springing up everywhere. He also said two other things. He said that none of his clergy had been paid in six months, and he also said that he had never yet presided over a funeral where there were fewer than twelve bodies. So combine the prevalence of poverty, sickness, and death with a level of church growth that would be astounding.

That mix of poverty and deep, passionate religion is very characteristic. James also provides a very good way of communicating between different religions. Why is this? Because Islam, Buddhism, and other religions also grew up in societies that shared many of the same conditions: poverty, hunger, and disease. In fact, James actually sounds very Muslim when translated. He even calls God compassionate and merciful, and if you ever deal with a Muslim society, you will hear this phrase, “If God wills” (Inshallah). If you ever fly on a Middle Eastern airline, they may announce, “The plane will be taking off in two minutes if God wills.” That can bother you.

In the context of Buddhism, James has a unique power because he preaches this basic idea of transience: your life is a mist. Recently, an English publisher reprinted many books of the Bible and in each case included an introduction by a celebrity, author, novelist, actor, or religious figure—sort of pop-culture figures. One of the texts was the epistle of James. Whom did they get to write the introduction to the epistle of James? The Dalai Lama. He began by saying, “I don’t know much about Christianity, I know a lot about Buddhism. This is fine Buddhism.”

James has this very interesting quality. If you were to try to evangelize a community and if you could use only one part of scripture, one book, one text, what would it be? Many possibilities come to mind. But there are some evangelists in the field and some missionaries in the field who actually think, “Well, if you want to speak to people, let’s look at something that describes their lives and builds on that.” James carries a lot of weight.

One other very important area is the area of good and evil, and this is a matter in which Northern and Southern churches tend to be quite divided. Now, it’s certainly not a straight North-South division, but for most liberal, mainline churches in the Global North, many of the passages in the New Testament—especially about demons and healings and exorcisms—are so irrelevant that they seem almost an
embarrassment—they’re just not part of what the churches pay attention to. Jim Wallis once said that cutting out references to “the poor” from the Bible leaves very little to the text. He’s dead right. If you take references to angels and healings and exorcisms and demons out of the Bible, you’re left with a pretty thin pamphlet. And this is a point that I think many Global South churches have taken very seriously. If you are interested in speaking about Christianity in the Global South, you have to speak to a world in which the world of demons and spirits and curses is taken absolutely seriously.

It has been said by a very sane and sober mission scholar, Andrew Walls, that the two biggest areas of difficulty for white churches in Africa are ancestors and witchcraft. Even to speak of those things is an embarrassment. In African communities, however, unless you address those subjects, you are not speaking languages of vital concern; and that’s why people turn to the New Testament, which deals with very similar concepts. Andrew Walls once said, in effect, “If you want to see the Christian church of the second century in operation, you can basically do one of two things. You can either invent a time machine, or you can buy an air ticket to Africa, and the air ticket to Africa is less expensive.” If you look at the prayers—and once again, the hymns that are coming out of not only contemporary Africa but also India, China, Korea—so many of them read as if they were written eighteen hundred years ago.

Let me give you one example. This is a hymn from contemporary transference of Africa: “Jesus Christ is Conqueror / By his resurrection he overcame death itself / By his resurrection he overcame all things / He overcame magic / He overcame amulets and charms / He overcame the darkness of demon possession / He overcame dread / When we are with him / We also conquer.”

That hymn could have been composed in the year 150; it was actually composed about 1970. You are probably aware of the fact that in American churches, many people are very embarrassed by the hymns that used to be popular a hundred years ago because the hymns were very patriarchal and very militaristic and aggressive, so people tried to change them to make them nicer.

Here is an example of a contemporary African hymn. I particularly like this because it’s by a woman from Ghana, and when you listen to it, you can pick up the very gentle woman’s touch in it: “If Satan troubles us / Jesus Christ / You who are the lion of the grasslands / You whose claws are sharp / Will tear out his entrails / And leave them on the ground / For the flies to eat.” I’m glad we don’t have any of these aggressive hymns!
Demonology is credible for African and Asian Christians in a way in which it has not been for European Christians or American Christians for a long time. I once listened to a white American Adventist pastor tell of an experience he had in a South African Adventist church in an area where white faces were not normally seen. Surprised, the members asked him, “Why are you here? You’re an ordained pastor? That’s the best news we could have!” The word then went up to the minister carrying out the service, and he made this very happy announcement to the crowd: “My friends, I have wonderful news. Pastor Smith has come to visit us all the way from America, and I’m going to ask him to conduct tonight’s exorcism.” The pastor told me that he had only seen exorcisms in movies, but he thought that he did all right!

African churches, Asian churches, and emerging churches believe in the healing of mind and body as a paramount goal. Any American or European church that fails to appreciate that has no business trying to censor them. I offer you one quote from a West African independent church sermon: “Why are we in this church? We are all here in this church because we have found healing here. But for this church, the great majority of us here assembled would not be alive today. That is the reason why we are here.” Each denomination—Methodist, Presbyterian, Anglican, Catholic, any—takes these issues very seriously, or it does not survive as a denomination.

Let me tell you another story of another African church service. Hundreds of people were trying to squeeze into a building, but there wasn’t room for them; and at this service a woman announced that she’d been healed from a spinal complaint. She wanted to testify. Other people stood up. One person said, “I’ve been healed of this.” Another person said, “I’ve been healed of this.”

It goes on and on until finally the deacon of the church, wanting to see the service end before next Sunday, said, “All right, no more individual testimonies. Show of hands: How many people have been healed of this sort of disease?”

Eighteen, nineteen.

“How many have been healed of this sort of disease?”

Four, six, eight.

What sort of church was this? A Roman Catholic church. You get the idea that things you might associate with one kind of denomination, one kind of church, are found across the spectrum.

All churches are healing churches, and that is not necessarily just in physical healing—it means emotional or spiritual healing, healing from substance abuse. Once again, one of the most quoted passages
is the line from James about the church offering anointing and prayer for the sick. You will notice here that I am dealing with many concepts that are very familiar to this audience. I am talking about ideas of the temple, continuing prophecy, and ideas of healing. You just have to be in a different kind of mindset.

In the West, for example, very few of us believe in ancestral evil. Very few of us believe that our grandparents did something bad and that we are therefore being punished for their sins. This is a strange, superstitious idea. In large sections of Africa and Asia, that is a cardinal belief. In India, you have probably 150 million people who are consigned to the lowest caste and who are treated worse than black Americans were ever treated during the years of segregation—because of their conduct in previous lives. Now imagine people in a society like that reading the New Testament and reading about Jesus, who arrives and eats with anyone. Eating with someone is the guide to whom you prefer to mix with—He eats with anyone, mixes with anyone, and destroys ideas of caste. Imagine those stories being read by an audience of people who perhaps have had violence because they once wandered near a temple, never mind trying to go in it, for which they could be killed. It is only when you read something like that that you appreciate the radicalism, perhaps, of the Christian message.20

There are so many other passages to explore, but I come back to this idea about food. Food is so important because it decides who you are—whom you’re allowed to eat with. If, for example, you’re a high-caste person and you eat with somebody who is low-caste, your caste has been damaged. It has to be restored by rituals. Then look at a passage that people of India and Africa still read and tell each other about with disbelief—the story where Jesus is taking a rest and a Samaritan woman comes to the well and Jesus has a chat with her. We read this and think, “It’s a nice story. It has a couple of nice angles to it.” Try to imagine reading that story in a society where what Jesus did is absolutely wrong at every point and what the woman did is something for which she could be killed. We have are no longer shocked by the radicalism of the scriptures, but members of African and Asian churches continue to be. When they get over their shock, they tend to express a new interest in this very radical religion called Christianity.

I want to offer you a poem by Longfellow. This is a poem called “The Sicilian’s Tale: King Robert of Sicily.” He imagines a medieval king, King Robert, who

On St. John’s eve, at vespers, proudly sat
And heard the priests chant the Magnificat,
And as he listened, o’er and o’er again
Repeated, like a burden or refrain,
He caught the words, “Deposit potentes
De sede, et exaltavit humiles;”
And slowly lifting up his kingly head
He to a learned clerk beside him said,
“What mean these words?” The clerk made answer meet,
“He has put down the mighty from their seat,
And has exalted them of low degree.”
Thereat King Robert muttered scornfully,
“’Tis well that such seditious words are sung
Only by priests and in the Latin tongue;
For unto priests and people be it known,
There is no power can push me from my throne!”
And leaning back, he yawned and fell asleep,
Lulled by the chant monotonous and deep.  

Those words, “He has put down the mighty from their seat / And has exalted them of low degree,” could be a motto for Global South Christianity, which has served to take people who were outside the traditional order, people who are marginalized, people who did not have the right to speak, and has given them—from the idea of sociologist David Martin—tongues of fire and the right to speak out.  

In America, people often think in terms of “liberation theology” as a secular, political attitude. Deliverance means healing and spiritual warfare. In Africa and Asia, the two are the same word. African and Asian churches preach deliverance and liberation, or they do not succeed. They speak messages of secular and spiritual liberation. That’s a very radical message.  

I was once talking with a very wealthy lady from the Episcopal Church who said: “In your books you tell this wonderful story of these hundreds of millions of Christians in Africa and Asia, and this new kind of Christianity that’s spreading all over the world. It’s so biblical, and it’s so apostolic, and it’s passionate—it’s like the earliest days of Christianity. Tell me, as Americans, as Christians, as Episcopalians, what can we do to stop this?” She’s right about the passionate spread of this new kind of Christianity! What I think they do have right in the Global South is that they see the scriptures for the radical message they contain. Maybe the challenge in the Global North is to try to see the same message.  

Notes

5. See Jenkins, *New Faces of Christianity*, 33, 56.
8. See Jenkins, *New Faces of Christianity*, 78.
10. See Jenkins, *New Faces of Christianity*, 78.
Donald W. Parry researching the Great Isaiah Scroll in the scrollery of the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem.

Photo courtesy of Donald W. Parry
The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Round-table Discussion Celebrating the Sixtieth Anniversary of Their Discovery, Part 1

Richard Neitzel Holzapfel (holzapfel@byu.edu) is a professor of Church history and the managing director of the Religious Studies Center publication office. Donald W. Parry (donald_parry@byu.edu) is a professor of biblical Hebrew and head of the Hebrew section in the department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages at Brigham Young University. Dana M. Pike (dana_pike@byu.edu) is the coordinator for Ancient Near Eastern Studies and is a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. David Rolph Seely (david_seely@byu.edu) is a professor of ancient scripture and ancient studies at Brigham Young University. Parry, Pike, and Seely are members of the international team of editors for the Dead Sea Scrolls and have contributed to the official Dead Sea Scrolls publication series, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, published by Oxford University Press.

Holzapfel: Since their discovery in the Judaean desert sixty years ago, the Dead Sea Scrolls have both enlightened and perplexed scholars and laymen alike. Between 1947 and 1956, Bedouins and archaeologists found around 930 fragmented documents near the archaeological site called “Qumran,” about ten miles south of Jericho and thirteen miles east of Jerusalem. Each composition is numbered by the cave where it was found and then named according to the scroll’s contents; for example, scroll 11QTemple is from Cave 11 in Qumran and is called the Temple Scroll, while 4Q252 is from Cave 4 in Qumran and is composition number 252. Most of the scrolls were produced in Hebrew or Aramaic between 250 BC and AD 68. The scrolls include books from the Old Testament (except the book of Esther), the apocrypha and other contemporary Jewish pseudepigraphal texts, and sectarian texts unique to the Qumran community. Additionally, scholars found an ancient cemetery near the archaeological ruins of Qumran that raises questions about the cemetery’s relationship to the scrolls, caves, and the archaeological site.
Because misconceptions about the contents and spiritual significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls have sprung up over the years and have spread among Christians, including some Latter-day Saints, I invited three colleagues who have been involved in Dead Sea Scrolls research to join me in a roundtable discussion to answer some important questions regarding the Dead Sea Scrolls, placing the scrolls in context after sixty years of scholarly and popular discussions regarding the importance of these ancient texts. Because of the many questions that surround the Dead Sea Scrolls, this discussion has been divided into two parts to give an opportunity for these three scholars to share their knowledge. This is the first article in a two-part series on the Dead Sea Scrolls, focusing mainly on those texts discovered around Qumran. The second part will be published in the next issue of the Religious Educator. We have added suggested readings at the end of this article for further study on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Creation of the Dead Sea Scrolls

*Holzapfel:* What are the general theories on who collected or copied the Dead Sea Scrolls and when?

*Pike:* The dominant theory is that the scrolls were collected and copied by a group of Jews called Essenes. However, the Essenes did not compose the contents of most of the scrolls. Some scrolls were
brought to the site, some were copied at the site, and some may have
been composed at the site. But composition at the site was probably
limited. Thus, the collection of scrolls probably came from a number
of places, ending up at Qumran during the last two centuries BC and
the first century AD.

Parry: The earliest scroll (4QSam\textsuperscript{b}) dates to about 250 BC, and
the latest scroll dates to about AD 67–70. Regarding the scrolls’
authorship, Magen Broshi and Hanan Eshel have collected twelve dif-
ferent opinions and theories about who lived at Qumran.\textsuperscript{1} Some of
those theories also pertain to who owned the scrolls.

I am currently studying controversies and puzzles in the Dead Sea
Scrolls, in which I have identified about twenty-five controversies and
questions that have remained unresolved among scholars: Who owned
the scrolls? Did the Essenes own the scrolls? Did the Pharisees own the
Scrolls? Did the Sadducees, or did another group? These are some very
important questions that we face.

Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls

Holsapfel: What is the general consensus about the scrolls’ relation-
ship to the caves and the nearby graves and ruins?

Pike: The general consensus is that the Qumran ruins and the scrolls
are connected. Every few years something comes up—some new maver-
ick proposition that somehow the scrolls and the site are not connected,
such as the suggestion that the site was a fort or a villa. It is true that scroll
fragments were found only in the caves near the ruins, not in the ruins
themselves. But the majority of scholars have believed for the last fifty
years or more that the scrolls and the site are integrally connected. This
is primarily because the pottery types found in the caves, such as the jars
in which some of the scrolls were found, match the pottery types found
in the ruins. Since some of these types are not found elsewhere in Israel,
it strongly suggests a link between those who lived at Qumran and those
who deposited the scrolls in the caves. And some of the caves are quite
close to the site, so the proximity argues in favor of a connection. It is also
important to remember that the site was burned and destroyed around
AD 68, so it is not surprising that no scroll fragments were found in the
Qumran ruins. Very little organic material of any sort was found there.

Seely: Excavating the graves has been a problem because of a religious
law in Israel, but some of these graves appear to be later Bedouin graves.

Parry: We have such a small sampling of the graves that have been
uncovered and excavated that it is hard to make any solid statements about
who was buried in the graves: what sex, what age group, and so on.
Holzapfel: Did the Essenes inhabit the ruins and use the caves?
Parry: That is the consensus among scholars.
Seely: The people who lived at the site had something to do with at least some of the scrolls.

Holzapfel: Was Qumran an administrative center with people living in caves, tents, and huts outside, or did people live in Qumran as well?
Seely: Scholars disagree about exactly how they are related, but Qumran seems to be a satellite community of the greater Essene community spread throughout Israel. First archaeologists thought that everyone lived in this big center, but the current view now is that people actually lived in caves around it and used the center for communal meetings, where they would write the scrolls and have their communal meal. I think the people probably lived in the caves or in tents around the area. The consensus is that this community at Qumran apparently demanded some sort of celibacy; it was not like other family-oriented Essene communities that existed elsewhere in bigger cities.

History of the Essenes

Holzapfel: If they were Essenes, we know of them in other sources: Josephus, Pliny the Elder, and Philo. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls represent the first hint of the Essenes’ own writings: writings they produced and collected that talked about them. In other words, is there nothing else that can give us an insider’s view of who the Essenes were or what they thought?

Seely: Other than Josephus, Pliny, and Philo and the scrolls themselves, there are no other sources. All we know is that sometime in the second century BC, the Essene movement was started by someone called the Teacher of Righteousness.

Pike: At least some of the Qumran documents—such as the Rule of the Community (1QS); the War Scroll (1QM); the Thanksgiving Hymns (1QH); the pesherim, or commentaries on prophetic books; and probably the Temple Scroll (11QTemple)—these so-called sectarian texts tell us about some of the distinctive beliefs and practices of the Qumran community. For example, these Jews believed, based on their interpretation of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, that they were living in the evil period of the last days—the “end of days”—and that God would shortly destroy evil from the earth. They believed that they were the chosen ones of God with whom He had renewed His covenant and that there would be a great and decisive battle between the “sons of light,” as they termed themselves, and the “sons of darkness,” as all others were called—both wicked Jews as well as Gentiles. Some of the sectarian scrolls mention the coming of two messiahs, a priestly one and
a royal one. Unique among Jews of their era, the Qumran community believed in the doctrine of determinism, or predestination. They had a particular initiation process for anyone wanting to join their group, and those who were full participants in the community partook daily of a communal meal (that probably prefigured a future meal with the Messiah), referred to in one passage as “the pure meal of the saints.”

These sectarian scrolls thus help us see not only how the Qumran community was connected to the larger world of Judaism at the time but also what made them distinct. However, we do not clearly understand the relationship between these Qumran Essenes and the Essenes who had families and lived throughout the land. The so-called Damascus Document at one point provides regulations for those living in “towns” and “camps.” These are distinct from those who lived at Qumran, and many of the regulations governing them were different.

The reality is that just as there were different major factions within Judaism at the turn of the era, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, there were also other, smaller factions as well, and there were further subgroups within many of these factions. And as seems to be the case, many Jewish people of the day were oriented toward one or another of these groups or subgroups but were not necessarily “card-carrying members” of any one group. Most people believe that the Qumran community represents one particular group or branch of Essenes. I consider them to have been an extradevoted Essene supersect.

Holzapfel: Do the Essenes appear in the New Testament? Can we say that a passage is probably Essene or that it refers to an Essene belief?

Pike: The standard example that I always cite is Matthew 5:43–44. In this passage, Jesus says, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies.” Jesus is somehow responding to and contradicting what appears to have been a strongly held belief unique to the Essenes, or at least unique to those at Qumran. This idea of hating one’s enemies is not attested in the Hebrew scriptures or other Jewish writings but is clearly taught in several different passages in texts that appear to have been unique to the Qumran community and may have been accepted by the wider Essene group in general. Beyond this there is not much that is Essene in the New Testament, but there are some very interesting parallels between certain Qumran and New Testament texts.

Seely: One of these parallels is found in the Qumran and Christian interpretations of the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3: “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” The Gospel writers teach that “the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness”
is John the Baptist in the wilderness (see Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23), preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah. In the Rule of the Community, a sectarian text from Qumran, it says about the Community, “They shall separate from the session of perverse men to go to the wilderness, there to prepare the way of truth, as it is written, ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God’” (Rule of the Community 8.12–16). They both agreed, then, that the way of the Lord would be prepared in the wilderness.

**Treasure of the Copper Scroll**

*Holzapfel:* Let us turn our attention to the Copper Scroll (3QTreasure). Because it is metal, it has captured the attention of many Latter-day Saints. What is the significance of the text? What is the controversy? Is there a question about the translation of the Copper Scroll?

*Parry:* The Copper Scroll lists sixty-four treasure deposits, and there is absolutely a question about its translation. In 1998, I attended a conference in Manchester, England, the place where the scroll was cut into pieces several years ago. During the conference we discussed the Copper Scroll for three days. Just that scroll. Our biggest question was, “Is the copper scroll a genuine composition, or is it fraudulent work?” The scholars at the conference voted on this issue, and the consensus was that it is a genuine composition. It is a genuine treasure map, so to speak.

But there are other questions. For instance, the Hebrew on the scroll is of questionable quality. We think the Hebrew is questionable because it was written on copper. The people who prepared the scroll engraved letters on it, but this is a very difficult process.

*Holzapfel:* Have the readings been basically similar? Are the differences just in some nuances?

*Parry:* Many scholars believe that the Copper Scroll represents the temple treasure from the second temple, or Herod’s Temple. The treasury was quite large and administered by seven priests who were appointed to be treasurers.

*Seely:* One of the controversies is, is it real treasure, and if so, where is it? Most of the places described on the scroll are so obscure that we cannot find them. Some people think they really do know where a couple of the places are. None of the treasure has been found, so if the scroll is truly about treasure, it is very possible that someone has already found it. Vendyl Jones caused a fair amount of destruction of geographical landmarks and caves in that area over the last twenty years by looking for the treasure. I think Jones was finally stopped by the Israel Antiquities Authority. His followers did find a vial of what they called balsam oil.
Parry: I believe that Jones also found some incense, did he not?

Seely: Or what looked like incense—it is somewhat disputed. This treasure is a serious issue, and people really have been looking for it. They really have some strong opinions about this.

Also, a lot of scholars do not consider the Copper Scroll to be a scroll. They consider it a plaque that was rolled up. Rolling it up actually started ruining it. So to call it a scroll is a little misleading.

Parry: Yes, it is a plaque or a plate.

Seely: It was not common for people to write on metal scrolls. It was rolled up for the sake of depositing.

Parry: I think that this scroll has interested Latter-day Saints because it is written on metal.

Pike: So, for Latter-day Saints, did people write on metal in antiquity? Yes, but we have examples that are closer to the time of Nephi and Lehi than the Copper Scroll from Qumran Cave 3.

Parry: And that are also scriptural, such as a very small, seventh-century BC silver scroll found in west Jerusalem that contains Numbers 6:24–26.
Pike: The Copper Scroll dates to five or six centuries after Nephi’s time. In my mind the scroll is a curiosity. I do not think that it was connected with the Qumran community; it just ended up in a cave with some other things that were connected to the Qumran community. But not everybody shares that opinion. Either way, there are better examples of records on metal that are closer to the time of Nephi than is the Copper Scroll, if that is the connection that people are interested in.

The Bible in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Holzapfel: We talked a little about some of the so-called sectarian texts that were found, but we know that all the books of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) except Esther are attested at least once, and in some cases many copies are preserved of what were considered the more important biblical books. What do the scrolls teach us about the ancient Bible, either the Old or New Testament?

Pike: There are no remains of New Testament books found in the Qumran caves, despite some claims a few years ago that some New Testament passages were preserved on small fragments from Cave 7.

Parry: The scrolls have provoked new questions about what the biblical canon looked like in antiquity. Depending on their religious backgrounds, some scholars believe that the Qumran canon was an open canon that included books beyond what is in the present Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament, while others say that those who owned the scrolls possessed the same Hebrew Bible that we have now. By way of example, some scholars attribute canonical or religious authority to the Temple Scroll. Yigael Yadin, B. Z. Wacholder, and Hartmut Stegemann have all argued that the Temple Scroll was a text that held religious authority. I am talking in general terms here because we could talk the whole time about just the canon or what the book of Psalms or some other biblical book looked like.

Holzapfel: The Dead Sea Scrolls seem to represent a remarkably creative period. These people could even have two different versions of the same text. In other words, were they not as firm in fixing a text? Could they live comfortably with two different readings?

Parry: According to scholars, the biblical text was quite fluid at that time. Take one of the Dead Sea Scrolls’ books of Samuel (4QSam*), for example. It has almost five hundred variant readings different from the Masoretic text, or Septuagint. Scholars disagree about whether the variations are major or minor, but some are more or less theological. The large number is even more significant when you consider that only 10 percent of this particular book of Samuel is extant. Samuel, how-
ever, is exceptional with its many variants. Most biblical books are very close to the Bible from which came the King James Version.

**Holzapfel:** Is the multi-attestation of some biblical texts significant? Do more copies of a certain text suggest that it was more important to those who owned the scrolls?

**Pike:** Today we are used to having all of our scriptures under one or two covers. The Qumran biblical texts demonstrate that the practice in that day, for very practical reasons, was to copy the text of only one or two of the longer biblical books on a scroll. So while several shorter books would be copied onto one scroll, the book of Isaiah, for example, required a scroll about twenty-three feet long all by itself, as indicated by the nearly complete Isaiah scroll from Cave 1 (1QIsa\(^3\)). Another example is a scroll that contains only Leviticus and Numbers (4QLev-Num\(^3\)). Therefore it was more practical for them to copy and study those biblical texts that were of greatest interest. And we think that there is a correlation between the multiple copies of certain biblical books attested at Qumran and the importance the content of these books had for those people. Most people today do not sit down and read Chronicles or Ecclesiastes over and over. So it is easier to appreciate why there were multiple copies of certain books when we know that only one or a few biblical books were on one scroll and when we appreciate what it was that the community considered to be most important in the biblical books.

**Seely:** Related to that, the importance of these books can also be measured by the number of times they are quoted in significant sectarian documents. I think that the texts that are attested in multiple copies are cited more. I know it is true for Isaiah and Psalms.

**Parry:** Yes, and Deuteronomy. Isaiah, Psalms, and Deuteronomy are also the three most frequently cited books in the New Testament.

**Pike:** And that says a lot about the nature of the Qumran community. They believed themselves to be true Israel, the people of the renewed covenant, and thought the prophecies about Israel were going to be fulfilled through them in their day, with the coming of the Messiah or Messiahs. And so, as Don mentioned, the three books of the Hebrew Bible best attested at Qumran (and in the New Testament) are Psalms, with the remains of thirty-six copies found; Deuteronomy, with the remains of thirty copies; and Isaiah, with the remains of twenty-one copies. It is no surprise that all three of these books contain important messianic texts.

**Holzapfel:** As we have already noted, the only book among our current Old Testament that is not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls is the book of
Esther. Should we conclude that these people did not accept Esther as part of their canon, or is it a fluke that we did not find it among the fragments?

Parry: In my opinion it is a fluke. Some opine that the book of Esther was not in the collection of texts because it does not mention a name of God anywhere in the text or that its story lacked significance to those who owned the scrolls. But I believe the Esther scroll was probably accidentally destroyed through time. Compare it to the scroll of Samuel, which was originally about fifty-five feet long. One of the copies of Samuel discovered in Cave 4 now survives only in a few small fragments. Since the Esther scroll was much smaller than Samuel, I suppose that the Esther text could have been destroyed over a two-thousand-year period.

Seely: I tend to agree with you. There is a scholarly argument based on the fact that in all the sectarian texts at Qumran there is no mention of Purim, the celebration of Esther delivering the Jews from Haman’s plot. Not celebrating Purim is probably significant.

Pike: If they did not celebrate Purim, then they would have been less inclined to read Esther.

Seely: Then it might indicate a bias against the book of Esther. We did find some texts that refer to Esther, so they were aware of the biblical book of Esther. I tend to agree with Don that the book of Esther may have been destroyed, just as Ezra and Nehemiah are only recognized in the scrolls by one tiny piece of evidence. Technically, Nehemiah is not represented at all. In the scrolls, Ezra and Nehemiah are in one book.

Pike: I think that it is quite possible that a copy of Esther was originally there, but we cannot be sure. Since we have found at Qumran the fragmentary remains of only one copy of the biblical books of Chronicles and Ezra/Nehemiah and the fragmentary remains of only two copies of Joshua, it is important not to be too dogmatic about why Esther was not discovered there. This is another good illustration of one of the challenges in dealing with the Dead Sea Scrolls: we have a specific, incomplete data set susceptible to multiple interpretations; we know many of the issues but we don’t know many of the answers.

Judaism in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Holzapfel: What do we now know about first-century Judaism that we would not have known before the discovery of these ancient texts?

Seely: We have untouched first-century sources on a movement of Judaism. I say “untouched” because almost everything else came through the Rabbinic tradition, which was not even written down for hundreds of years but which was then edited and recorded by Jews
with somewhat different beliefs. So the Dead Sea Scrolls are primary source materials from that period. From Qumran we now have an instant first-century attestation of what Judaism was like in Israel at the time of the New Testament.

_Holzapel:_ What information about ancient Judaism do the scrolls contribute?

_Parry:_ We have so many more texts that were previously unknown to the world, such as the Temple Scroll, the War Scroll, and a copy of a composition called the Beatitudes, different from what was given on the Sermon on the Mount. We also know much more about the Hebrew and Aramaic languages. We have scores of previously unattested words from that period that help us better understand biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew. We know much more about a number of fields and topics. For example, a brand new field that has recently opened up in Dead Sea Scrolls studies is corpus linguistics, in which we use a computer database to study languages and texts. We also know much more about the coming forth of the Hebrew Bible—scribal conventions and scribal approaches. We know what an ancient scroll looks like. We know what the Bible looks like from this time period.

_Seeley:_ In Rabbinic Judaism the liturgical prayers were not written down before the ninth century AD. Therefore, before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we did not have any examples of Jewish prayer besides those few scattered in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have numerous ancient Jewish prayers that give us a real glimpse into Jewish spirituality and into the origins of some of the prayers that are attested later in the Rabbinic prayer book. We now know that they worshiped with _tefillin_ (phylacteries) one hundred years before Christ. We just couldn’t know that without these scrolls.

_Parry:_ In addition, the scrolls present us with a greater view of the variety of religious beliefs and practices that existed in the first century AD—well beyond what we thought we knew before the discovery of the scrolls. We are also able to understand how Jewish groups interpreted the biblical texts—what they considered to be holy writings and how they applied it to their situations, their lives, and their time period. The scrolls present us with these insights and much more.

_Holzapel:_ Many people view Judaism as a homogenous religion during the first century AD. Does the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls smash that assumption?

_Pike:_ If we understand what the scrolls have to say, yes. We know that there were many different factions during this time, including the
Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and other smaller groups. Most Jews of the period identified with a certain group, but they were not necessarily full members of the group. People now talk about Judaisms (plural) during the period prior to the destruction of the Temple in AD 70.

**Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls**

_Holzapfel: How do the Dead Sea Scrolls contribute to our understanding of the historical context of the rise of Christianity that we would not have known before their discovery?_

_Parry: We can see what the Bible looked like at the time of Jesus Christ. We can ask, perhaps, about the Isaiah scroll that Jesus read from in the synagogue of Nazareth (see Luke 4:16–20). What did it look like? How long was it? How were the chapters written? Then we can look at the Great Isaiah Scroll, for instance, and determine what a biblical scroll looked like at the time of Jesus and His Apostles. The Great Isaiah Scroll was twenty-three feet six inches long; it lacked verses and chapters. It was written in Hebrew without vowels, without punctuation, without capitalization of any Hebrew characters. How did Jesus locate the reference that we now call Isaiah 61:1–2? He had to find it by context or some other means, for He couldn’t go to the chapter and verse._

_Pike: He knew His scriptures!

_Parry: Yes, He knew His scriptures in a remarkable way. Knowing about these scrolls or scriptural books teaches us much about Jesus Christ’s great knowledge of the scriptures._

_Seeley: The bigger mystery worth considering is why, when the people of Qumran were so close geographically to Christians for thirty years, they do not seem to have mentioned each other._

_Holzapfel: Perhaps because Christianity did not become a dominant missionary project until after these people died in the first Roman-Jewish War? Even the Pharisees did not mention the Jesus movement until much later._

_Pike: Well, the early chapters in the book of Acts indicate there was quite a bit of missionary activity going on in the land of Israel in the several years just after Jesus’s Resurrection. I have always supposed the reason for these groups not mentioning each other is a matter of focus and distribution. These texts were for internal use, meaning for members of the group. They focus on what is distinctive about the group that produced and accepted them, and only by implication do they illustrate how the group that accepted them was different from other groups. Also, none of the Qumran sectarian texts or early Christian texts were produced and disseminated for public consumption._
For example, the synoptic Gospel accounts, which no doubt helped introduce people to Jesus and His message, were not sold at the corner store. They were intended, in this example, to be used by Christians to teach others about Christ, as well as for Christians to reinforce their own understanding of and commitment to Christ.

John the Baptist and the People of Qumran

Holzapfel: There has been some speculation that John the Baptist had a relationship with or was somehow influenced by the people at Qumran. What are scholars saying about John and Qumran today?

Parry: Stephen Pfann gave a lecture here on campus in 1996 on the question “Was John the Baptist associated with the group who owned the scrolls?” His presentation focused on John and baptism as compared and contrasted with the Essenes’ view of what Pfann calls the “Essene Renewal Ceremony.” Pfann concludes that, although there are definitely similarities between the Christian baptism and the Essene ritual immersion, there are also some key differences.

Pike: On this point, I agree with Pfann. But I think it is safe to say that many scholars, probably most scholars, think that John did have an organic connection with the Qumran community and then broke away from them and started his own movement. At the official Israeli national park site at Qumran, you can watch a movie suggesting that John learned his baptizing technique there. In my mind, I imagine that John was familiar with the community, maybe even visited there. However, it has been pointed out that the people at Qumran had separated themselves from Jerusalem, whereas John had people coming from Jerusalem to him and he talked with crowds (see Matthew 3:5–12). There are enough significant differences for me to confidently say that John did not study or learn his craft at Qumran—although many scholars would say that he did. One of these differences, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, is that the ongoing ritual immersions that were taking place at Qumran were different from the one-time ordinance of baptism that John was performing with legitimate priesthood authority.

Seely: John was in the same area as the Dead Sea Scrolls writers; that’s always worth noting. Israel is a much smaller country than most people think. However, a fair amount of angst has built up over the fact that John’s baptisms were different from those happening in Qumran.

Holzapfel: True, John was physically immersing other people, whereas at Qumran they immersed themselves.

Seely: Also, John performed baptisms for repentance, while in Qumran immersion was an important ritual washing.
Pike: But a passage in the Rule of the Community (1QS 3:4–6) implies that ritual washings were of no effect if one’s heart was not right with God, so the washing did have spiritual meaning.

Jesus and the People of Qumran

Holzapfel: What is the general consensus today about Jesus’s association or contact with the Essenes? What issues are still unresolved?

Seely: The simple issue is that the New Testament gives the impression that all of Israel is flocking to Jesus, so what we picture is probably exaggerated. In reality, Jesus did not have a huge impact on the Essenes, at least not that they mentioned. And I do not know if another specific mention of the Essenes exists in the New Testament besides the passage that we quoted. However, the reason becomes more clear when we see that the Essenes believed in about 70 percent of standard Judaism. Therefore, the New Testament mentions many beliefs and attitudes common to the Essenes and to many other Jewish groups. The Essenes are just not always distinctive.

Parry: I see no evidence that Jesus was affiliated with the Essenes or with the Qumran community, even though some have argued that perhaps He was.

Pike: I concur. A number of sensational theories have been published, all without substantiation, connecting Jesus and the Qumran community. But it is very unlikely that Jesus and the Qumran community were connected in any way. Some Essenes must have heard and seen Jesus, and some may have even believed Him; we just do not know. While we can cite some similarities in belief, growing out of their shared Jewish, biblical heritage, there are serious differences between some of the things Jesus taught and some of the teachings in the Qumran texts. I think Jesus had even less interaction with the Qumran community than did John the Baptist. John was working in the area close to Qumran much more regularly than was Jesus.

Suppression of the Dead Sea Scrolls

Holzapfel: The popular media has highlighted the controversy concerning scroll research and publication. Why did it take so long to get the Dead Sea Scrolls published? Was there a conspiracy to hide them?

Seely: I think it is really simple. The seven scholars who were originally involved with the scrolls did not want to give up any rights of publication. They were overly optimistic about their own ability to publish the scrolls, and they did not allow other people to see the
scrolls. And of course, people like John Strugnell and John Allegro, who had sorted all the fragments of these collections, had a vested interest and a sense of ownership of the texts. They had invested some time into these scrolls.

**Pike:** They had invested a great deal of labor and time.

**Seely:** And energy. But they did not have the energy to publish the scrolls. There came a point when they had to give them up, but they did not do that willingly. But I do not think there was any kind of religious conspiracy.

**Parry:** There was no conspiracy, and the authors that write of such are sensationalists; I think they write about Dead Sea Scroll conspiracies to sell books. Controversy and sensationalism sells books. It is true that the scholars did hold the scrolls close to their hearts. They shared the scrolls and byline credit with their doctoral students. They were also aware of many texts that we knew about in the 1950s but that were not published until forty years later.

**Holzapfel:** Do you believe that the plan was always to publish all of the scrolls and that they underestimated the amount of time and energy it would take to release them? Did it just take longer than expected?

**Parry:** It took a lot longer.

**Pike:** There were too few people trying to accomplish too large a task. In the first ten years, an enormous amount of work was done. The sorting and the organizing and the publishing just got bogged down.

**Holzapfel:** Do we have all the texts now? Are there any scrolls still in private possession that scholars have not had access to? Should we expect some news in the future about additional scrolls?

**Pike:** There are rumors that this or that scroll is floating around somewhere on the antiquities market. But as far as I know, all the scrolls that are legally owned by government entities have been or shortly will be published.

**Parry:** I’d say that is true. In addition, a few fragments are floating around in private collections.

**Holzapfel:** So any unavailable scrolls are the result of private parties owning some pieces. Is some entity like the Roman Catholic Church holding certain scrolls because the scrolls contain some great theological surprise?

**Parry:** No, I am unaware of any mainstream scholars who believe that the Roman Catholic Church is holding certain scrolls.

**Seely:** The conspiracy theories really went to pot when everything was published because the published scrolls did not support any of the rumors—nothing in the texts destroyed the Catholic Church, nothing destroyed Christianity.
Pike: Or Judaism.

Seely: Boredom set in for the alarmists once the scrolls were published because there just was not anything like that.

Brigham Young University’s Contribution to Dead Sea Scrolls Studies

Holzapfel: What significant contributions to Dead Sea Scroll research has BYU made?

Seely: The most significant contribution is the four translators: Dana Pike, Don Parry, Andy Skinner, and myself. Our work continues beyond the publication of the work assigned to us. Other contributions include FARMS’s *Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library*.

Parry: BYU professors have made several contributions to Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship, but the most lasting seems to be those belonging to the four translators.

Pike: I agree. The four of us from BYU who were part of the international team of editors worked on the *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* series and the *Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library*; these are probably the largest and most lasting contributions by BYU personnel to this point.

Holzapfel: Certainly members of the Church and BYU have provided financial and academic support to the project. Imaging and computer technology developed and highlighted at BYU have been used to push the program forward, providing the potential for a Dead Sea Scrolls database. What do you think about your invitations to participate in the official publication project, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*?

Parry: I’ve thought about this for years because people occasionally ask me, “How come you were invited to join the team of translators?” In addition to what you mentioned, I also see it as providential: I see God’s hand in all of the work here. And I want to give Him more credit, far and above any of my academic credentials. I think my own invitation to participate as a Dead Sea Scrolls scholar was an act of God.

Seely: I will speak for myself here too: it was not my credentials.

Holzapfel: However, if you had not earned good degrees, done solid work, and put in long hours, the door would have never opened.

Pike: Latter-day Saint scholarship in the areas of biblical and Dead Sea Scrolls studies is somewhere it has never been before. As in any situation, a number of factors, such as academic training and acquaintances, worked together to bring this opportunity about for us. The journey for each of us has been providential, as well. As a graduate student at
the University of Pennsylvania, I took a class on biblical textual criticism from Professor Emanuel Tov, who was a visiting professor there one year. Several years went by, during which we did not communicate, but he gave a presentation here at BYU in 1994, a few years after he had been appointed editor-in-chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls publication project. I saw him at a reception afterward. I walked in the room, and he said, “Dana, I didn’t know you were here.” He even remembered my first name! Later that year he invited me to participate in the official publication of the scroll fragments as a member of the international team of editors. I couldn’t have planned that if I had tried.
Parry: I see a great series of miracles, all brought forth from the Lord, that brought the four of us to the translation team.

Seely: I think BYU faculty members have worked on the scrolls because of the influence of other people: Frank Moore Cross, Moshe Weinfeld, Emanuel Tov, and others. The very act of working with scholars of other faiths is a really remarkable thing and bodes well for the future. If we continue to reach out to scholars in other areas, many good things will come of it. Reaching out like this is unprecedented.

Holzapfel: What will historians and scholars say about BYU’s efforts concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls ten or twenty years from now?

Parry: This project has helped us gain respect in many areas of the world. Internationally, many religious scholars now see the work of BYU scholars as legitimate, competent, and a contribution to knowledge.

Holzapfel: So BYU scholars have become part of the dialogue?

Parry: Yes, we have become part of the dialogue, contributing to academic journals and scholarly symposia. We are doing research and publishing our findings in scholarly journals. It is a remarkable thing.

Dead Sea Scroll Contributions to Latter-day Saint Scholarship

Holzapfel: How are Dead Sea Scrolls studies affecting Latter-day Saint scholarship?

Seely: Until now most religion scholars at BYU, even with their training, have worked in a vacuum, largely because they were interested only in Latter-day Saint topics. Working with the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert series has been a remarkable opportunity for all of us to work not only with the text but also with the scholars. I have gained humility from working with people who are infinitely smarter than me.

Holzapfel: What do you think about the younger generation of Latter-day Saint scholars, like Thomas Wayment, Frank Judd, Eric Huntsman, Jared Ludlow, Kerry Muhlestein, and others?

Pike: When I consider our younger colleagues and others who are still in graduate school, I expect that the number of respected Latter-day Saint scholars will continue growing. More qualified Latter-day Saints will participate in Dead Sea Scrolls and Bible scholarship and related fields in the future.

Parry: There is a host of scholars in the religion departments here, specializing in all fields: Church history, Doctrine and Covenants, modern prophets, New Testament, Old Testament, Book of Mormon. It is just very impressive.
Further Reading on the Dead Sea Scrolls


Note

New Publications

To purchase the following publications, visit www.byubookstore.com, click on BYU Publications>BYU Religious Studies Center or search on the site using book title or ISBN; or call the BYU Bookstore toll-free at 1-800-253-2578.

The Tabernacle: “An Old and Wonderful Friend”
Scott C. Esplin

As the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City’s Temple Square was renovated in 2007, historian Scott C. Esplin releases this in-depth review of the Tabernacle’s construction. Featuring beautiful and historic photos, much of the book consists of a newly edited version of Stewart Grow’s thesis on the building of the Tabernacle. Grow was the grandson of Henry Grow, the bridge builder who built the roof of the historic Tabernacle. The author has provided a new introduction, placing the thesis in historical context.

ISBN 978-0-8425-2675-3, Retail $18.95
“A Witness for the Restoration”: Essays in Honor of Robert J. Matthews
Kent P. Jackson, Andrew C. Skinner, eds.

This collection of essays offers tribute to Robert J. Matthews for his eightieth birthday. The wide-ranging essays are a reflection of his varied interests and academic loves. Written by Matthews’ colleagues, topics range from biblical studies to the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.

ISBN 978-0-8425-2676-0, Retail $24.95
Upcoming Conferences

The Wilford Woodruff Conference

The Wilford Woodruff conference will be held October 12, 2007. Admission is free. Speakers will include Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Susan Easton Black, and Alexander L. Baugh. Topics will range from “Images of Wilford Woodruff’s Life: A Photographic Essay” to “Wilford Woodruff on the Polygamy Underground in Southern Utah.”

The 36th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium

The Sperry Symposium will be held October 26–27, 2007. Admission is free. This year’s symposium theme is ‘Living the Book of Mormon: Abiding by Its Precepts.’ The book will also be available in October. Speakers include Elder Joe J. Christensen, Terry B. Ball, Frank F. Judd, and Robert L. Millet.
Religious Studies Center

Director
Terry B. Ball

Associate Director
Richard D. Draper

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

Editorial Advisory Board
Nelson Boren
Tad R. Callister
Jack R. Christianson
Kathy K. Clayton
Milty Day
Eric Gustafson
Randall L. Hall
Jolene E. Rockwood
Jack L. Rushton
Lynne K. Speierman
Thomas R. Valletta
Victor L. Walch

RSC Photographer
Richard Crookston

Religious Educator Staff

Editor-in-Chief
Richard Neitzel Holzapfel

Executive Editor
R. Devan Jensen

Associate Editor
Ted D. Stoddard

Production Manager
Stephanie H. Wilson

Administrative Assistant
Joany O. Pinegar

Student Editorial Interns
Lindsay J. Davidson
S. David Grover
Beth Hixon
Elizabeth A. Pinborough
Elisabeth Sutton

Student Assistants
Megan L. Warren
Erin Tanner

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

Subscription Management
Mary Jo Tansy
Creative Works
Staff Spotlight

Editorial Board Member

Kathy Kipp Clayton lived the first two decades of her life in Salt Lake City and the second two in various parts of California. She is now something of a potted plant seeking to bloom wherever she and her husband, Elder L. Whitney Clayton of the Seventy, are assigned to serve. They recently returned from four years in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay. She has seven children and seven grandchildren, the oldest of whom is three. Besides seeking to become a worthy disciple of Christ, her interests include lively conversation, everything literary, physical exertion, gourmet food, and family reunions.

RSC Staff Member

Joany Pinegar, a resident of Orem, Utah, is the administrative assistant for the Religious Studies Center. In her duties for the RSC, Joany works closely with the director, executive editor, production manager, and fourteen great student employees with all RSC publications. A graduate from BYU with a degree in elementary education, Joany also likes to travel, read, attend plays, and spend time with her seven beautiful children and two incredibly adorable grandbabies!

RSC Typesetter

Nathan E. Richardson fondly speaks of his hometown of Ukiah, California, as “haiku” spelled backwards. He is a graduate student in communication disorders at BYU. Nathan’s interests include telling stories to children, dabbling in linguistics, and spelunking. He served a mission to El Salvador and has since continued to take advantage of every service opportunity abroad that he hears of, doing humanitarian work in Mexico and Peru, as well as in a return visit to El Salvador. He is visiting Guatemala in July to help train Spanish speech therapists who work with children.
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.
Subscriptions

■ Online (preferred method)
Place orders online at tre.byu.edu

■ By Mail
Fill out the subscription form online at tre.byu.edu. Click “Mail-in Order Form.” Print the form and include a check for the amount shown on the form. Mail both to the address shown on the form.

Failure to inform TRE of an address change in a timely manner may result in missed issues without compensation or replacement.

If a subscription is placed after the first mailing of an issue, there may be a delay until the second mailing occurs.

■ Subscription Questions
Subscription questions should be sent via e-mail to catalog@byu.edu and should include “TRE Subscriptions” on the subject line.

■ Back Issues
Back issues are available for a limited time online. Available back issues are listed on the subscription page and may be purchased with or without a subscription. If an issue is not listed, it is out of print but may be viewed in our back issues archive at tre.byu.edu.

Back issues may be purchased for $5 each (included shipping and handling).
The *Religious Educator* was typeset in Galliard by Brandon J. Barney of Stephen Hales Creative, Inc.
“[Doctrine and Covenants] section 21 and the command to keep a record were revealed on the day the Church was organized. I think that fact alone evidences the significance Church history ought to merit in our lives.”