The Perpetual Education Fund

Elder John K. Carmack

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ON THE COVER:
THE PERPETUAL EDUCATION FUND'S MISSION TO NURTURE GROWTH AMONG YOUNG CHURCH MEMBERS IS SYMBOLIZED BY A TENDER SHOOT.
The *Religious Educator* is published three times a year by the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 167 Heber J. Grant Building, Provo, Utah 84602-2701.

The *Religious Educator* is designed to serve the interests and needs of those who study and teach the gospel on a regular basis. The distinct focuses of the *Religious Educator* are on teaching the gospel, publishing studies on scripture, doctrine, and Church history; and sharing the messages of outstanding devotional essays. The contributions to each issue are carefully reviewed and edited by experienced teachers, writers, and scholars.

We anticipate that the articles published in the *Religious Educator* will appeal to anyone interested in perspectives on the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Articles will be selected on the basis of their appeal to and appropriateness for religion professors at each of the Brigham Young University campuses, full-time seminary and institute teachers and administrators, volunteer early-morning and home-study seminary teachers, and volunteer institute of religion teachers. In every issue, we plan a selection of articles that will be helpful and appealing to this diverse audience. In each issue, we hope that each group will find one or more articles that meet the individual needs of members of the group. 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.

Each year, issue number two of the *Religious Educator* is dedicated to the publishing of selected presentations, including a General Authority address, from the Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators Conference held in August at BYU. This issue provides a unique opportunity for educators throughout the Church to have access to these helpful presentations by a wide variety of part- and full-time CES teachers.

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At the time an author submits an article for possible publication, the author should submit one copy of the prospectively article, an electronic file of the article on an IBM-compatible diskette formatted in Corel WordPerfect or Microsoft Word, and 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.

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Editors’ Introduction

President Gordon B. Hinckley tells of a man who changed his prayers from “Bless the poor and the sick and the needy” to “Father, show me how to help the poor and the sick and the needy, and give me resolution to do so.” In May 2001, President Hinckley announced the Perpetual Education Fund, a bold new program to help less-advantaged members get on their feet financially. In this issue of the Religious Educator, Elder John K. Carmack, managing director of the PEF, offers a behind-the-scenes look at the program and the inspiration that gave it birth.

“What a wonderful journey!” said Stanley A. Peterson of his experiences as an administrator in the Church Educational System. But the term journey is more than figurative. During his twenty-four-year leadership, Brother Peterson traveled more than four million miles and visited instructors in 150 countries. In this time period, seminary and institute enrollments more than doubled, and the curriculum was significantly streamlined.

Since 1938, General Authorities have offered nearly 130 talks relative to education. In “Those Who See: A Century’s Charge to Religious Educators,” authors Scott and Brent Esplin have distilled the essence of this counsel, offering their own insights as well. A list of these inspired addresses from beloved Church leaders is included at the end of their article.

Our youth need heroes, and Brigham Young was one of the finest, demonstrating his discipleship through both word and action. In “Brigham Young: A Disciple Indeed,” W. Jeffrey Marsh, associate professor of ancient scripture at BYU, highlights Brother Brigham’s discipleship, including striking similarities to the work of President Gordon B. Hinckley, testifying of their undeviating faith.

Since the theatrical release of The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring and the new release of The Two Towers, an ever-increasing number of people have become acquainted with the works of J. R. R. Tolkien. We think our readers will appreciate knowing more about this important Christian author and scholar. Paul Nolan Hyde’s essay, “The Moral Mythmaker: The Creative Theology of J. R. R. Tolkien,” brings important background to the current movie phenomenon.

We hope you enjoy the rich variety in this issue.

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

Note: In the Religious Educator, volume 3, no. 2, pages 170–71, the name “Elder Pratt” was used by mistake. It should read “Elder Hyde.” Sorry for the confusion; it is part of our learning curve.
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Elder John K. Carmack
The Perpetual Education Fund: A Prophet’s Rescuing Hand

Elder John K. Carmack

Elder John K. Carmack is an emeritus member of the Seventy and managing director of the Perpetual Education Fund.

The Lord has made it clear that our salvation is tied in with our attitudes and actions toward the poor. In our time, President Gordon B. Hinckley and his associates in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have given a tremendous new emphasis on sharing with the poor in announcing the formation of the Perpetual Education Fund and Department. The sole purpose of this fund and program is to help our young men and women in poor communities of the world gain opportunities beyond what their resources allow.

As far as I can tell, every prophet of God has loved and served the poor. While President Hinckley is proud of our institutions of higher learning, he recognizes that most of the opportunities in these universities are for people of means, and these opportunities are not generally available for those coming from poor backgrounds. He has been asking for a long time, “What are we doing for the poor of the Church, especially the young people who are trying to get a start in life?” That may be more important to him than establishing the best teaching and research university possible. He wants action. He insists that we, who are so greatly blessed materially, act to assist those who are less fortunate.

This attitude has been one of his themes in sermons for a long time. For example, in 1978 at BYU, he spoke of a man of prominence who said, “I have amended the language of my prayers. Instead of saying, ‘Bless the poor and the sick and the needy,’ I now say, ‘Father, show me how to help the poor and the sick and the needy, and give me resolution to do so.’”
A Parable

A keen matter of equity and justice is involved in the effort of opening opportunities for the poor. We find a parable in section 38 of the Doctrine and Covenants that has become something of a spiritual theme for the Perpetual Education Fund: "For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there—and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just? Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:26–27).

With this parable in mind, consider President Hinckley’s introductory comments about the Perpetual Education Fund. He said:

We have many missionaries, both young men and young women, who are called locally and who serve with honor in Mexico, Central America, the Philippines, and other places. They have very little money, but they make a contribution with what they have. They are largely supported from the General Missionary Fund to which many of you contribute. . . .

They become excellent missionaries working side by side with elders and sisters sent from the United States and Canada. . . . They return to their homes. Their hopes are high. But many of them have great difficulty finding employment because they have no skills. They sink right back into the pit of poverty from which they came.2

These returned missionaries fit the parable’s description of the twelve sons who serve the father obediently. Some come home to rich educational and job opportunities. They are the ones in the parable clothed in robes and occupying the place of honor. The ones who come home to grinding poverty and hopelessness are those who are dressed in rags in the parable. It is for that second group of sons that the program has been announced and is being readied. We are positioning the Church to reach out to our young men and women in less-advantaged parts of the world.

There is no quick fix for this global concern, but we are starting and moving forward. Help is on the way. Experience has shown that sprinkling money in a show of benevolent giving is not the answer and, in fact, will usually weaken and harm rather than help. Almost all our members want to assist, including both those with modest means and those with substantial means. Many approaches have been tried, with some good results and some not so good.
A returned missionary gaining assistance from the Perpetual Education Fund gazes at his hometown of Manila, Philippines.

Training and Education

Opening opportunities for education and training that lead to jobs seems the best way to help those facing a bleak future. Although Joseph Smith had little formal education, he and the Church have, from the beginning, emphasized education. Everyone knows, for example, that "the glory of God is intelligence" (D&C 93:36). We also know the scripture that says "it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance" (D&C 131:6). The doctrine and literature of the Church abound in admonitions to improve ourselves; to gain knowledge, wisdom, and understanding; and to progress—not only in this life but also in the eternal realms.

The education promoted by the Church in this new program lays a heavy emphasis on studying the scriptures and treasuring up words of life. But the curriculum does not stop there. The scriptures advocate diligence in teaching and learning "in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand; Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms" (D&C 88:78–79).
The scope of such a curriculum is breathtaking, requiring a lifetime of study and continuing beyond this life.

In his books and sermons, President Hinckley often counsels the Saints to get all the education, knowledge, and training they can. And where the economies of the countries allow it, the Saints are making great strides in education, knowledge, and training. Church researchers, moreover, have found that the greater the attainment of formal education, the more likely it is that the person will be found attending Church meetings regularly and giving service to others.

President Hinckley, however, put his finger on a serious concern the Brethren have for members who live in parts of the world where education, training, and good jobs are unavailable generally or are very difficult to obtain. With the increasing globalization of the Church, how do we help members attain the dignity, financial stability, training, and education they need? From what source will our leaders come in those parts of the world?

A returned missionary from Lima, Peru, who is using Perpetual Education funds to study automation

Success in making new converts is often enjoyed among the poorest and most humble brothers and sisters. How can we help them without destroying their dignity, self-reliance, and initiative? It is a great concern. We are searching for the answers. Just adding to the enrollment of our few great institutions of higher learning, though very
important, is not the answer to this larger question we have raised. We know the doctrine. It admonishes us to help the poor; be one; and be just in the treatment of sons and daughters. As James points out, we can’t just say to a brother or sister naked and destitute of daily food, “Be ye warmed and filled.” Rather, we say, “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:16–17).

Just as the Church grappled mightily with the plight of the Saints during the Great Depression, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have agonized and pondered and planned to find ways of meeting the plight faced by many of our members in less-advantaged countries. How can we help without bringing great harm and misery to our people? Like the medical profession, the Church has the obligation, above all, not to harm its members by placing them on what we used to call a dole. That kind of assistance can paralyze and stultify the initiative and self-reliance of our people and rob them of their self-respect.

Many wonderful initiatives and procedures are already in place to assist the poor and disadvantaged Saints. We have a way of helping the poor that has stood the test of time in our fast-offering program. We have also developed many employment centers. We have given loans and grants to some for education. On their own initiative, many of our members with means and skills have done their best to lift and touch members and others less advantaged throughout the world. These continue to be important and wonderful, but something more needed to be done.

In announcing the Perpetual Education Fund and new Church department, President Hinckley addressed the major concern head-on. After describing and raising the concern, as outlined above, he announced a bold, new program, international in scope, to meet the challenge, at least for our young returned missionaries and other young adults. I will discuss more about that later, but let us see what we can learn from some other initiatives, in and out of the Church.

Similar Initiatives

Those of us who lived during World War II remember the tremendous debt of gratitude we felt for what Tom Brokaw called the “greatest generation.” Millions of our youth had been in the service of the country for four or five years, forgoing the years they would otherwise have been working, gaining an education, and starting a career. They had performed, on the whole, magnificent service for their countries and for the free world in the fight against tyranny. To help them, the
government required bold action. The nation created what became known as the GI Bill of Rights. Literally millions received education and training under this powerful program. Other millions received loans for starting businesses, buying farms, and acquiring homes. The program was a tremendous boost to them and to the nation. This bold program laid a new foundation of prosperity and opportunity.

Brokaw said in his bestseller that these soldiers “became part of the greatest investment in higher education that any society ever made, a generous tribute from a grateful nation. . . . They were a new kind of army now, moving onto the landscapes of industry, science, art, public policy, [and] all the fields of American life. . . . They helped convert a wartime economy into the most powerful peacetime economy in history.”

On a global and international scale, is that not what the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have in mind with the Perpetual Education Fund?

Another bold initiative followed World War II, named the Marshall Plan after President Harry S. Truman’s secretary of state, George Marshall. This program of assistance saved the economies and independence of many nations that faced ruin without resources to meet the horror and chaos of World War II. The Church, though small, acted quickly and magnificently during that same era to help its own and others under the noble administration of Elder Ezra Taft Benson.

Earlier, in 1903, the Church found itself faced with a shortage of well-educated teachers for its young people. To meet that problem, the Board of Education of the Church established the Education Fund of 1903. This fund granted loans to worthy and ambitious young people to gain greater competence, particularly in the profession of teaching. The fund was revolving in nature in that as the recipients completed their education, they repaid their loans and thus replenished the fund for others to use.

Now, back to our present dilemma, we find that the kind of assistance needed in less-advantaged countries is training for our young men and women who want to find good jobs, marry, have families, and serve in the Church. The priority is for training leading to occupations and jobs, not college or university training, although that too is needed. First and foremost, however, they need training that will lead to jobs.

I am reminded that John Adams, in a letter to his wife, Abigail, from Europe, where he served as an envoy for the new country, wrote: “I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and
philosophy, geography, natural history, naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study paintings, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain.”

Perhaps President Hinckley is saying that our young adults need to study computer technology, bricklaying, electrical installation, design and drafting, teaching skills, automobile repair, and nursing to allow them to marry, serve in the Church, pay tithing and fast offerings, and become contributing members of their communities. Later, some of their children may have the means and background to study a profession and gain all that universities have to offer. In the meantime, the work available and the skills needed should be our curriculum and the place to use our resources to help. Much of Thomas Jefferson’s effort was to lead “a crusade against ignorance; [to] establish and improve the law for educating the common people.” Is that not the essence of the bold new initiative of the Church? Is it not a crusade against the lack of opportunity for the common people of the Church? Should not that be a major emphasis of Church members today?

Answers from the Past

History often gives us context and answers to present concerns. For example, after the death of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum in Carthage Jail, Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve moved into the place of leadership. They did not forget the poor. In a meeting held in the Nauvoo Temple to discuss and plan the migration to the West, Elder George A. Smith of the Twelve recalled the covenant they had made in Missouri—not to leave behind any of the poor—and suggested it was time for another such covenant. Brigham Young “moved that we take all the Saints with us, to the extent of our ability.” They did that to their great credit and to the credit of the Church members who shared with each other.

Having succeeded in establishing a foothold in these valleys, they faced another great need—to immigrate the thousands of converts in Europe who wanted to join them. But how were they to do it?

Knowing that a huge and complex organizational task faced them, they incorporated a new organization under the laws of the provisional state of Deseret. They called it the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company. Brigham Young, at the organizational meeting, reminded the Saints of the covenant that “we never would cease our exertions, until all the Saints who desired, should be removed to a place of safety.” He was elected president of the company, and others were selected to various offices. A fund separate from tithing was established. He then called
the people of Europe to gather here. They built into the program the requirement of repaying their loans to maintain self-reliance and dignity in the people. Many could and did pay their own way. Others needed partial loans to make it. Some needed assistance for all their expenses. In spite of the cost, they did it.

The Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company required agents to organize and commence the journey across the sea in Great Britain and Scandinavia. The company appointed agents to meet them when the ships arrived in America. Other agents had the duty to find the wagons, provisions, oxen, cattle, and everything needed to cross a wide wilderness.

They boarded in Liverpool. The noted author Charles Dickens boarded the Amazon, one of the emigrant ships carrying the Saints to the New World, and published this report: “Two or three Mormon agents stood ready to hand them on to the Inspector, and to hand them forward when they had passed. By what successful means a special aptitude for organization had been infused into these people, I am, of course, unable to report. But I know that, even now, there was no disorder, hurry, or difficulty. . . . I went on board their ship to bear testimony against them if they deserved it, as I fully believed they would; to my great astonishment, they did not deserve it; and my pre-dispositions and tendencies must not affect me as an honest witness. I went over the Amazon’s side, feeling it impossible to deny that, so far, some remarkable influence had produced a remarkable result, which better known influences have often missed.”

What these approximately one hundred thousand Saints added to the Church in these valleys is impossible to estimate. They became the Church in large measure. And a great many owed their ability to come to loans from the Perpetual Emigrating Fund. Repayment was difficult and was often made in labor and in kind. Leaders extended tremendous efforts to keep the fund equal to its task. The Moroni Fund, the Provo Fund, the Ephraim Fund, and the Scandinavian Concerts helped. Sarah Ann Peterson’s plan to have sisters donate eggs laid on Sundays spread from her community in Ephraim to surrounding communities. The plans and thoughts of the Church revolved around and were dominated by this program of emigration. There was nothing like it anywhere.

After Brigham Young died, John Taylor took the laboring oar as President and forgave half of the remaining debts of the emigrants as an act of celebrating the year of jubilee. When the United States disincorporated the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company and the Church, the fund and company had fulfilled their essential purposes. The Church and its growing communities were well supplied with boot- and shoe-
movers, accountants, boilermakers, cabinetmakers, engineers, miners, masons, printers, spinners, weavers, and many others representing specialized skills and occupations.

**Back to the Present**

We no longer need all of these people and their skills in these valleys. The communities are bursting with growing population. We need to do the same thing in less-advantaged countries that we once had to do here. And President Hinckley, on behalf of his Brethren, announced the plan and way to do it. Before making that announcement, he began developing a plan to organize a new department and establish a plan to accomplish the purposes of the new Perpetual Education Fund. He invited contributions. All contributions would go to assist the needy young adults in less-advantaged areas of the Church. The local administration of the program was delegated to institute directors in those countries.

The Perpetual Education Fund Board of Directors has approved the program designed by the new Church department. The plan of action has been created. The expenses of the department will be minimal because the only paid employee is its secretary. The budget for travel and other expenses will be paid, not out of the fund but by the Church
budget. The department is establishing the program on a small basis, as President Hinckley counseled, and by the end of the year, loans for worthy and needy recipients will be available in all the less-advantaged countries of the world where we have institutes of religion and a number of returned missionaries. The scope of the plan is enormous, limited only by the size and income of the fund. The fund is rapidly growing through the generosity of the Saints. This program greatly enhances the future of disadvantaged returned missionaries and other young adults.

The President and the entire Church are behind this bold, new program. The policies designed by the Perpetual Education Fund Department have built self-reliance into the program by requiring commitment to repay the loans with modest interest once the training has been received. We are all committed to it, like the covenant the Saints entered into in the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company to bring the Saints here. This fund does not replace other programs to help the poor. Fast offering continues to be a grand and fundamental program and principle.

An Enduring Legacy

The meaning and value of the Perpetual Education Fund will probably not be known and appreciated for a decade or two. Surely the Perpetual Education Fund will help the Church fulfill its destiny to roll
forward until it fills the whole earth. It is patterned after the old Perpetual Emigrating Fund and Company and, in fact, is based on heavenly and spiritual patterns. The course of God is one eternal round. Principles of equity and justice underpin it. We are remembering all twelve of our sons and not forgetting less-advantaged returned missionaries who have served so well. It is magnificent. One reason it will work is that “the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare” (D&C 104:17). We need no new organization, except for the focus on a new fund with its special mission, but we will use volunteers and our magnificent institutes of religion. Under the direction of prophets of God, like we did with the old Perpetual Emigrating Fund, we will do things that will amaze the world around us! May God grant us the intelligence, energy, and faith to make our principles a reality.

Notes

7. Brigham Young Minutes of Special Conference, 15 September 1850, Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company Records, Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
Photograph of Stanley A. Peterson, ca. 1974
“What a Wonderful Journey!” An Interview with Stanley A. Peterson

Eric Paul Rogers

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

During his twenty-four-year tenure as administrator of religious education and elementary and secondary education, Stanley A. Peterson guided the Church Educational System (CES) through a period of remarkable growth. In 1977, when Brother Peterson assumed leadership, seminary and institute enrollments worldwide totaled 301,439. As Brother Peterson delivered his farewell address at the August 2001 CES Religious Educators Conference, seminary and institute enrollments had more than doubled to 722,844. I visited with Stan in June 2002 in his home in Orem, Utah, and asked him questions about his retirement, his career with CES, and his successor, Paul V. Johnson.

How has your life changed since you retired?

I guess I would begin the interview with a story that I thought at the time was so delightful, and now I can relate to it. It was probably a few months after Ernest Wilkinson was released as president of BYU. Ernest Wilkinson hired me to come to BYU, and I knew him quite well. After he had been released as president, he was writing a history of BYU and was on campus. One day I went to the Skyroom to have lunch, and he was there sitting all alone at a table. I walked over to him and said, “Hello, President. How is everything?” He looked at me and in kind of a curt way, which was his manner, he said, “I don’t know how everything is; I’m not in charge of anything anymore!” It’s been an interesting ten months [for me] because you are in charge of everything and then all of a sudden you’re in charge of nothing.
I told Paul Johnson when I left, "Paul, you are now the man, and I’m not going to mother you. I’m not going to come hang around. I’m not going to bother you. I’m going to go away. It isn’t because I’m hurt or I’m angry or I’m pouting. It’s because you need to be in charge. If you want to call me at any time, I’d be happy to talk to you. I’d be happy to answer questions, but I’m not going to call you. So just know that if you don’t see me, it’s not because I don’t love you; it’s because you need to now take charge."

When the Evening with a General Authority came along, he called and asked, "Would you and Anna sit on the stand?" I replied, "Paul, that’s your first really official faculty meeting, and I’m not going to come and be in the limelight at all. You need to establish yourself." In the ten months I’ve been out, I have not gone back to the office once. I’ve been in the Church Office Building for meetings that the Brethren asked me to come to, but I’ve never gone back to the ninth floor. Like I said, it isn’t because I’m angry or anything. It’s just that that’s what it needs to be. I think you need to be as gracious in exiting an assignment as in entering. And so I’m trying to be gracious and stay out and let Paul establish himself as the leader.

**How is your health?**

My health is fair. I wish it were better. What I’m learning is I have limitations that aren’t going to change. My stamina is very poor. I have certain health problems that are not going to go away. I feel better now because I have gotten more rest. The pressure is off, and so I’m feeling better than I did. The last three years were really tough because my health wasn’t good. I didn’t feel like I could let down, and yet my body was telling me, "You have to slow down, and you have to get more rest." I’m also very cognizant of the limitations that I have on me, that I don’t have the energy. I don’t have the stamina to do nearly what I was doing. The Lord sustained me, and the faith and prayers of my CES family and the Brethren kept me going much longer than I probably would have been able to, but I’m very limited in how much I can do. I can go for a couple or three hours in a day, and then I’m shot. That’s just not what I was doing before.

But Anna and I love being together. We walk every morning about forty-five or fifty minutes, and I sleep a lot. I rest a lot. That’s as good for me as anything. I’m feeling fairly well. I’m probably as good as I’m going to get. We’re doing quite a few things that we’ve wanted to do for a long time. I said, "I’m going to do them while I can and
while you can, Anna.” So we’re doing some things we want to do because it’s going to end, and then we’ll have to be more humble.

It’s been a wonderful ten months. People have asked me, “Do you miss your work?” and I say, “No, I don’t, honestly, but I miss the people.” It’s a wonderful association I’ve had over these years. The CES family is so dear and near; they’re still in our prayers every single day. We pray for all of you, and we feel so close to you. You would be surprised how many phone calls and visits I receive. One day John Beck and Garry Moore came to see me. While they were here, Nelson Dibble came to see me. While Nelson was here, somebody else came to see me. There were four CES folks here within a matter of fifteen or twenty minutes. It’s been a sweet experience. I’ve absented myself from the middle of things, but I certainly haven’t lost my love and appreciation for CES and the family that I feel so much a part of. I just love my brothers and sisters in CES, and that will never change.

What were the events that led up to your coming into CES?

Well, originally I was at the University of Southern California. While I was at USC, Ernest Wilkinson asked me to come to BYU. I was the department chairman for two years, then associate dean for one year, and then the dean of continuing education for six years. Jeff Holland and I were deans together at BYU. When Jeff Holland became commissioner of education for the Church, he had a dream of bringing religious education, Church schools, and continuing education together under one umbrella. Joe Christensen was over religious education. Ken Beasley was over the Church schools, and I was over continuing education. Jeff also brought in Henry B. Eyring, who was president of Ricks College. Henry Eyring came in as deputy commissioner. Joe and I were associate commissioners.

The three of us were given the assignment to take Church schools, religious education, and continuing education and bring them together. When Ken Beasley was over schools, he had his men going out visiting the schools in South America and the South Pacific and so forth. Joe had his people going out and doing their visiting and administration. And we did continuing education programs. We had literacy in South America and Know Your Religion, Education Week, and that kind of thing. Jeff Holland felt we should bring everything under one umbrella. One administrator could take a geographical area and worry about everything that went on in that area. We wouldn’t have to have separate administrations for each function. It worked pretty well, but we
found as we went forward that having three heads was just not working really well; it was not as smooth as it could have been.

Then Joe Christensen was called to be the president of the MTC, and Henry Eyring was called to replace Jeff Holland as commissioner. Elder Eyring and I conferred, and we just felt like it was best to have one head. I became the head of all of those functions: religious education, elementary and secondary schools, and the continuing education programs that are not strictly BYU. The Education Week, Know Your Religion, and Especially For Youth programs fall under the CES banner. Jeff’s feeling was that when I came up there, we could kind of pool continuing education and that together, but it didn’t quite work out the way we all thought it might. That is how it started and how it evolved into my role as administrator over the whole thing. When I took over the administration, it was the first time everything was under one head. It worked well. I was in the central office twenty-four years and saw a lot of wonderful things come to pass over those years.

One of the humorous things that would always cause me to smile was my title. Wherever I went, people didn’t know how to introduce me because my title was administrator of religious education, elementary and secondary education for the Church Educational System of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—nobody knew what to call me! I really had the biggest handle as far as a title that I have ever seen, so I just shortened it. When people asked, “What do you do?” I didn’t want to give them the whole title so I just explained, “I’m over religious education and schools.” The only problem was that could be misunderstood because then some would think I’m over BYU and Ricks College. I never solved that one.

**What were your most memorable experiences, and what did you learn from them?**

I traveled over four million miles in 150 countries and met marvelous, marvelous people. The thing I enjoyed the most was getting acquainted with folks, being in their homes all over the world. I’ve been in CES homes everywhere. One of the experiences that typifies the feelings I have for our CES family occurred in Montevideo, Uruguay. I was there visiting as I did a lot. In fact, there was a period of time when I was gone from 175 to 200 days a year. Because there was so much going on and so many things that I needed to be doing, I was gone a lot.

As the years went on and I reorganized and put the zone administrators in the role that they are in, I did less of the traveling and they
did more of it. But I was in Montevideo, Uruguay, and one of our CES men, a stake president in Montevideo, invited me to come to his home for dinner one evening. It was in a little apartment building. I went into their home and ate with them. There was one chair, and they gave it to me. The others were on boxes around the table. I sat in the honored seat. I don't think there was one plate on the table like any other—nothing matched. The silverware didn't match. We had a very humble meal. It was Monday night, and they invited me to be with them for family home evening. As I was alone in the living room waiting for them to begin—they were in the other room getting everything put together—I just reached out and touched the walls on both sides of the room. That was their living room; I could touch the walls on both sides. It was about six feet wide and eight feet long. They had a kitchen, that room, and three very small bedrooms. As I sat with that little family and watched them conduct their family home evening and felt of their spirit, I was so moved. I thought, It doesn't matter where you go or how humble the circumstances: where the faithful gather, the Spirit of the Lord is there. There was such a sweet spirit in that little home as we sang songs to a little guitar and did the things you do in a family home evening. That experience typifies my travels around the world: being in the homes of humble, sweet people and knowing that the Spirit of the Lord dwells with the pure in heart.

I just learned to love people everywhere. Their intent was pure, and their purposes were focused on moving the Church forward, moving the work of the Lord forward, helping make Church education do what it is supposed to do. You know, that's the thing that touches me every time I talk about it—the dedication and the spirit of those in our CES program who gave their all, who give their all every day to make the work move forward. I was so impressed with the teachers—the early-morning teachers all over the world—in some of the most interesting and humble circumstances, in little homes, in chapels, in halls, in every kind of a setting you can imagine. I remember one morning in England going to a little hall. It was a church, but it was a rented facility. It was a very, very humble little place. It was cold, it was foggy, it was miserable weather, and the building was no warmer than it was outside. Because the kids needed to get to early-morning seminary, the ward had taken up a project and had acquired bicycles for all the kids so they could get to seminary. They came and gathered and brought their bikes inside and sat in this little room. It was cold, and yet that teacher had those kids mesmerized. A marvelous lesson was given; the
Spirit of the Lord was there; and they learned. All these experiences cause you to come out saying, "The gospel is true! Hallelujah, I'm a part of it!"

**You were an early-morning seminary teacher, weren't you?**

That’s really how I started my career—five years as an early-morning seminary teacher in California. I did it while I was a bishop. We had a large ward with 250 young people between the ages of twelve and twenty-one. When I started as a young bishop in my mid-twenties, there were 960 in my ward. LeGrand Richards called me as bishop. We had trouble finding seminary teachers who would get up early in the morning. One class of about thirty juniors and seniors were on their third teacher by Christmas. When the Christmas vacation came—in those days we gave report cards at Christmas break—our seminary teacher gave the report cards to these thirty seminary kids and flunked every single one of them—all thirty of them. The teacher gave them all F's and then resigned. I said, "Our kids aren't that bad. I'll teach them myself." I told the seminary supervisor, "I want to teach them." He said, "All right," and I started teaching. I taught for five years and loved every minute of it.

Actually, I was a bishop twice in that area. I was bishop of two wards. Finally, I got to the point where I was so bone tired because the ward went from 960 to 1,140 before they split it. I was going to graduate school; I was teaching seminary; I was a bishop; and I then became a school principal. I even had a family, and once in a while I got to see them. After five years, I finally quit. I said, "I can't teach anymore in seminary." They said, "Will you teach our Sunday School class?" I replied, "Okay, I'll do that." I loved those kids so much I did something very unorthodox. I didn't want to let them go, so I called myself as their Sunday School teacher and taught them for about eight months.

**Are there people from those early years with whom you have maintained contact?**

I have kept in contact with many of the young people. I still see them. On occasion, they stop in to see me. They came to see me at the office. I saw many of them marry in the temple and serve missions. Stan Johnson, whom many may know, was in my ward when I was bishop. Jerry Lund and Bruce Lake were in my ward. Paul Hanks,
Clarence Schramm, and Garry Moore were in my stake.

You may have heard me talk of Miguel Cervantes down in Arequipa, Peru. He's a young man whom I met when I was speaking in Arequipa at a fireside. The little guy was seventeen years old. He came into the chapel with two little sticks that he used as crutches because he was paralyzed from the waist down. He hobbled into the chapel on those two little homemade crutches. I watched him come in, and my heart went out to him. After the program, I held meetings with the seminary teachers. We had a long get-together of about an hour and a half. Then we left for my hotel.

Several kilometers from the chapel, in the lights of the truck, I saw that little boy walking down the street with his two little sticks. I said to the man driving, "Stop, I want to see that young man. He was at our fireside." We had come a long way from the chapel, and he was still working his way down that road a good hour and a half after the fireside. We stopped and I said, "Weren't you at the fireside at the Mormon Church?" He said, "Yes, I was." I explained, "I'm Brother Peterson. I'm the one who spoke. I want to talk to you. Can we give you a ride home?" He said, "Oh, I'm just going down here to catch a bus. I'll be okay." I said, "No, we want to take you home."

I picked him up and lifted him into the truck and took his little sticks and threw them into the back of the pickup. The little guy was soaking wet with sweat from working his way down there; it was just pouring off him. I got acquainted with him. I asked him if he went to seminary. He said, "I'm the president of my class this year."

I said, "It's the Book of Mormon this year. Have you read the Book of Mormon?"

"I've read it five times!" he explained.

I got acquainted with him, and he is now thirty-two years old. I've written to him for fifteen years. I just got a letter from him. It is on my desk. He has struggled because of several surgeries. He was trying to go to school. He wanted to go on a mission. In that letter was a copy of his temple recommend, and he wrote, "I want you to know I'm worthy to go to the temple, and I have gone to the temple, and here is a copy of my recommend." After fifteen years, he had gotten to the temple. All that time he had been struggling and working. He said, "I couldn't go on a mission, but I'm teaching the gospel to all of my friends and hoping that they will understand what a wonderful thing it can be in their lives."
What are some of the most important changes you have seen in CES?

There are several. The rolling out of the program worldwide was the most exciting. People who had never been involved in the program were suddenly teaching seminary, and it was going as well as it does here. They caught the vision. My role in the central office started in 1977. We were just really starting to see a thrust into international areas. When Elder Packer and Elder Tuttle were the assistants to William E. Berrett, the program consisted of five of the western states and Cardston, Canada. That was CES, really. When you look at what it has become, where it is now, the thrill for me and the excitement were that I got to be a part of that worldwide expansion.

I will always remember something William E. Berrett said to me one night as Anna and I took him to the Christmas dinner for the CES folks in Utah Valley at BYU. It was held in the Wilkinson Center. It was just for the Utah Valley group. He said, "You know, Stan, there are more people here in this little group than there were in the whole program when I was the administrator. This is amazing to me to see what has happened to the program since I was in charge." When you start thinking of about forty-five thousand teachers, volunteers, and full-time people worldwide teaching hundreds of thousands of young people, what an impact that can have and is having!

Photos

All photos courtesy of Stanley A. Peterson except photo 6, which is courtesy of Eric Paul Rogers.

1. Presenting an award to President Hinckley and the Church on behalf of the United Way, 1985.
2. Visiting with Church schools students in Tonga, ca. 1983.
5. CES area convention, Baraloche, Argentina, 1984.
8. Introducing Elder Neal A. Maxwell at a CES symposium address in the de Jong Concert Hall, BYU, ca. 1983.
I felt, a long time ago, that the most critical thing we needed to do was outstanding inservice training. We devoted a lot of time, energy, and money to inservice training. I know the Brethren have questioned on occasion spending that much on inservice training. I have said to the Brethren on numerous occasions, "It's the best money we spend, because you have got to train these people and help them catch the vision so they can pass it on to the kids." It isn't just saying, "The Lord bless you; go to work!"

The thing that is exciting to me, though, is not only does it bless the young people in that seminary classroom but it blesses the whole Church. As these teachers learn how to teach and work effectively with young people, they become bishops and they become Relief Society presidents and they become all kinds of things in the Church and bless the Church in so many ways. Many of the Brethren have told me, "Oh, the training your people get blesses every aspect of the Church because your people use what they have learned from you in their callings." That has been a wonderful thing to see.

When I taught early-morning seminary, the volume of materials that we had was overwhelming. I have said on a number of occasions that I could have taught the whole year and never opened the scriptures. Then President Kimball gave the challenge to us in about 1977 or 1978 to reduce and simplify. We could not continue with that volume of material. I'm sure he was envisioning the growth of the Church. Putting the materials in all these languages just wasn't possible. He gave us the challenge to reduce and simplify, and we started working on that.

I called Jay Jensen and Jerry Lund and David Christensen into my office, and I said, "We have got to make changes. We have got to reduce and simplify and make this curriculum exportable worldwide so it can be used in the humble little home-study classroom as well as in the released-time program, and the focus must be on the scriptures. I am going to give you the challenge to go and put together a plan, and I don't want to see your faces until you have one." They went away for a few days and came back with a plan. We started on that plan and worked on it for many, many years. In fact, it has just come to fruition in the last couple of years. The curriculum today is about 10 percent the volume of what it was in 1977. When you realize that we are in 147 countries now, you know why we had to simplify and reduce and focus on the scriptures. That is probably as satisfying an experience for me as anything. No matter where I went, I walked into classrooms
where the young people had their scriptures on their desk. Every time I saw that, it reignited the excitement in me that it is working—we are getting the kids into the scriptures.

As you reflect over the past twenty-four years, is there anything you wish you had done differently?

No, I don’t think so. I certainly made a lot of mistakes. I would not want you to think that I didn’t make mistakes. But I don’t look back with regrets. I probably could have delegated more than I did. I probably was a little too much of a hands-on administrator, but I had goals in mind of what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it, and I did it. I was that kind of an administrator. I don’t regret it. I think to a certain degree, because I was that much of a hands-on administrator and did so much myself, it probably broke my health. I think that’s one of the reasons I had to retire early. I pushed myself. I would average at least a fourteen-hour day. Most weeks it was seven days a week—I would speak on Sundays. I remember one three-month period, a March, April, and a May, when we were doing a lot of in-service and a lot of graduations in which I delivered 154 talks. Talks aren’t what I was supposed to do! I was doing the other stuff in the administration, but I wanted to do everything I could to help move the work. I literally gave everything I had. If I had saved myself a little more and not been so free to take everything that anybody asked me to do, I would have been healthier and may have been able to administer longer. Looking back at my career, the most satisfying thing I can say is that I don’t have any regrets. I don’t say, “I wish I had . . .” or “I wish I could have. . . .” I feel a real peace in my soul, a real satisfaction. I don’t want to boast. I don’t want people to think I did everything perfectly. I certainly did not. But I feel good about what I did. I had a wonderful journey.

I loved what I did. I think we made a lot of progress. When I walked away, having finished my role, I felt like I left the organization in good condition. I left good leadership, good people who have been trained. I had appointed every single person who held any administrative assignment in any aspect of our program because I had been there so long. I had appointed all the area directors, all the zone administrators, all of the country directors. And I said to myself, “Boy, it’s time for change. We need to get new blood.” I felt like the organization that I left was strong. It was moving forward, and good things were happening. I’m sure there are a lot of things we could have done differently and more effectively, but I feel good about what happened.
You have talked about some of the sacrifices you made to come into CES. Teaching for CES has traditionally been viewed as an occupation requiring sacrifice. Is it the same today as it used to be?

I took a 75 percent cut in salary when I came to work for the Church. I said to my wife, “We’re not going to look back, and we’re not going to say, ‘What if?’ We’re just going to go forward and have faith that the Lord wants us here, and we are going to do what we need to do.” I can honestly tell you that it was no sacrifice because the Lord has blessed us in so many ways.

We have made a lot of progress in what we are able to pay our seminary and institute teachers and our administrators. I have said on several occasions in the last few years, “I don’t apologize for what we pay anymore.” We have made enough progress that we can hold our heads high. Our teachers are fairly paid. We know sacrifices are made. I know that there are a lot of our people who make tremendous sacrifices—move out of new homes to go to a new area.

I know of one family who had just completely remodeled their home and bought new furniture. We asked them to move, and they did not even hesitate. They just went. I went to see them after I retired. I felt so much gratitude to that couple for what they were willing to do. They had bought all this new furniture. They just sold it because it wouldn’t fit in their house. The house they got was about one-fourth the size of the house they had previously. I told them, “I’m coming to see you. I just want to come and tell you we love you and we appreciate the sacrifices you have made.” I went to their home. They are doing a marvelous job in their new assignment, but the little house they are in is so small. They have two little bedrooms upstairs. They have a very, very small multipurpose room that is so small they can’t even get a table into it to have dinner. The couple, her brother, who is handicapped and lives with them, and Anna and I sat in chairs in the room but couldn’t fit a table, so we ate off our laps. Their attitude was marvelous. They were not complaining. They were just grateful to be serving and doing a marvelous job reaching young people and making a difference with such a good attitude.

Tremendous sacrifices are made in many places, but generally the salaries we pay we don’t have to apologize for. You have heard me repeat what President McKay said to William E. Berrett when Brother Berrett explained the sacrifices of the seminary teachers. President McKay’s comment was, “We hope that they continue to sacrifice because if the spirit of sacrifice is lost in Church education, the spirit
of greed will take over.” I have worried about that. That is why I have asked, “Are we too rich? Are we too blessed?” I hope there is always a spirit of sacrifice. I can speak for myself when I say that I thought I had made a tremendous sacrifice in doing what I did. Yet the older I get, the more I realize that when all is said and done and we lay our bodies down for the last time on this earth, the only things that really matter are family, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and friends. If you have those things, what more could you ask for?

The material things in life, in some ways, become a burden. I remember well a very wealthy woman who had lost her husband saying to me, “I came home from the funeral and looked around at all we had accumulated. I thought how blessed my partner is because he is free of all this.” The older you get, the more your possessions seem to be an inconvenience that you have to worry about disposing of in some way. The things that matter are the gospel and your family and your friends. I look back on our life, and what a rich, wonderful existence we have had. Anna and I just celebrated our forty-fourth wedding anniversary. We have six beautiful children and sixteen and a half grandchildren. I wouldn’t trade that for anything!

As you reflect upon your career, what are you most pleased with?

I am grateful for the family spirit that we have been able to generate in CES. One of the great concerns I had was watching the growth and seeing so many people. I was bound and determined that we were going to keep the family spirit. I put little names on things like the CES conference that we have as the “family reunion” and “family home evening” for our Evening with a General Authority. That is one of the things I’m most pleased about. Even though we are very big, there is a family feeling in CES. I’m grateful for that because we have hung together—because we have enough common bonds and enough feelings for one another that there is a strong family feeling.

If you were to sit down and have an interview with each member of the CES family, what counsel would you give?

There are several things. The hardest thing for me was when I would come home at night and my wife would say, “You had a bad day, didn’t you?” She could see it immediately. It was when I would see one of our people being let go because he used poor judgment. They were immoral, they were doing something that was wrong, and they had to leave because of their sins. Let’s just face it—they sinned and could no longer be a part of us. I always remember the J. Reuben
Clark story when he was counseling his daughter to be careful. She said, “Daddy, don’t you trust me?” His counsel was, “My dear, I don’t even trust myself. Because in the wrong situation and under the wrong circumstances, any one of us can fail.”

The first thing I would say is, “Watch out. Be careful.” Think of the pain of watching people go through the misery of seeing themselves separated from not just Church education but from their membership in the Church, from their family. Watch what happens to those people, the terrible, terrible price they pay for the sins they commit. I would tell them, “You be careful. Don’t ever, ever take a chance. Don’t ever compromise because it isn’t worth it. You are not exempt; no one is.”

Another thing I would say is, “Be sure that family is always first and foremost in your life.” As busy as I have been and as involved as I have had to be to do what I have done, my family was very, very prominent in my life. I didn’t have a lot of time with my family, but I gave quality time when I could. I would be willing to say that in front of my wife and children because they know they were important. You cannot just push the family aside. I don’t care who you are, how busy you are, or how important what you are doing is: you must be sure the family has a very high priority. The relationship my wife and I have had has been phenomenal. It has been very unusual because we have hung close together and we have been best friends. I idolize my wife, and she knows it. We have the greatest partnership on the earth. We just love each other, and we have been good to each other and close to each other. We have kept our vows that we took when we went to the house of the Lord. I would say to my people, “You honor your companion. Don’t ever belittle your spouse. Love your children and give them your time. Make sure that they know you love them.” My baby is thirty years old. It is very depressing to think of having a forty-two-year-old child, and I do! But to this day, whenever I talk to them, the parting words are, “I love you, Dad,” and, “I love you, Mark or Brian or Wendy or Julie or Lisa or Laurie,” because we just want to make sure that there is no question that they are important, that they are number one. Stay close to your family. Take care of your family.

I would also say, “Don’t get too caught up in the material things.” We have a humble home. My wife has always said, “You’ll never have any money because you give it all away.” That’s probably true because we have sufficient for our needs. I don’t believe in driving new cars; I always buy used cars. Our home is humble, and it is adequate. I don’t want to let material things get too important in my life, and they never have. Those kinds of things just don’t matter that much to me. I think
you need to be careful that you don’t worship idols, the idol of wealth. We don’t need all of that stuff. We have too much, and I worry about us all becoming too spoiled and too materialistic. Traveling the world and seeing the humble, poor people of the world who have nothing but the gospel and each other as a family has caused me to think, “You know, they are lucky because they don’t have all these other things that cloud the picture. They are focused on the things that matter most because that’s all they have.” We can get caught up in the material things and start thinking that it’s so important to have more and more. Then, we start to say, “I’ve got to work more, and my wife has to work. I have to have a second job.” How much do you need? I don’t know. It seems like for some it is never enough no matter what it is. So be careful of the material things.

Finally, something that continually haunts me is that we are not reaching as many of the young people as we should. I’ve always felt that we could do more to get more young people in, that we could be smarter. I don’t think we could work longer hours because I think everybody is working hard. But I think we could be smarter at getting more of our young people involved because we know that it changes lives; we know what effect it has. We sometimes get too comfortable thinking we have reached enough. We can all be more sensitive to how we can just get one or two or three more. We all need to be more cognizant of our responsibility to go out after the lost sheep. The Savior focused on the lost sheep. We need to be looking for those lost ones, never giving up on the ones that seem to be lost, never saying we can’t get them. They are retrievable.

You stressed in your last address at the CES conference the importance of teachers’ reaching the hearts of students. How do you see teachers achieving that?

Number one, the most powerful thing we have is the Spirit. We can touch those kids’ hearts through the Spirit. They may personally be rebellious, but I don’t think their spirits are. Their spirits will listen to the Spirit, and that listening will have an impact on any young person. If we can talk heart to heart, if we can speak spirit to spirit, by teaching by the Spirit, young people will respond. I think so many of them are hungry for the things of the Spirit, as President Clark has said. They want those things; they need those things; and their souls are longing to hear the words and to feel the Spirit. We have to teach by the Spirit and love the young people.
I have been a strong advocate for a long time of "teachable moments." In my life, there were a few very special moments when something just grabbed me and shook me spiritually to the core and changed my life. I can count these incidents on one hand. We can be a party to helping those young people have those special, teachable moments. We're not going to get everyone, but we need to make sure we do everything in our power to provide teachable moments for young people when they can say, "Yes! That's what I needed!" You have had those moments when a young person will come up with tears in his or her eyes and say you were speaking just to me today. When you have those experiences, it makes it all worthwhile.

We need to be more sensitive to individuals. We are teaching individual sons and daughters of God. When I was teaching early-morning seminary, my goal used to be that every student, in every class, every day would know that I knew they were there. By some personal acknowledgment, I wanted them to know that I knew they were there and that I loved them. So I tried to do something some way by a little comment to a student or a shake of the hand when they came in or before they left or a little something to let them know, "I am glad you were here today. I love you. Come again tomorrow."

We are dealing with individuals. Everyone needs to feel that they matter. We need to put more effort into being more personal. We need to feel, "These are my kids. These are my Heavenly Father's children. I've got to make sure that they all feel welcome and feel good about being where they are." It isn't easy. There are some days that they are pretty obnoxious, but you have got to love them.

**Paul Johnson has succeeded you as the CES administrator. How did those events unfold?**

I obviously gave everything that I had for a long time to that program, and I wanted to see it go into the best possible hands. It is not a compliment to you if what you have done for so long falls apart when you leave. I wanted it to work. I wanted it to be in good hands. I prayed fervently that, if given the opportunity, I would be able to make a recommendation, that I would know who it should be. I had gone to the Brethren and told them that I had a spiritual confirmation that it was time for me to leave. I have said for a long time, "How can you quit when your leader is ninety years old?" Yet I had a very strong confirmation that it was time. I had to go.

I visited with the prophet and said, "President, the bucket is dry; there is nothing more I can pull from it. I'm completely worn down."
It was hard to do because I have never quit anything. Yet he was so kind and so understanding and so loving. As I talked to him, he was so concerned about me. I was asked to make a recommendation, so I gave the names of seven people and a very extensive vita on each one who I felt were possible candidates. I took them in and met with my leaders and gave them the names. They said they appreciated it and then asked me, "Whom of the seven do you recommend as the one?" I told them and they said, "Great. You set up an appointment for us to meet with him." It was Paul. I set up the appointment. Paul asked, "What is this about?" I lied: "They want to get better acquainted with our leaders. They know me really well, but they don't know a lot of the others. They just want to meet with you. They are going to meet with many of our people to get acquainted." So he went over and had a meeting totally oblivious to what was coming! After he had met with some of the Brethren, they said, "We think you have chosen the right man. Now the First Presidency wants to meet with him." That was harder to sell as a routine kind of thing. So the secretary to the First Presidency called Paul and said, "The First Presidency wants to meet with you." He came to me and asked, "What's this about?!" I lied again: "Well, Paul, I don't know. You'll just have to go find out." He met with the First Presidency, and they invited him to take the assignment.

He is a good man. He is a great soul. His heart is pure. I knew his heart was pure. At the direction of the Brethren, I called his stake president and asked him about Paul. His stake president didn't know the reason I was calling, but he gave him probably as fine a recommendation as he could give anybody. He said, "The man is absolutely and totally grounded in the gospel and is solid as a rock spiritually. His family is as much a role model in our stake as any family could ever be." Paul is a counselor to the stake president. The stake president said, "The man is a peacemaker. Whenever I have a tough situation in the stake that I need help with, Paul is the peacemaker." I told the Brethren what Paul's stake president had said. They replied, "What more could we ask for?"

He is a good man, a man of God, and he will do a great job. I'm very comfortable with Paul. I don't say this to aggrandize myself, but there is only one man who knows what it is like besides me, and that's he! It is a huge job and a very demanding job and very difficult. The Brethren are hard taskmasters, and I don't mean that negatively. They know how important the work is, and they expect it to be done right, and that makes it hard because they do expect excellence.
I have had a very close association for twenty-four years with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve and the Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric. I have had people say to me on occasion, "Boy, when you are that close to the Brethren, you have to have a strong testimony." I say to you and to the world that my association with the Brethren just strengthened my testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, of the work, and of their dedication and commitment. Their hearts are pure, even though they may make mistakes. They do make mistakes; we all make mistakes. But their intent is totally pure, totally committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are prophets of God. I sustain them. I haven't got one hesitancy or equivocation about any of them. They know where they are going. They are dedicated to the work. If they hurt somebody's feelings or if they say something that offends, it is not intended. They are only trying to do what they feel the Lord wants them to do. It is hard to be in a key administrative position and not offend somebody.

The sweetest part of the whole experience has been to continually watch the hand of the Lord as He moves the work forward. Many miracles over the years have confirmed this—little moments when you wake up in the night and you know what you ought to say in a talk you are preparing or a talk you're not even thinking about yet! You get directed, and you know. So many times I have been directed what to say or do. I treasure those beautiful moments when you know you have been directed to do something. I love the Brethren. I sustain them. I've watched them in every kind of situation, and they are our Heavenly Father's mouthpieces here on the earth. I sustain them as prophets, seers, and revelators. There is no equivocation. I am grateful that I have had that privilege to work under their direction. This is the Lord's work. I have watched it. I have experienced it. I have been the beneficiary of the inspiration of the Lord. I told Paul, "The one thing I regret is that I will lose the mantle, and it will be yours. It is as real as anything you will ever experience. Yes, it's a paid position, but it is directed by the Lord. You will feel that mantle and responsibility upon you, and you will know. I will lose it because I am walking away."

I have served my time, and I did the best I could. What a wonderful journey! I have no regrets—only wonderful memories and great appreciation for the blessings the Lord has given to me and my family.

Note

"Those Who See":
A Century's Charge to Religious Educators

Scott C. Esplin and Brent R. Esplin

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A couple of years ago I taught "that class"—thirty-five freshmen, twenty-seven of them boys. I'm sure every teacher has had or eventually will have a class like that. Maybe everyone needs one. Naturally, it was fifth period, right after lunch (it seems like it always is). By winter, the idealism of the Church Educational System (CES) symposium had worn off, and I was frustrated. I was most bothered by a statement made by President J. Reuben Clark Jr. in "The Charted Course of the Church in Education." He promised teachers: "The youth of the Church are hungry for things of the spirit; they are eager to learn the gospel, and they want it straight, undiluted. They want to know.... These students crave the faith.... They are prepared to understand the truth." My students were hungry all right—but not for anything I was offering. Obviously, he had not seen my class.

That year I had on my wall a quote taken from President Boyd K. Packer's talk to religious educators in which he quoted President Joseph F. Smith, who said: "The hand of the Lord may not be visible to all. There may be many who cannot discern the workings of God's will in the progress and development of this great latter-day work, but there are those who see in every hour and in every moment of the existence of the Church, from its beginning until now, the overruling, almighty hand of Him who sent His Only Begotten Son."

In the winter of that year, I was far from seeing the hand of the Lord "in every hour and in every moment" of my class. I began to
wonder if He spent "any hour" or "any moment" in my class and whether I could handle others like it for the next forty years.

But President Smith testified, "There are those who see." Who are they, and what do they see? What is the prophetic vision of religious education? President Packer, speaking of CES employees, observed: "I would like to make just a comment or two about the assignments that are mine as one of the General Authorities. . . . I have learned firsthand how the General Authorities of the Church regard this group. I now know the importance of this body of men, and I do not know whether it is quite what I expected it to be. It is a good deal finer that I hoped it would be. And I know now, firsthand, how tremendously important this body is in reference to the destiny of the Church."°

On another occasion, President Packer again noted: "In the history of the Church there is no better illustration of the prophetic preparation of this people than the beginnings of the seminary and institute program. These programs were started when they were nice but were not critically needed. They were granted a season to flourish and to grow into a bulwark for the Church. They now become a godsend for the salvation of modern Israel in a most challenging hour. We are now encircled. Our youth are in desperate jeopardy. These are the last days, foreseen by prophets in ancient times."°

Prophets do not use phrases like "tremendously important," "prophetic preparation," and "godsend" lightly. As they are blessed with spiritual insight into youth and education, what do they see? How do prophets feel about religious education? Why do they feel so strongly?

These questions sparked our search of talks by General Authorities relative to education. Since 1938, nearly 130 talks by General Authorities have been directed to the CES audience. These talks, covering sixty-four years, represent what President Packer called "the prophetic preparation"° of the CES as well as the combined educational vision of forty of the Lord's anointed (see the appendix for a list of the talks).

**The Law of Teaching**

The talks of the century reveal a pattern that conforms to the directives the Lord has given for teaching. In 1987, President Ezra Taft Benson questioned, "Are we using the messages and method of teaching found in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures of the Restoration to teach this great plan of the Eternal God?" What did he mean by "the method of teaching found in the [scriptures]?" Is there a method of teaching the Lord has given us and expects us to use in
teaching His gospel? If so, where is it found? If there is a method, do General Authorities teach and model it when they train?

The Lord outlined elements of a teaching model in the section Joseph Smith referred to as "the law of the Church." The Doctrine and Covenants describes a "law of teaching" in the following words: "And again, the elders, priests, and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel. And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they are directed by the Spirit" (D&C 42:12-13).

The Lord's law of teaching includes four elements: teaching principles and doctrines, observing covenants, obeying Church articles, and being directed by the Spirit. The talks to religious educators discuss and model each of these four elements.

"The Charted Course": A Beginning Place for Finding the Lord's Method

The first published address, "The Charted Course of the Church in Education," holds a special place in establishing religious education. Since the talk's delivery, prophets have continually referred to it, holding it up as a model. Of President Clark's landmark talk, Elder Henry B. Eyring said: "The place I would always begin, to be sure I knew what those principles are, would be to read President J. Reuben Clark Jr.'s talk 'The Charted Course of the Church in Education.' . . . He saw our time and beyond, with prophetic insight. The principles he taught, of how to see our students and thus how to teach them, will always apply in our classrooms. . . . The great change in our classrooms, as the kingdom goes forth to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, will only verify the prophetic vision of President Clark. . . . The principles described so many years ago will be a sure guide in the years ahead."

President Packer wrote of the same address: "President Clark was a prophet, seer, and revelator. There is not the slightest question but that exceptional inspiration attended the preparation of his message. There is a clarity and power in his words, unusual even for him. . . . Read it carefully and ponder it. For by applying the definition the Lord Himself gave, this instruction may comfortably be referred to as scripture."

Prophets feel so strongly about the principles outlined in "The Charted Course" that they quote liberally from it. In his 1980 address to religious educators, President Marion G. Romney scrapped a previously
prepared speech (as indicated by Elder Eyring\textsuperscript{10}), declaring instead, "Because this assignment to speak to you professional teachers about how to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ in these Church institutions requires an endowment which I do not possess, I shall say what I think should be said in the words of President J. Reuben Clark, Jr."\textsuperscript{11} He then proceeded to quote word for word from "The Charted Course of the Church in Education."

Elder Eyring later spoke of that night and the car ride with President Romney following the talk. He questioned: "President Romney, don't you think young people and the world have changed almost completely since President Clark gave that talk in 1938? . . . Do you think what President Clark taught still describes the way we should approach our students today?" President Romney chuckled, sat silent for a moment, and then said, 'Oh, I think President Clark could see our time and beyond.'\textsuperscript{12}

President Clark's vision of "our time and beyond" includes, like D&C 42:12–13, a discussion of doctrine, covenants, articles (teaching counsel), and Spirit-directed teaching. Interestingly, it does not include any mention of the conditions of the day, although the talk was given at the beginning of World War II in Europe and the end of the Great Depression. His words are not time sensitive, with statements such as "in our troubled times," "in light of what is taking place," or "with this on the horizon." Like scripture, the talk transcends time and circumstance, stating facts as if they were applicable to any time or place in history. As stated by President Romney, a fellow member of the First Presidency, President Clark possessed "an endowment" unique to the situation.\textsuperscript{13}

In the rest of this article, we will analyze the four elements of the Lord's teaching method outlined in D&C 42:12–13. The sections will include President Clark's words on the subject, supported by prophetic commentary from fellow General Authorities in their counsel to CES employees. Finally, it will include a summary of how the Brethren feel about students, teachers, and the role of religious education in the destiny of the Church.

**Doctrine**

*Doctrine*, as used in D&C 42:12, refers to the "principles of [the] gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon." From President Clark's time until today, doctrine has received a strong emphasis in the talks to CES by General Authorities, with fifty-six talks dealing with the subject. Elder Mark E. Petersen declared: "Our authorities are the scriptures, the four standard works. Joseph Smith and the other Presidents
and leaders are likewise our authorities. They are our file leaders. We must teach as they do. We must avoid the doctrines which they avoid, we must avoid the practices which they avoid.\textsuperscript{14}

President Clark likewise stated:

There is neither reason nor is there excuse for our Church religious teaching and training facilities and institutions, unless the youth are to be taught and trained in the principles of the Gospel, embracing therein the two great elements that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph was God’s prophet. The teaching of a system of ethics to the students is not a sufficient reason for running our seminaries and institutes. . . . There are the great principles involved in eternal life, the Priesthood, the resurrection, and many like other things that go way beyond these canons of good living. These great fundamental principles also must be taught to the youth; they are the things the youth wish first to know about.\textsuperscript{15}

He continued:

You do have an interest in matters purely cultural and in matters of purely secular knowledge; but, I repeat again for emphasis, your chief interest, your essential and all but sole duty, is to teach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as that has been revealed in these latter days. You are to teach this Gospel using as your sources and authorities the Standard Works of the Church, and the words of those whom God has called to lead His people in these last days. You are not, whether high or low, to intrude into your work your own peculiar philosophy, no matter what its source or how pleasing or rational it seems to you to be. . . . You are not, whether high or low, to change the doctrines of the Church or to modify them.\textsuperscript{16}

The Power of Doctrine

Prophets give promises for the power of doctrine in teaching. Elder Bruce R. McConkie testified: “You do not change anybody’s life by teaching them mathematics. . . . But you do change the lives of people when you teach them the doctrines of salvation.”\textsuperscript{17}

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland declared: “The Church has a great work to do, and we want to do it right down the middle of the straight and narrow path. Teach the gospel. Teach the doctrine. It has all the power and appeal you will ever need to hold your students.”\textsuperscript{18}

The Doctrines to Teach

With faith that the teaching of doctrine has power, what constitutes “doctrine” in the CES classroom? Speaking of the Brethren, Elder Petersen noted, “We must avoid the doctrines which they
avoid. What doctrines do the Brethren teach? What do they avoid? Have they modeled them for the CES? President Harold B. Lee counseled teachers: “You as teachers are not being sent out to teach new doctrines. You’re to teach the old doctrines, not so plainly that they can just understand, but you must teach the doctrines of the Church so plainly that no one can misunderstand.”

Part of the “plain teaching” includes teaching to the proper audience. Just because something may be true does not mean it needs to be taught in the classroom. President Packer warned: “There is a temptation for the writer or the teacher . . . to want to tell everything, whether it is worthy or faith promoting or not. Some things that are true are not very useful. . . . The writer or the teacher who has an exaggerated loyalty to the theory that everything must be told is laying a foundation for his own judgment. . . . It matters very much not only what we are told but when we are told it. Be careful that you build faith rather than destroy it.”

Because of this warning, the Brethren have provided powerful aids to help a teacher determine the appropriateness of doctrine. One aid is the document “Basic Doctrine,” published in the Charge to Religious Educators, third edition. The two-page document lists and develops “basic doctrines and general objectives . . . approved by the Church Board of Education.”

General Authorities’ talks are another aid. As Elder Petersen stated, “We must avoid the doctrines which they avoid.” Teachers can look to the prophets as a model for doctrinal teaching, as almost half of the talks deal with doctrine. Most come from an era of doctrinal discussion, the 1950s and 1960s, when authorities like Joseph Fielding Smith and Harold B. Lee established the doctrine and modeled its teaching.

A third, and probably the greatest, aid in teaching true doctrine has been provided by the Lord Himself. Elder McConkie taught: “The scriptures themselves present the gospel in the way that the Lord wants it presented to us in our day. . . . We are to teach in the way things are recorded in the standard works that we have. And if you want to know what emphasis should be given to gospel principles, you simply teach the whole standard works and, automatically, in the process, you will have given the Lord’s emphasis to every doctrine and every principle.”

Warnings about Teaching the Sensational

When explaining doctrine, instructors are warned against teaching the sensational. President Spencer W. Kimball cautioned:
There may be a tendency, perhaps there may be a temptation, for some institute and seminary teachers to want to delve deeply into things which we are not primarily concerned with in the eternal life of our youth. Perhaps they do this to get something that would be somewhat spectacular; something that is not known; something a little strange; a little different; or something that hadn't been dug out. . . . A teacher is doing a disservice to his students when he incites curiosity or encourages discussion about those things which are not a part of their lives or of their experiences. . . . The teachers should confine themselves to the practical standard living phases and not expound spectacular, strange, and exciting newnesses.26

President James E. Faust observed: “I have wondered if a few gospel scholars, including Church educators, get bored with everyday life, with the basics, and with the first principles and fundamentals of the gospel. Some seem to find the esoteric intriguing. These miracles and mysteries hold some fascination. All of us would do well to teach principles and covenants that build faith more than to teach history and geography.”26 Elder Holland summarized the challenge with this warning:

For the sake of the Church and your students and the gospel we love and teach, brethren and sisters, please work hard at staying balanced and steady, not given to extremism or rumors, sensationalism or fads of various kinds that often sweep through the land (and sometimes come among the members of the Church). In this regard you can be for us, and we hope with us, part of a solution, and never part of a problem.

I know the challenge of trying to hold a class’s attention. Every teacher wants to be a pied piper, in the very best sense, appealing to a student for the right reasons and mesmerizing them with our grasp of gospel truths. In this audience you and I know how demanding that is hour after hour, day after day, week after week. Teaching effectively, teaching powerfully, teaching with enthusiasm, solid preparation, and appealing supporting materials, that’s hard work—it’s among the hardest work I know and surely among the hardest work I have ever done. But please resist the temptation to push into the sensational or the extreme any doctrine you teach or any counsel you may give.27

We are, therefore, to teach the basic doctrines of the Church as found in the standard works and the words of the prophets. These are, after all, “the things the youth wish first to know about,” according to President Clark. In concluding his address, he summarized: “The tithing represents too much toil, too much self-denial, too much sacrifice, too much faith, to be used for the colorless instruction of the
youth of the Church in elementary ethics. . . . In saying this, I am speaking for the First Presidency.”

Covenants

Prophets have stressed that there is more to teaching than merely declaring true doctrine. Elder Eyring added a second aspect when he stated, “If we make the doctrine simple and clear, and if we teach out of our own changed hearts, the change for them [the students] will come.” Elder Neal A. Maxwell likewise reminisced on his own seminary experience: “My own memories of my teachers at Granite High Seminary . . . are basically now distilled into what they were in terms of their character. Forgotten are the specific lesson menus, but I remember the chefs! It’s likely to be that way with you. You will be remembered not only for what you taught, but even more for what you are.” President Romney emphasized the power of a teacher’s example: “I would prefer that he [the teacher] were a little off on whether the pearly gates swing in or out than not to be living so he can go through them.” In another address, he observed, “I never pay any attention to a person’s interpretations of the gospel if I know he isn’t keeping the commandments.”

The Lord’s law of teaching in section 42 continues: “And they shall observe the covenants.” Observing the covenants, from a teacher’s perspective, includes commitments both in righteous living as individuals and in obligations as employees of the Church. It deals with being worthy of the Spirit, faithful to the teaching appointment, and obedient to the directions given by the scriptures, file leaders, and the Lord’s servants.

What did President Clark establish in “The Charted Course” as the standard for all teachers? “The first requisite of a teacher for teaching these principles is a personal testimony of their truth. . . . No teacher who does not have a real testimony of the truth of the Gospel . . . has any place in the Church school system. If there be any such . . . he should at once resign.” President Clark stressed not only the importance of possessing a testimony but also the moral and intellectual courage to declare it.

What have the Brethren taught dealing with the aspect of covenant keeping in the Lord’s method of teaching? The greatest emphasis on covenant keeping seemed to be in the decade of the 1970s when covenant keeping and personal worthiness came under attack. Focusing on this time period, what did the Lord’s anointed say to teachers about covenental worthiness?
President Packer counseled teachers to “make sure that you are committed, that you are nonneutral, that you are biased, that you are one-sided, that you are on the Lord’s side.” He continued: “Somewhere on earth in our day our youth must, positively must, be able to tie to someone who is not confused and who is secure in his faith. . . . Somebody has to stand, face the storm, declare the truth, and let the winds blow, and be serene and composed and steady in the doing of it. That is your responsibility and your obligation as teachers.”

During this same time period, President Kimball declared:

I hope that you will be such a solid rock that they can receive from you strength that can be a real deterrent to troubles. . . . Your students do not deserve to suffer by reason of your problems. . . . Your students are entitled to expect years of firm spirituality in your effective teaching. . . . In a large measure, quite a large measure, young people are going to the temple for their marriages because of you. . . . They go to the temple because you went to the temple, because you have been talking about the temple. You’ve been telling them the joys of temple life, and so largely because of your influence, they will go to the temple after they have filled their missions.

President Benson reminded teachers: “Your first responsibility as a teacher of the gospel is to prepare yourself spiritually. All of you were interviewed by a General Authority when you applied for employment in the Church Educational System. I assume most of you were asked if you possessed a testimony. . . . Your responsibility is to live as you teach. Be consistent in your life with the message you declare to your students.”

When we read the talks delivered over the years, it seems the Brethren have been concerned that we keep our covenants particularly in relationship to the following:

1. That we have firm testimonies of the Savior and the Prophet Joseph Smith and the courage to bear witness of them.
2. That we are true to the questions asked by the General Authorities during our interview for employment and those established in our letters of appointment.
3. That our lives are in harmony with the covenants we have personally taken.
4. That what we teach and how we live are in harmony.
5. That we are defenders of the Brethren and “teach what prophets preach.”
6. That our loyalty to the doctrine and the Brethren is unequivocal. Titles of talks relative to covenant keeping are found in the appendix.
The Lord and the Brethren stress covenant keeping on the part of the teacher because of its teaching power. Elder Maxwell summarized:

Each of you realizes, long since, that you teach what you are. It is that lesson in the memories of your students which will outlast all other lessons that you will teach. You, as a person, can bulk large in the memory of your students. Your teaching techniques will be secondary to what you are as an individual. Your traits will be more remembered, compositely, than a particular truth in a particular lesson. This is as it should be, for if our discipleship is serious, it will show, and it will be remembered. . . . You can’t be a successful teacher in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, nor can I, if things are not right in our eternal callings.38

Church Articles

As a teacher, it is not enough to teach pure doctrine and keep one’s own covenants, as powerful as these two may be in the law of teaching. The Lord in Doctrine and Covenants 42 requires something more, stating, “And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them.” What are the “church articles”? At the time of the writing of the Doctrine and Covenants, what are now sections 20 and 22 were called the “Articles and Covenants of the Church.” Speaking of these revelations, Joseph Smith stated, “In this manner did the Lord continue to give us instructions from time to time, concerning the duties which now devolved upon us.”39

Noah Webster’s dictionary of 1828 gives the following as one of the definitions of article: “A single clause in a contract, account, system of regulations, treaty, or other writing; a particular separate charge or item, in an account, a term, condition, or stipulation in a contract.”40

“Church articles,” for our purposes, are the “instructions, duties, regulations, charges, and stipulations” that constitute being a teacher beyond merely keeping covenants. They are the instructions relative to teaching. It is not enough to live as Church articles instruct and teach pure doctrine. We must, as Elder Petersen noted, “teach as they do.”41

So what have the prophets said specifically about teaching? How can teachers improve teaching? Elder Holland noted there is something beyond covenant keeping that constitutes valuable teaching:

To a group of professional teachers surely it need not be belabored that, after we have prepared and purified ourselves to have the companionship of the spirit of the Lord, it is then required of us to develop genuine mastery in our profession, using the best educational techniques we can employ and honing our skills for as long
as we are privileged to enter that classroom. We need to devote the same kind of effort toward improving our teaching abilities that a man or woman in any other profession would exert, be they physicians, or attorneys, or computer experts, or microbiologists. In the Church Educational System it is essential but not sufficient that we be good men or women—we must also be good at what we do. We must be very good. Our subject matter and the lives of our students demand that we give our very best effort in our teaching.\textsuperscript{42}

Elder Maxwell likewise observed the importance of effective teaching:

Of course there are individuals who are keeping their covenants who lack teaching charisma. Of course there are those whose lives are in order who are not exciting as teachers. However, the Spirit blesses the efforts of all who live worthily. It endorses what they say or do. There is a witnessing authenticity which proceeds from the commandment keeper, which speaks for itself. Therefore, I prefer doctrinal accuracy and spiritual certitude (even with a little dullness) to charisma with unanchored cleverness.

However, part of what may be lacking, at times, in the decent teacher is a freshening personal excitement over the gospel which could prove highly contagious. Since we can only speak the smallest part of what we feel, we should not let that “smallest part” shrink in its size.\textsuperscript{43}

President Clark set the standard in improving teaching skills and magnifying the “smallest part”: “Before trying on the newest fangled ideas in any line of thought, education, activity, or what not, experts should just stop and consider that however backward they think we are, and however backward we may actually be in some things, in other things we are far out in the lead, and therefore these new methods may be old, if not worn out, with us.”\textsuperscript{44}

He continued commenting on teaching methods: “You do not have to sneak up behind this spiritually experienced youth and whisper religion in his ears, you can come right out, face to face, and talk with him. . . . There is no need for gradual approaches, for ‘bed-time’ stories, for coddling, for patronizing, or for any of the other childish devices used in efforts to reach those spiritually inexperienced and all but spiritually dead.”\textsuperscript{45}

Teaching in the CES, therefore, is different from any other public or private teaching setting. What works elsewhere may “be old, if not worn out with us.” Teaching is different because the students and the subject are different.
Teaching Gimmicks, Fads, and Games

Elder McConkie noted the difference in teaching CES versus private teaching. After quoting President Clark’s statement on bedtime stories, coddling, patronizing, and childish devices, Elder McConkie stated, “I suppose that [statement] has some bearing on games and parties and entertainments and gimmicks which, really, brethren, are poor substitutes for teaching the doctrines of salvation to the students that you have.”

Elder Richard G. Scott likewise commented: “There is no place in your teaching for gimmicks, fads, or bribery by favors or treats. Such activities produce no lasting motivation for personal growth nor any enduring beneficial results. Simply stated, truths presented in an environment of true love and trust qualify for the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit.”

President Benson warned, “You were not hired to entertain students or unduly dramatize your message.”

So how do we find the balance between Elder Maxwell’s “freshening personal excitement” and President Benson’s “not hired to entertain . . . or unduly dramatize,” especially on cold mornings in the middle of winter when the teacher may be more tired than the students?

Elder Eyring gave a key to effective CES teaching when he stated:

Our aim is both that they will choose to return to our classroom daily and that they will endure in faith to the end of life. To draw them back would seem to require entertainment, and the longer haul would seem to demand some stiffer medicine. Those two aims seem incompatible, or at least very difficult to achieve in the same classroom. But it has become clear to me that what the student—even the very young student—wants in the short run is also the needed preparation for the long road ahead, however narrow in places and shrouded in mist it may turn out to be. What every student wants now is happiness. And what the student will want for the rest of life and for eternity is happiness.

How do we teach happiness to a fourteen-year-old freshman boy? Almost twenty years earlier, Elder Eyring gave another key. In a talk to the CES administrators, he stated:

There is a tremendous faith in the way they are revising the curriculum. The faith is that young people can be led into and love the scriptures. . . . My feeling is that there must be some way . . . to make them more using the scriptures and less using the other things and something in my heart tells me that’s right. . . . I have a hunch, if you just want my prediction, that four or five years from
now you will see more Latter-day Saint youth in our classes pondering the scriptures, talking about them with each other, teaching each other from them, loving them, believing that they really do have the answers to the questions of their hearts. . . . It’s going to take a miracle for young people to do that.\textsuperscript{50}

More recently, Elder Holland has verified this focus on the scriptures, declaring: “It is little wonder that as times get tougher and the going gets rockier, the Brethren have focused our curriculum at every level, every level in the Church and every level in CES, on the scriptures. Please immerse yourself in them and immerse your students in them. Don’t stray off into forbidden paths and get lost in mists of darkness. You know what happened to those folks! Stay with the rod of iron, which is the word of God. Use what teaching techniques you need to assist with your lesson, but keep war stories and strange doctrines and near-death experiences to a minimum. Stay in the heart of the mine where the real gold is.”\textsuperscript{51} Elder Eyring himself recently summarized the change, “Where once there was a wealth of material calculated to hold the wandering interest of young people and even entertain them, the words of the scriptures are now doing the holding.”\textsuperscript{52}

The Brethren have counseled how to teach the scriptures to bring about this miracle. The CES is charged to teach the scriptures sequentially, using the Church-approved curriculum. President Benson illustrated his faith in these resources: “Always remember, there is no satisfactory substitute for the scriptures and the words of the living prophets. These should be your original sources. Read and ponder more what the Lord has said, and less about what others have written concerning what the Lord said. . . . As you stay with the fundamental doctrines and gospel principles, adhering to the standard works, the words of the Brethren, and your Church Educational System outlined courses of study, seeking the guidance of the Spirit, you should have no trouble following this counsel.”\textsuperscript{53}

Elder Eyring likewise promised: “We can unlock the power of the curriculum simply by acting on our faith that it is inspired of God. . . . Sticking with the content of the curriculum as well as its sequence will unlock our unique teaching gifts, not stifle them.”\textsuperscript{54}

What if the scriptures, the prophets, and the curriculum are silent on a question the youth may pose? Elder Eyring counseled:

As we ask questions of our students we will surely stir questions in their minds. Sometimes they will ask us things which are new to us or for which we do not know the answers prophets have given. We do best at such moments to remember our purpose; it is to allow
our students to be fed by hearing truth which is confirmed by the Holy Ghost. Where we have any doubt that we can answer with a fundamental and well-established truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we serve our students best by saying simply, “I do not know.” . . . We can show students our faith that God answers every question for which we need an answer and our patience to go forward without answers to all the others.56

President Lee gave similar counsel: “Brethren, it is the wisest thing that you say, ‘I don’t know,’ to the many questions of youth, when the Lord has not spoken. Never presume to elucidate upon a matter on which the Lord has revealed very little.”56

How can a teacher have the courage to say “I don’t know” to a student he or she loves and knows is struggling with a particular concern? President Howard W. Hunter warned:

Let me give a word of caution to you. I am sure you recognize the potential danger of being so influential and so persuasive that your students build an allegiance to you rather than to the gospel. Now that is a wonderful problem to have to wrestle with, and we would only hope that all of you are such charismatic teachers. But there is a genuine danger here. That is why you have to invite your students into the scriptures themselves, not just give them your interpretation and presentation of them. That is why you must invite your students to feel the Spirit of the Lord, not just give them your personal reflection of that. That is why, ultimately, you must invite your students directly to Christ, not just to one who teaches his doctrines, however ably. You will not always be available to these students. You cannot hold their hands after they have left high school or college. And you do not need personal disciples.

Our great task is to ground these students in what can go with them through life, to point them toward him who loves them and can guide them where none of us will go. Please make sure the loyalty of these students is to the scriptures and the Lord and the doctrines of the restored Church. Point them toward God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and toward the leadership of the true Church. Make certain that when the glamour and charisma of your personality and lectures and classroom environment are gone that they are not left empty-handed to face the world. Give them the gifts that will carry them through when they have to stand alone. When you do this, the entire Church is blessed for generations to come.57

President Hunter’s counsel is supported by similar statements from President Kimball and President Monson about not taking the role of parent or bishop in the lives of the students.58
So what have prophets said about proper teacher-student relationships? Should they do anything? While prophets remind CES teachers of their proper place, prophets also consistently talk about reaching out to students. This theme is a constant one throughout the century.

In 1958, Elder A. Theodore Tuttle stated: “You brethren must set the example in compassion and love. These students may be forgotten by everyone else, but they should not be forgotten by you. . . . How can you sleep without seeking after every student? I know it is difficult to reach every one. But we can do much better! That is what I am pleading for today.”

President Kimball requested: “I hope that if any of God’s children are out in spiritual darkness, you will come to them with a lamp and light their way; if they are out in the cold of spiritual bleakness with its frigidity penetrating their bones, you will come to them with your coat and your cloak also; and when they need you to walk with them holding their hands a little way, you will walk miles and miles with them lifting them, strengthening them, encouraging them and inspiring them.” “The Rescue” was not just a nice pioneer theme for the sesquicentennial.

The examples of counsel and directives on teaching are numerous. It is the most-often-mentioned topic of the talks delivered to the CES; it is covered in 60 percent of the talks. The titles of talks dealing specifically with teaching are found in the appendix. Elder Tuttle was right when he declared, “I think that the prophets, after all, are the greatest teachers in the Church.”

Spirit

As important as the Church-directed curriculum may be in the law of teaching, the Lord Himself includes a fourth and final phase—the Spirit. Elder Holland, citing D&C 42:14, stated, “The Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.’ . . . Not just that you won’t teach or that you can’t teach or that it will be pretty shoddy teaching. No, it is stronger than that. It is the imperative form of the verb. “Ye shall not teach.’ Put a show in there for ye and you have Mt. Sinai language. This is a commandment. These are God’s students, not yours.” Elder Maxwell observed:

I hope you find fresh ways to involve our youth in the personal reading of the scriptures. I guess the best analogy that comes to mind is that it’s like a songbook. There are many melodies that need to be sung and heard, and my favorites and your favorites are not necessarily those that would attract or be relevant for the
young. Only by some personal involvement with the scriptures can they find the song the scriptures would sing to them today to meet their needs. You cannot count on the curriculum—any curriculum—to respond to individual needs that adroitly and that precisely. They have to open the songbook and hear the music. It is there. It will speak to them; it will sing to them, but sometimes it’s going to have to be in the privacy of their own scholarship. There is no way you and I can anticipate all those needs that precisely.\textsuperscript{64}

Counsel given by the General Authorities over the years that deals with teaching by the Spirit includes both learning and preparing by the Spirit. Although there have been only twelve talks dealing directly with this subject, the Brethren emphasize that all teaching is done by the Spirit: “Wherefore, I the Lord ask you this question—unto what were ye ordained? To \textit{preach} my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter which was sent forth to \textit{teach} the truth” (D&C 50:13–14; emphasis added). The Savior stated the same truth at the Last Supper: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, \ldots he shall teach you all things” (John 14:26).

This aspect of teaching has received increased emphasis since 1980. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there seems to have been a shift in the Church and in the CES, with greater emphasis on being Spirit directed. Teaching shifted to sequential scripture study, manuals and material helps were reduced, lessons in priesthood meeting and Relief Society were rewritten, and greater emphasis was placed on parental teaching in the home. In other words, members, leaders, and teachers were encouraged to learn to follow the prompting of the Spirit in their lives rather than to rely on detailed written directives, manuals, and guidelines from Church headquarters.

Elder Eyring illustrated the shift: “You’re going to see a streamlining and stripping away of non-essentials and an impatience with inefficiency. \ldots There is a tremendous faith in the way they are revising the curriculum. The faith is that young people can be led into and love the scriptures.”\textsuperscript{64} This change has already occurred, bringing with it a greater emphasis on the scriptures and teaching by the Spirit and less emphasis on materials. Elder Eyring’s prediction of more youths pondering, talking about, teaching, loving, and believing the scriptures has been verified.\textsuperscript{65}

What have the Brethren shared with us about teaching with fewer aids and more Spirit? Elder McConkie stated, “I do not care what I talk about. All I am concerned with is getting in tune with the Spirit and expressing the thoughts, in the best language and way that I can, that are implanted there by the power of the Spirit. The Lord knows
what a congregation needs to hear, and he has provided a means to give that revelation to every preacher and every teacher.”

Elder L. Tom Perry counseled: “First and foremost, of course, is to teach with the Spirit. Teaching with inspiration means seeing and taking advantage of every special teaching moment that comes along or that can be purposely created. Teaching with the Spirit will let the students know of your love and especially God’s love and concern for them. . . . It would be impossible to stand before a class ‘on fire’ with the Spirit of the Lord without having your soul’s vibrations resound in the hearts of your students.”

Elder Richard G. Scott declared:

The greatest impact of all is what they feel in your presence in the classroom and elsewhere. . . . It is the commitment to a life every hour of which is purposefully lived in compliance with the teachings and example of the Savior and of his servants. It is a commitment to constant striving to be evermore spiritual, evermore devoted, evermore deserving to be the conduit through which the Spirit of the Lord may touch the hearts of those you are trusted to bring to a greater understanding of his teachings. . . . The most lasting impressions, the greatest teaching, and the most enduring effects for good will result from your ability to invite the Spirit of the Lord to touch the hearts and minds of those you teach.

Elder Maxwell gave detailed instructions, including a list of do’s and don’ts, for teaching with the Spirit. He stated:

Teaching does not remove responsibility from the teacher for prayerful and pondering preparation. Teaching by the Spirit is not the equivalent of going on “automatic pilot.” . . . Seeking the Spirit is best done when we ask the Lord to take the lead of an already informed mind, in which things have been “studied out.” Additionally, if we already care deeply about those to be taught, it is so much easier for the Lord to inspire us to give customized counsel and emphasis to those we teach. Thus we cannot be clinically detached when teaching by the Spirit.

Elder Eyring shared the effects of teaching by the Spirit at the 1999 CES symposium:

I would more carefully invite the Holy Ghost as my companion. The students wouldn’t see much of what I would do, since so much would be in private. But they would sense the change in me, as the Spirit softened my nature. They would notice it in my being a little more patient, a little more interested in them, a little less likely to argue or belittle, a little more likely to smile. They would notice not only that I seemed more happy but that they were more happy in
our classroom. . . If they decided to copy what they saw brought happiness in me, they might choose the right because it brings happiness and peace of companionship of the Holy Ghost. And then the Holy Ghost will teach them all things they should do to please God and so take happiness along with them, years after they are gone from our classrooms.  

Prophetic Visions of the CES

Prophets indeed have a vision of what the educational system can do with the youth of the Church. A final common theme of the sixty-two-year history of addresses to the CES is prophetic insight into the youth of the latter days and their teachers. Nearly every talk, from President Clark’s time until today, includes some blessing and counsel for these two groups. Of the youth, Elder Maxwell said: “The rising generation, those seedling Saints who sit before you—ordinary as they may seem on a dull day—are being especially prepared for unique service in the last days of this dispensation. To a significant degree, you are entrusted with the shaping of their religious education—a very genuine compliment to you and a blessing to them.”

Elder Eyring prophesied of those “ordinary” kids and their future. “I can’t promise you that fifty years from now one of those skinny kids in your class will, because of you, go somewhere for the Lord where it may be hard to go. But I can promise you this: more than one of them will in that future day love whatever you love and be loyal to what you are loyal. And that could come from just one class on one day, even a day in February. You are doing more good than you know.”

General Authorities have constantly stressed the blessings that gospel teachers enjoy. President Hunter remarked: “I have often thought how privileged you are, how fortunate you must feel, to be in a profession that not only allows you but quite literally compels you to be immersed in the holy scriptures every day. There are so many members of the Church who envy you that rare privilege, and on some days my brethren and I envy you as well.”

Elder Eyring expressed his appreciation for teachers:

In my travel across the Church, whenever one of you is introduced to me as “our early-morning seminary teacher” or “our seminary teacher for our students at the something-or-other junior high school,” I hear a note of gratitude and admiration that I hope you hear and remember. I hope you feel it on some dark mornings as you roll out of bed or at the end of a long day when some of those junior high school students want to linger to ask a question that is new and vital to them but which you have heard more times than
you can remember. I suppose what keeps you going, even more than gratitude and admiration, is the glimpse you get of what a difference it can make when you do what you do well. 24

Elder Scott expressed his love: “You have set aside the allurements of what so many people in the world seek—material success—and have concentrated on the better, albeit, more difficult part. Eternal success through the application of eternal truth—oh how we love you for that. I wonder if you have the remotest idea of how important you are to building faith and testimony and sustaining it as the Church grows throughout the world.” 25

Great gospel teaching truly does matter. The CES program has been and is guided by a prophetic vision. President Packer, a witness and participant in the prophetic history of the CES, summarized:

I mentioned the many things that have improved over the years. . . . There are some things that haven’t changed. We still have the young man and his wife struggling to get through school and then moving out to seek their fortune. That man makes a choice that he will be a teacher—a teacher of the gospel—that he will devote his life to that. With that decision at once comes the fact that all the other things that he might have chosen are therefore set aside, and the realities of his chosen life are then to be accepted. He lives on a modest income, about the middle of the middle class economically. He struggles, he has children—ordinarily too many children by the world’s standards. He has the realities of a worldwide program where he is moved here and there and everywhere. . . . Well, in spite of all of those realities and challenges and the modest budgets and the problems—the difficulties in it all—you are involved in and attached to the greatest thing on this earth, the greatest thing that has ever been upon the face of this earth.

You have the complete trust of the Brethren. I say again that there is no greater evidence of the prophetic preparation of this people than the beginning of this religious education program, because when it was installed it was nice, but really not critically needed. It has had time to flourish and now helps to protect our youth from all that we face. . . . Be patient with all the realities that you face, all the difficulties and challenges. You brethren be understanding, be helpful to your lovely wives and companions, the mothers of your children. Sisters, be patient with these brethren. They have chosen a better part. Encourage and sustain them. They are a part of the greatest thing that transpires on this earth this day.” 26
Notes

1. This account is shared by Scott C. Esplin.
8. Henry B. Eyring, “The Lord Will Multiply the Harvest,” talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998), 1–2; all references cited as “talk to the CES” had limited distribution to CES teachers and leaders.
9. Boyd K. Packer, “Seek Learning Even by Study and Also by Faith,” in That All May Be Edified (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 44.
12. Eyring, “‘And Thus We See’: Helping a Student in a Moment of Doubt,” 107.
14. Mark E. Petersen, “Avoiding Sectarianism,” in Charge to Religious Educators, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 118; emphasis added.
27. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Our Consuming Mission," talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999), 3.


31. Marion G. Romney, untitled address to CES coordinators convention, 13 April 1973, 8.


38. Neal A. Maxwell, "But a Few Days," talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 2.

39. Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–51), 1:64; emphasis added.


41. Petersen, "Avoiding Sectarianism." 118.

42. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Teaching Skills," talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992), 1–2; emphasis added.


47. Richard G. Scott, "Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led," talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998), 3.


49. Henry B. Eyring, "Teaching the Old Testament," talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999), 1.


52. Eyring, "We Must Raise Our Sights," 1.


56. Harold B. Lee, "The Mission of Church Schools," talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1953), 5.
57. Howard W. Hunter, “Eternal Investments,” talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 2.
59. A. Theodore Tuttle, “Men with a Message,” talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1958), 83–84; emphasis added.
60. Spencer W. Kimball, “What I Hope You Will Teach My Grandchildren,” talk to the CES (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1966), 11.
64. Eyring, “A Miracle Required,” 7, 12.
73. Hunter, “Eternal Investments,” 1; emphasis in original.
74. Eyring, “And Thus We See: Helping a Student in a Moment of Doubt,” 104.
75. Richard G. Scott, typescript of untitled video address to CES, 4 February 1994.
76. Packer, “Teach the Scriptures,” 91–92; emphasis added.
Appendix

Known Addresses to the CES by a General Authority of the Church

Categories: The following definitions, taken from D&C 42:12–14, are used to organize the talks:

  Doctrine (D): Explanation and clarification of doctrine as taught in the Church.

  Covenants (C): Counsel to the CES on personal worthiness and covenant keeping.

  Church Articles (A): Directives, policies, and general counsel on teaching and interacting with students in the CES.

  Spirit (S): Counsel on teaching, learning, and preparing by the Spirit.
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<tr>
<td>21 Aug. 1953</td>
<td>The Mission of Church Schools</td>
<td>Harold B. Lee</td>
<td>BYU Summer School</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 June 1954</td>
<td>Organic Evolution Opposed to Divine Revelation</td>
<td>Joseph Fielding Smith</td>
<td>BYU Summer School</td>
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<td>7 July 1954</td>
<td>When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture; The KJV of the Bible</td>
<td>J. Reuben Clark Jr.</td>
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<td>24 Aug. 1954</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>Mark E. Petersen</td>
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<td>15 June 1956</td>
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<td>Joseph Fielding Smith</td>
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<td>June 1958</td>
<td>Something Higher Than Self (reprinted in <em>The Growing Edge</em>)</td>
<td>David O. McKay</td>
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<td>23 June 1958</td>
<td>“Thou Shalt Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself”</td>
<td>Henry D. Moyle</td>
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<td>8 July 1958</td>
<td>The Publications of the Church</td>
<td>Mark E. Petersen</td>
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<td>15 July 1958</td>
<td>Problems in Teaching the Moral Standard</td>
<td>Boyd K. Packer</td>
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<td>24 June 1960</td>
<td>The Place of the Church</td>
<td>Harold B. Lee</td>
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Avoiding Sectarianism

Mark E. Peterson

Boy K. Packer

Boyd B. Hinkley

Brian B. Romney

Spencer W. Kimball

Hugh B. Brown

Harold B. Lee

Spencer W. Kimball

22 June 1962
28 June 1962
17 Sept. 1962
22 June 1964
8 July 1964
31 Oct. 1964
8 July 1966
11 July 1966
14 July 1966
18 June 1968
18 July 1968
1969
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6 July 1970
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Summer 1970
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Aug. 1970
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Summer 1971

The Ideal Teacher
The Place of the Living Prophet, Seer, and Revelator
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Counseling Problems in the Church
What I Hope You Will Teach My Grandchildren (and)
All Others of the Youth of Zion
The Measure of a Man
Circles of Excitation
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Qualities of Leadership
Anchor Yourselves after the Way of the Lord
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<td>Peter, My Brother (reprinted in <em>The Growing Edge</em>)</td>
<td>Spencer W. Kimball</td>
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<td>Ours Is Not Just Another Job</td>
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<td>Neal A. Maxwell</td>
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<td>3 Apr. 1973</td>
<td>(Untitled)</td>
<td>Marion G. Romney</td>
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<td>2 Jan. 1974</td>
<td>On Being a Light</td>
<td>Neal A. Maxwell</td>
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<td>1974</td>
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<td>Joe J. Christensen</td>
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<td>Apr. 1974</td>
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<td>Boyd K. Packer</td>
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<td>Equally Yoked Together</td>
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<td>Seminary Makes a Difference</td>
<td>Marion D. Hanks</td>
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<td>The Value of a Well-Informed Faith</td>
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<td>Bruce R. McConkie</td>
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<td>17 Aug. 1978</td>
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<td>A Miracle Requires</td>
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<td>The Mantle Is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect</td>
<td>Boyd K. Packer</td>
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<td>But a Few Days</td>
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<td>19 Aug. 1983</td>
<td>Those Seedling Saints Who Sit Before You</td>
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<td>14 Sept. 84</td>
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<td>Dec. 1984</td>
<td>If Thou Endure Well (distributed with 16th CES Symposium packet)</td>
<td>Neal A. Maxwell</td>
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<td>Joe J. Christensen</td>
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<td>Twenty Questions</td>
<td>Russell M. Nelson</td>
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<td>Aug. 1986</td>
<td>“It Speaketh of Jesus, and Persuadeth Them to Believe in Him”</td>
<td>Marion D. Hanks</td>
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<td>12 Sept. 86</td>
<td>“If Ye Receive Not the Spirit Ye Shall Not Teach”</td>
<td>L. Tom Perry</td>
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<td>22 Aug. 87</td>
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<td>Four Fundamentals for Those Who Teach and Inspire Youth</td>
<td>Richard G. Scott</td>
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<td>8 Jan. 88</td>
<td>Responding to the Promptings of the Spirit</td>
<td>M. Russell Ballard</td>
<td>Evening with a General Authority</td>
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<td>Aug. 88</td>
<td>A Legacy of the New Testament</td>
<td>James E. Faust</td>
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<td>10 Feb. 89</td>
<td>Eternal Investments</td>
<td>Howard W. Hunter</td>
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<td>Teaching by the Spirit and Learning How to Receive Blessings from the Lord</td>
<td>Gene R. Cook</td>
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<td>A Message for All the World: Chastity and Virtue, &quot;Most Dear and Precious Above All Things&quot;</td>
<td>Richard P. Lindsay</td>
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<td>&quot;Prepare Ye for That Which Is to Come&quot;</td>
<td>Dean L. Larsen</td>
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<td>Thomas S. Monson</td>
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<td>Dallin H. Oaks</td>
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<td>&quot;And Thus We See&quot;: Helping a Student in a Moment of Doubt</td>
<td>Henry B. Eyring</td>
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<td>The Great Plan of Happiness</td>
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<td>J. Richard Clarke</td>
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<td>V. Dallas Merrell</td>
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<td>Therefore, What?</td>
<td>Jeffrey R. Holland</td>
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<td>Our Creator's Cosmos</td>
<td>Neal A. Maxwell</td>
<td>CES Conference</td>
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The Baptisms of Latter-day Prophets

Michael D. Taylor

Michael D. Taylor, M.D., is an anesthesiologist at Provo (Utah) Surgical Center.

As Jesus began His three-year ministry in Palestine, His first priority was to seek baptism at the hands of an authorized servant of God, one who held the proper priesthood to perform this sacred ordinance. He sought out His cousin, John the Baptist, and was baptized by immersion in the River Jordan. Likewise, when the Savior appeared to and taught the Nephites on the American continent, one of the first instructions He gave them was the necessity of and the proper mode of baptism. The importance of this crucial ordinance has been emphasized in our dispensation, with the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery being instructed in this ordinance by John the Baptist himself.

All our latter-day prophets have followed the Savior’s example by being baptized by immersion by one holding the priesthood of God. Our first five prophets were baptized as young men in their twenties or thirties as converts to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our last ten prophets were baptized as children. The table that follows shows the date of each prophet’s baptism, his place of baptism, his age when he was baptized, and the name of the person who performed the ordinance.

Interestingly, only one of our prophets (Gordon B. Hinckley) was baptized in an indoor baptismal font. The other fourteen were baptized in open bodies of water or makeshift fonts. Two prophets (Joseph Smith and Lorenzo Snow) were baptized in rivers, two (Brigham Young and Harold B. Lee) in ponds, six (John Taylor, Wilford
Woodruff, Joseph F. Smith, George Albert Smith, David O. McKay, and Joseph Fielding Smith) in streams or creeks, one (Heber J. Grant) in a wagon box, one (Spencer W. Kimball) in a tub and then later in a canal, one (Ezra Taft Benson) in a canal, one (Howard W. Hunter) in a swimming pool, and one (Gordon B. Hinckley) in a baptismal font in a chapel.

I can find no records that specifically state where Joseph Fielding Smith was baptized. However, he was baptized on a warm July day in 1884 by his father, Joseph F. Smith, and we can assume he was baptized in City Creek, a commonly used baptismal area of that day and the place where Joseph F. Smith himself was baptized.

Wilford Woodruff’s baptism must have been memorable for several reasons. He was baptized in an icy stream on 31 December 1833 in Richland, New York. He recorded the following in his journal concerning his baptism: “The snow was about three feet deep, the day was cold, and the water was mixed with ice and snow, yet I did not feel the cold!” Wilford was baptized just two days after first hearing the gospel preached.

Interestingly, I have not been able to determine who baptized Heber J. Grant.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prophet</th>
<th>Date of Baptism</th>
<th>Place of Baptism</th>
<th>Age at Baptism</th>
<th>Name of Baptizer</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Smith</td>
<td>15 May 1829</td>
<td>Susquehanna River near Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania</td>
<td>23 years 5 months</td>
<td>Oliver Cowdery, as directed by John the Baptist</td>
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<td>Brigham Young</td>
<td>14 April 1832</td>
<td>A millpond near Mendon, Monroe County, New York</td>
<td>30 years 10 months</td>
<td>Eleazar Miller, an early Church missionary</td>
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<td>John Taylor</td>
<td>9 May 1836</td>
<td>A stream near Toronto, Ontario, Canada</td>
<td>27 years 6 months</td>
<td>Parley P. Pratt, an Apostle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilford Woodruff</td>
<td>31 Dec 1833</td>
<td>An icy stream near Richland, Oswego County, New York</td>
<td>26 years 10 months</td>
<td>Zera Pulsipher, an early Church missionary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lorenzo Snow</td>
<td>3 June 1836</td>
<td>Chagrin River near Kirtland, Lake County, Ohio</td>
<td>22 years 2 months</td>
<td>John F. Boynton, an Apostle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prophet</td>
<td>Date of Baptism</td>
<td>Place of Baptism</td>
<td>Age at Baptism</td>
<td>Name of Baptizer</td>
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<td>Joseph F. Smith</td>
<td>21 May 1852</td>
<td>City Creek, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah</td>
<td>13 years 6 months</td>
<td>Heber C. Kimball, First Counselor in the First Presidency</td>
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<td>In a wagon box rigged up as a font near City Creek, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heber J. Grant</td>
<td>2 June 1864</td>
<td>City Creek, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah</td>
<td>7 years 6 months</td>
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<td>George Albert Smith</td>
<td>6 June 1878</td>
<td>City Creek, Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah</td>
<td>8 years 2 months</td>
<td>James Moyle</td>
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<td>Spring Creek near Huntsville, Weber County, Utah</td>
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<td>David O. McKay</td>
<td>8 Sep 1881</td>
<td>Spring Creek near Huntsville, Weber County, Utah</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Peter Geertsen</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Spring Creek near Huntsville, Weber County, Utah</td>
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<td>Joseph Fielding Smith</td>
<td>19 July 1884</td>
<td>Probably in City Creek, Salt Lake County, Utah</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Joseph F. Smith, his father</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Probably in City Creek, Salt Lake County, Utah</td>
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<td>Harold B. Lee</td>
<td>9 June 1907</td>
<td>Bybee Pond, near Clifton, Franklin County, Idaho</td>
<td>8 years 2 months</td>
<td>Lester Bybee, a neighbor and family friend</td>
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<td>Bybee Pond, near Clifton, Franklin County, Idaho</td>
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<td>Spencer W. Kimball</td>
<td>28 Mar 1903</td>
<td>Hog-scaling tub (the family bathtub), Thatcher, Graham County, Arizona</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Andrew Kimball, his father</td>
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<td>5 Oct 1907</td>
<td>Union Canal, Thatcher, Arizona; rebaptized because of concerns about the propriety of the tub baptism</td>
<td>12 years 6 months</td>
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<td>Ezra Taft Benson</td>
<td>4 Aug 1907</td>
<td>Logan River Canal, Whitney, Franklin County, Idaho</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>George Taft Benson, his father</td>
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<tr>
<td>Howard W. Hunter</td>
<td>4 April 1920</td>
<td>Natatorium swimming pool, Boise, Ada County, Idaho</td>
<td>12 years 5 months</td>
<td>George W. Willis</td>
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<td>Gordon B. Hinckley</td>
<td>28 April 1919</td>
<td>Font in First Ward chapel, Salt Lake Liberty Stake, Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Bryant S. Hinckley, his father</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Font in First Ward chapel, Salt Lake Liberty Stake, Salt Lake City, Utah</td>
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Notes

1. I am indebted to the following article for some of the baptismal information: William Hartley, "Our Prophets' Places of Baptism," *Friend*, August 1997, 42-43.

Joseph Smith and the Messiah: Prophetically Linked

RoseAnn Benson

RoseAnn Benson is a part-time instructor of ancient scripture and Church history at BYU.

Links from Old Testament prophets to Book of Mormon prophets and to the modern-day Prophet Joseph Smith span place and time: Old World to New World and antiquity to modern day. Ancient prophecies that were quoted by Book of Mormon prophets and later personally delivered by Moroni to the boy Joseph Smith bear witness of Christ, the One who sees all the dispensations of time before Him. These holy men testified that Jesus is the Messiah and that Joseph Smith is one “like unto Moses” who was “raised up” as a “choice seer” to restore the gospel that makes ready the way for the Savior’s return. These men also stand as witnesses of the prophetic link between Christ and Joseph. Through the Book of Mormon, we learn that the Holy Messiah and Joseph Smith are inseparably connected both in the visions and words of ancient prophets. A hymn selected by Emma Smith indicates that the first Saints of this dispensation clearly understood these links:

Those holy men minutely told,
What future ages would unfold,
Scenes God had purpos’d should take place,
Down to the last of Adam’s race.

He prophesied of this our day,
That God would unto Israel say,
The gospel light you now shall see,
And from your bondage be set free.
He said God would raise up a seer,
The hearts of Jacob's sons to cheer,
And gather them again in bands,
In latter days upon their lands.

He likewise did foretell the name,
That should be given to the same,
His and his father's should agree,
And both like his should Joseph be.

This seer like Moses should obtain,
The word of God for man again;
A spokesman God would him prepare,
His word when written to declare.

According to his holy plan,
The Lord has now rais'd up the man,
His latter-day work to begin,
To gather scatter'd Israel in.

This seer shall be esteemed high,
By Joseph's remnants by and by,
He is the man who's call'd to raise,
And lead Christ's church in these last days.¹

I will discuss Joseph Smith first as the “chosen seer” who would be “raised up” as prophesied of Joseph of Egypt, then as a “rod, branch and root” as prophesied by Isaiah, and finally as the latter-day Elias who makes possible the connecting of root and branch as prophesied by Malachi.

Joseph as a “Choice Seer,” “Raised Up,” and “Like unto” Great Prophets

In the patriarchal blessing that Lehi gave his son Joseph, we learn that God foreordained Joseph Smith to be a seer long before Joseph was born (see 2 Nephi 3). Lehi obtained these “great prophesies” concerning Joseph Smith from the brass plates. From these records, Lehi learned that God showed Joseph of Egypt his posterity, including Joseph Smith. The Lord promised Joseph of Egypt that a branch of his posterity would be righteous, broken off from the house of Israel, and guided to a new promised land. Further, He promised that in the latter days, this branch would learn of covenants with God by a “choice seer” whom the Lord would “raise up” (see 2 Nephi 3:5-7). Joseph of
Egypt knew that this latter-day seer and the seer’s father would have his same name, “Joseph” (see 2 Nephi 3:15). Interestingly, Joseph Smith Jr. is not the oldest son but is the third son, yet he is the one who carries his father’s name.

The Lord promised Joseph of Egypt that the latter-day Joseph would be “great like unto Moses,” for He said, “And I will make him great in mine eyes, for he shall do my work; and he shall be great like unto him [Moses] whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel, out of the land of Egypt” (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:29; 2 Nephi 3:9; emphasis added).

Although not mentioning Joseph Smith by name, the Pearl of Great Price gives a clear focus to the mission of the man who would be like unto Moses. Speaking to Moses, the Lord promised that “in a day when the children of men shall esteem my words as naught and take many of them from the book which thou [Moses] shalt write, behold, I will raise up another like unto thee; and they shall be had again among the children of men—among as many as shall believe” (Moses 1:41; emphasis added).

Joseph of Egypt was further told that “he shall be like unto you [Joseph of Egypt]; for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation” (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:33; 2 Nephi 3:15; emphasis added).

From these scriptures, we learn why Joseph Smith would be called a “choice seer.” The latter-day Joseph would be raised up and would be great, like unto both Moses and Joseph of Egypt, and he would bring salvation by restoring “the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back” (1 Nephi 13:32).

The phrases “raise up” and “like unto” are used several times in the scriptures. For our purposes, the most relevant prophecy is one spoken by Moses found in the Old Testament, New Testament, and Book of Mormon: “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me [Moses]” (Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22; 1 Nephi 22:20; emphasis added). Nephi identified this prophet: “And now I, Nephi, declare unto you, that this prophet of whom Moses spake was the Holy One of Israel” (1 Nephi 22:21). From this scripture, we learn that the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah, was raised up just as Moses was raised up and was to be like unto Moses.

The Doctrine and Covenants explains how Moses, Joseph of Egypt, the latter-day Joseph, and Jesus Christ are alike: “And again, the duty of the President of the office of the High Priesthood is to preside over the whole church, and to be like unto Moses—behold, here is
wisdom; yea, to be a seer, a revelator, a translator, and a prophet, having all the gifts of God which he bestows upon the head of the church” (D&C 107:91–92; emphasis added). Hence, we can see the importance of Moroni’s quoting to Joseph Smith the Apostle Peter’s recounting of this prophecy, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22–23; see also Joseph Smith—History 1:40). Moses, Joseph of Egypt, and Joseph Smith were blessed with “all the gifts of God” to make them like unto Christ, enabling them in helping to bring salvation to the Lord’s children.²

Prophets Aid in Redemption

These three prophets, Joseph of Egypt, Moses, and Joseph of the latter days, are linked to the Savior by their work in helping to redeem His children (see Moses 1:39). Joseph of Egypt helped bring spiritual and temporal salvation to his family who fled the famine in Canaan; spiritually, he assisted them in repenting of their sins against him, and temporally, he gave them grain and obtained land for them (see Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 48:8–9, 11). Moses helped bring temporal and spiritual salvation to the children of Israel by leading them out of bondage in Egypt to the promised land and then giving them the law to bring them to Christ (see 2 Nephi 3:10; Jacob 4:5). Likewise, the latter-day Joseph “in the Spirit of power” brought Israel “out of darkness into light . . . and out of captivity unto freedom” (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 50:25).

Joseph of Egypt saw the latter-day Joseph’s works of salvation in his translation of the Book of Mormon, the writings of Lehi’s ancient posterity for his modern posterity. The Lord further promised that these writings, in conjunction with the writings of the tribe of Judah (the Bible), were for the “con founding of false doctrines and laying down of contentions.” These writings would also establish peace, bring knowledge of forefathers and the covenants of God, and restore the house of Israel (see 2 Nephi 3:12–13), thus aiding Christ in the redemption of all His children.

Both Lehi and Joseph Smith were descendants of Joseph of Egypt through his sons Manasseh and Ephraim, respectively. From his reading of the prophecies of Joseph of Egypt on the brass plates, Lehi knew that the tribe of Ephraim would one day bless his posterity, a branch
of the tribe of Manasseh (see 2 Nephi 3:7, 11). Hence, he joyfully exclaimed, “For behold, he [Joseph of Egypt] truly prophesied concerning all his seed. And the prophecies which he wrote, there are not many greater. And he prophesied concerning us, and our future generations” (2 Nephi 4:2). Joseph Smith as a “choice seer” helped restore covenants that aid Christ in redeeming this future generation of Israel. In so doing, Joseph became “like unto” Christ.

The Olive Tree: Rod/Branch and Stem/Root

Isaiah also saw the important work that Joseph Smith was to accomplish in the latter days. Isaiah 11 is particularly noteworthy in this respect. The recitation of Isaiah 11 at the beginning of the Restoration gives some indication of its significance. In the fall of 1823, the prophet Moroni repeated it four times to young Joseph. Anciently, it was copied from the brass plates and engraved twice on the small plates of Nephi (see 2 Nephi 21; 2 Nephi 30:9–18). In these latter days, interpretive keys to its symbols were revealed and recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 113:1–6.

Although this chapter of Isaiah is especially important to Latter-day Saints because of its relevance to the Restoration, Christians and Jews alike have appreciated its magnificent poetry and message. As one Christian scholar observed, “Few texts in all of biblical literature are better known or loved than this one.” Nevertheless, biblical scholars have puzzled over its meaning, while revelation to Joseph Smith clarified specific words and verses. One part of this chapter will be discussed in this article: the literary unit that links the Messiah to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Nephi loved the writings of Isaiah. However, he recognized that Isaiah wrote poetry with complex literary devices and images familiar only to those of Isaiah’s era and region. In contrast to Isaiah, Nephi wrote in plain language. Nevertheless, his condensed version does not elaborate on the “choice seer” to be raised up in the latter days. Hence, we must make the effort to tease out of Isaiah’s writings the meaning of the images, allusions, and references to the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Messiah (see 2 Nephi 25:1, 4–6).

Isaiah 10. The last two verses of Isaiah 10 serve as an introduction to Isaiah 11: “Behold, the Lord, the Lord of Hosts shall lop the bough with terror; and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down; and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forests with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one” (Isaiah 10:33–34). It is the Lord’s day of judgment. Isaiah uses the metaphor
of a forest being cut down by a lumberjack. The “Mighty One” who wields the ax is the Messiah. He is clear-cutting a forest of mature trees that have become too tall. He is the Divine Forester, for who else could choose to devastate the glory of His kingdom except the one to whom the trees belong? Once the forest is cleared, a single majestic and beautiful tree can flourish and produce fruit.

Isaiah 11. Isaiah continues to use the same imagery of a tree, but this time as a messianic symbol: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isaiah 11:1). After the clear-cutting of the forest, Isaiah 11:1 begins with this image of a single stubby tree trunk from which shoots and branches grow easily. The olive tree aptly fits the description of this tree; it is “the most plastic of trees, surpassing even the willow in its power to survive the most drastic whacking and burning . . . and the new shoots do come right out of the trunk.”

The allegory of Zenos describes the same phenomenon of regrowth in an olive tree, clearly identified as symbolic of the house of Israel (see Jacob 5:3). The allegory represents the Master’s “response to Israel’s spiritual death.” In this allegory, the Master of the Vineyard labors diligently to save the tree by digging, dunging, pruning, and especially by grafting. Thus, all who are to be part of the house of Israel experience individual tutorials, spiritual nourishment, painful experiences, and converting events. Unlike other trees when left with only roots and stump, the olive tree will rise again and become glorious and fruitful (see Jacob 5:3, 75).

Like Isaiah, Zenos wrote of “young and tender branches” growing out of an olive tree (Jacob 5:6). In Zenos’s allegory, the great desire of the Master of the Vineyard was for the branches of the olive tree to be laden with good fruit. In speaking about the tree, the Master sees that “it had brought forth much fruit; and he beheld also that it was good.” He then tells His servant to “take of the fruit thereof, and lay it up against the season, that I may preserve it unto mine own self” (Jacob 5:20). This is a reference to the Messiah’s work and glory in bringing about the exaltation and eternal life of man (see Moses 1:39).

We can hear echoes of this messianic prophecy in Christ’s own words when He identified Himself and His disciples: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit” (John 15:5). Nephi brings together the metaphors of the true vine and olive tree when he says, “Yea, at that day, will they not receive the strength and nourishment from the true
vine? Yea, will they not come unto the true fold of God? . . . Yea; they shall be remembered again among the house of Israel; they shall be grafted in, being a natural branch of the olive-tree, into the true olive-tree” (1 Nephi 15:15–16).

The Apostle Paul also used the messianic symbol of the olive tree: the tame olive tree represents the house of Israel, and the branches of a wild olive tree represent the Gentiles. Referring to the allegory of the olive tree, Paul taught that if the root were holy, it would produce first-fruits and branches that are holy (see Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 11:16). Thus, he prophesied that just as wild olive branches grafted into a tame olive tree can bring forth good fruit, so also can the Gentiles who accept the gospel be adopted into the house of Israel and make covenants with the Lord (see Romans 11:13–24; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 11:15–19, 23–24).

Rod/Branch and stem/root. Isaiah specifically identified what grows out of the stump of this tree: a rod from its stem and a branch from its roots. This is a synonymous parallelism—in other words, two phrases that have the same connotation but use different words to clarify and expand the meaning, which is a common technique employed by Isaiah. With this interpretation, stem and root are synonymous, as are rod and branch. What or whom do the rod/branch and stem/root symbolize? Both biblical commentators and Joseph Smith had ideas about this symbolism.

A few biblical commentators identify this passage as messianic; however, they are silent or have varying interpretations in identifying the root, rod, stem, and branch. Others do not recognize the verse as messianic and appear to have rejected the idea of Jesus Christ as fulfilling the role of the Messiah in favor of a more liberal explanation, assuming a human could perform the magnificent role described by Isaiah. Perhaps most telling is the speculation that “this text expresses the promise of a messiah” rather than “the Messiah.”

The Prophet Joseph Smith, in response to three questions about this chapter of Isaiah, asked God and received an answer regarding the interpretation of these symbols (see D&C 113:1–6).

“Who is the Stem of Jesse spoken of in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of the 11th chapter of Isaiah?” The stem or root of Jesse is Christ (D&C 113:1–2; see also Revelation 5:5; 22:16). Thus, in the eighth century B.C., Isaiah identified the mortal Messiah as a descendant of the royal line of David who was the son of Jesse, a point emphasized by both Matthew and Luke in the New Testament genealogies of Christ (see Matthew 1:5–6; Luke 3:32; see also Micah 5:2).
“What is the rod spoken of in the first verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should come of the Stem of Jesse?” The rod or branch is “a servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse as well as of Ephraim, or of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power” (D&C 113:3–4). From this brief description alone, it is difficult to determine who this is.

“What is the root of Jesse spoken of in the 10th verse of the 11th chapter?” The description of the root of Jesse begins with the very same lineage as the rod and adds “unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days” (D&C 113:5–6). Thus, the root from verse 1, which is Christ, is different from the root in verse 10. The root in verse 1 is Christ, but who is the root in verse 10, and who is the rod in verse 1?

**Joseph Smith as a branch.** Some Latter-day Saint commentators believe that both the stem and branch refer to Jesus Christ, citing Jeremiah 23:3–6 and Zechariah 3:7 and 6:12 as evidence. In Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah, the King James translators capitalized the word Branch. The Joseph Smith translation did not correct any of these capitalizations. Thus, without a closer look, we might conclude that they all refer to Christ. However, while Jeremiah and Zechariah identify Christ as the Branch in context, they are not necessarily analogous to the branch in Isaiah 11:1. As further evidence, the word branch is translated from two different Hebrew words in these passages. In Jeremiah and Zechariah, the Hebrew noun is semah, whereas the Isaiah passage uses the Hebrew noun neser. Additionally, Isaiah refers to neser as the branch the Lord plants so that He might be glorified—not Christ but what He plants (see Isaiah 60:21). Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated, “Joseph Smith is the chief branch for our day.”

**Joseph Smith as a rod and the other root.** In the revelation regarding the meaning of these symbols, no definitive person or persons are named to specify who fulfills the descriptions of the rod and the other root. However, we can look at other prophecies to determine that the rod in Isaiah 11:1 and root in Isaiah 11:10 are none other than Joseph Smith. His patriarchal blessing, the receipt of priesthood keys, and divine declaration make it clear that the Prophet held the keys of the priesthood by birthright and the authority by divine dispensation and declaration (see D&C 86:8–9).

Joseph Smith’s patriarchal blessing, given to him by his father, Joseph Smith Sr., proclaims the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joseph of Egypt and further announces that Joseph Smith Jr. was the one of
whom it had been prophesied would restore covenants and lead the gathering of Israel in the last days:

“A marvelous work and a wonder” has the Lord wrought by thy hand, even that which shall prepare the way for the remnants of his people to come in among the Gentiles, with their fullness, as the tribes of Israel are restored. I bless thee with the blessings of thy fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and even the blessings of thy father Joseph, the son of Jacob. Behold, he [Joseph of Egypt] looked after his posterity in the last days, when they should be scattered and driven by the Gentiles, and wept before the Lord; he sought diligently to know from whence the Son should come who should bring forth the word of the Lord, by which they might be enlightened, and brought back to the true fold, and his eyes beheld thee, my son; his heart rejoiced and his soul was satisfied and he [Joseph of Egypt] said, As my blessings are to extend to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills; as my father’s blessing prevailed, over the blessings of his progenitors, and as my branches are to run over the wall, and my seed are to inherit the choice land whereon the Zion of God shall stand in the last days, from among my seed, scattered with the Gentiles, shall a choice Seer arise, whose bowels shall be a fountain of truth, whose loins shall be girded with the girdle of righteousness, whose hands shall be lifted with acceptance before the God of Jacob to turn away his anger from his anointed, whose heart shall meditate great wisdom, whose intelligence shall circumscribe and comprehend the deep things of God, and whose mouth shall utter the law of the just . . . and he shall feed upon the heritage of Jacob his father: Thou [Joseph Smith, Jr.] shalt hold the keys of this ministry, even the presidency of this Church, both in time and in eternity, and thou shalt stand on Mount Zion when the tribes of Jacob come shouting from the north, and with thy brethren, the Sons of Ephraim, crown them in the name of Jesus Christ.  

This blessing reaffirms Joseph of Egypt’s knowledge of Joseph Smith and identifies the Prophet as the “choice seer,” a powerful servant of Christ who would bless his (Joseph of Egypt’s) posterity, as well as help gather the house of Israel.

The Lord sent His prophets to Joseph Smith to restore all the keys of authority necessary to make the olive tree (house of Israel) flourish and produce good fruit, thus giving Joseph the power to accomplish his important mission. In various sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, the following keys are listed as being given to the Prophet Joseph: the keys to the record of the stick of Ephraim (D&C 27:5), the keys of the restoration of all things (D&C 27:6), the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood (D&C 27:8), the keys of the binding of hearts (D&C 27:9), the keys of the Abrahamic covenant (D&C 27:10), the
keys of the Melchizedek and Apostolic Priesthood (D&C 27:12), the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times (D&C 27:13), the keys of the mystery of sealed things (D&C 35:18), the keys of the kingdom of God (D&C 65:2), and the keys of the gathering of Israel (D&C 110:11). Joseph Smith's mission as prophet, seer, revelator, and head of the dispensation of the fulness of times demanded that all the keys of the ancients be restored to him, fulfilling the description of the root "unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood and the keys of the kingdom" (D&C 113:5–6).

As further evidence of Joseph's role, the Lord gave a parable about His vineyard that had been destroyed by the enemy. In the parable, the Lord called one of His servants and commanded the servant to redeem His vineyard by destroying His enemies so the Lord could possess again the land (see D&C 101:43–62). Regarding this parable, the Lord declared that Zion, His vineyard, must be redeemed by His power: "Therefore, I will raise up unto my people a man, who shall lead them like as Moses led the children of Israel. For ye are the children of Israel, and of the seed of Abraham, and ye must needs be led out of bondage by power, and with a stretched-out arm" (D&C 103:15–17; emphasis added). The Lord identified Joseph Smith as the servant who would redeem His vineyard (see D&C 103:21). Thus, the priesthood by birthright, the receipt of keys of authority, and the clear declaration of the Lord leave little doubt concerning the one to whom Isaiah was referring.22

Sidney Sperry wrote that undoubtedly Moroni, like Isaiah, knew that young Joseph was both the rod and the root and explained this to Joseph on his first visit.23 If this is true, then how is Joseph both a rod and a root, especially considering that the root in Isaiah 11:1 was identified as Christ? The use of this imagery in Isaiah 11 is particularly appropriate because a rod, or green shoot, accurately describes a young Joseph restoring from an ancient source the pure and pristine gospel of Jesus Christ to a church organization that, although of ancient origin, was in his dispensation also young and inexperienced. Joseph and the restored gospel connect to the original root as new growth that produces shoots, branches, and fruit. Just as roots sink down deep into the soil and then spread out, so has the gospel of Jesus Christ restored through the Prophet Joseph spread throughout the world. The covenants, as restored through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are now in many nations and in time will go to all the world (see D&C 42:8). Kent Jackson explains, "Just as the 'rod' or twig grows
out of the stem and derives its strength from it, so also do Joseph Smith's prophetic attributes, callings, and authorities stem from those of his Master.”  

A Latter-day Elias

Deeper insight into the meaning of these symbols unfolds as we review what Moroni taught Joseph prior to quoting Isaiah 11—the prophecies of Malachi. Moroni quoted part of Malachi 3; however, the part is not specified. It is probable that he quoted at least verses 1 through 4, since they prophesy of latter-day events. He also quoted Malachi 4, although with a little variation from the King James Version (see Joseph Smith—History 1:36). Interestingly, these are the very chapters of Malachi that Christ gave to the Nephites and commanded them to write into their record for future generations (see 3 Nephi 24, 25, 26:1–2).

In Malachi 3, the Lord declared, among other things, two significant events: (1) a messenger was to come to prepare the way before the Lord and (2) the sons of Levi must make a righteous offering to the Lord (see Malachi 3:3).

Joseph Smith as an Elias. A messenger or forerunner has the title of Elias. John the Baptist was the Elias of Christ's first coming, sent “to prepare the way” and “make his paths straight” (Isaiah 40:3; 1 Nephi 10:7–8; Matthew 3:3). Although many heavenly messengers have assisted in the Restoration, including John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Elijah, Moroni, and others, “the closest analogue to John the Baptist, the ancient messenger who was sent to prepare the way for the Lord’s first coming” is Joseph Smith. As confirmation of this responsibility, Joseph recorded the following: “I was informed that I was chosen to be an instrument in the hands of God to bring about some of his purposes in this glorious dispensation.”

Joseph Smith is an Elias of Christ’s second coming. The Doctrine and Covenants links the messenger to the message restored through him: “And even so I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me” (D&C 45:9). Thus, the forerunner, messenger, or modern Elias is both Joseph Smith and the gospel covenant that was restored through him, making an acceptable offering possible (see D&C 45:9). Modern-day revelation declares that part of that acceptable offering would be “a book containing the records of our dead” (D&C 128:24).
An acceptable offering. Moroni then quoted the Lord in Malachi 4:1, saying, “All that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Thus, the unrighteous will be utterly destroyed with “no hope of sprouting again to life,” unlike the olive tree or house of Israel. The “right to the tree of life” is obedience to the commandments (see Revelation 22:14). Christ stated, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16). He was declaring His royal lineage and stating that access to the living tree is only through Him.

Moroni also echoed Malachi 4:5: “Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” As the gospel covenants were being restored through Joseph, he received essential keys for governing the kingdom. The keys held by Elijah that allowed for the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers were particularly essential for accomplishing the purpose for which the earth was created (see Malachi 4:6). Those promises include sealing families together in an unbroken chain back to Adam. Hence, one of the most significant roles performed by the root and branch foreseen by Isaiah is to connect past and future, ancestry and posterity, or root and branch.

As an instrument of the Lord in restoring gospel covenants and promises, Joseph provided the means by which mankind could have both root and branch by being grafted into the main root and stem, Christ. That Joseph understood the significance of linking together the roots and branches of man’s family tree is clear from this declaration: “The greatest responsibility in this world that God has laid upon us is to seek after our dead. The Apostle says, ‘They without us cannot be made perfect’ (Hebrews 11:40) for it is necessary that the sealing power should be in our hands to seal our children and our dead for the fullness of the dispensation of times—a dispensation to meet the promises made by Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world for the salvation of man.” As head of the dispensation of the fulness of times, he was the essential link, restoring the past to the present and this world to the next. He prepares the way for the Second Coming of Christ by making possible part of the required offering—a book tying together the generations of man. Thus, Joseph could be symbolically portrayed in Isaiah as a rod, the synonymous term for branch, and a root (see Isaiah 11:1, 10).
Joseph Smith as an ensign. Isaiah 11 further declares that this root “shall stand for an ensign of the people” and that this root “shall set up an ensign for the nations.” It is to this ensign that Gentiles and Israel will gather (see Isaiah 11:11–12). What is an ensign?

Anciently, ensigns were distinctive banners representing each tribe of Israel. As the nation of Israel journeyed from Egypt to the promised land, each tribe had an assigned marching position next to the ark of the covenant. They raised a distinctive ensign, or banner, to which the members of the tribe were to gather (see Numbers 2). Just like Moses and ancient Israel, the Prophet Joseph Smith raised a unique banner or “standard” (see Numbers 2:2) around which modern Israel is to gather. The standard that Joseph raised has been defined in scripture as (1) the Book of Mormon (see 2 Nephi 29:2), (2) the light of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see D&C 115:3–5), and (3) the restored covenants of the gospel of Jesus Christ to which the nations of the world will gather (see D&C 45:9).

Joseph both raised the ensign and, as the messenger, stands as an ensign. As previously established, the messenger and the message he restored are a united forerunner preparing for the Second Coming of Christ. “The restored gospel of Jesus Christ is, in the fullest sense, the ‘ensign for the nations,’” yet Joseph’s role as prophet, seer, revelator, and restorer in the last dispensation “cannot be separated from the message itself.” Hence, Joseph was told that “the ends of the earth shall inquire after thy name,” and he explained, “My name should be had for good and evil among all nations.” His name is inseparably connected with the ensign he raised, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Book of Mormon, and the covenants of Christ (D&C 122:1; Joseph Smith—History 1:33).

Isaiah’s final promise to Joseph, the latter-day Elias and ensign, was a glorious rest. The “rest of the Lord” is identified as a state of happiness and peace and the “fulness of his glory” (Alma 40:12; D&C 84:24). Joseph’s temporal life was one of turmoil, with persecutions from both inside and outside the Church. He knew poverty, disappointment, hardship, and upheaval. He experienced sadness in the death of his children as well as the pain of betrayal by close friends. Yet the spiritual outpouring he received from God was continuous and reflected the fulness of God’s promised glory. Joseph’s life was difficult. However, the Lord sustained him so that he could fulfill his divine commission by reminding him that he was known of Him and known by prophets of old.
Conclusion

In his first meeting with Moroni, it was vital for Joseph Smith to glimpse his sacred commission from the Lord—the restoration of the gospel and covenants of Jesus Christ. We have a hint of the significance of this message in the announcement by Moroni to Joseph Smith: “It [the prophecy of Isaiah] was about to be fulfilled” (Joseph Smith—History 1:40). Joseph was the choice seer who saw into the eternities and brought together past and future. Joseph was the powerful servant raised up for the latter days. He was the one like unto Joseph of Egypt and Moses, foreordained to help bring salvation to the children of God by restoring plain and precious truths. He is the high priest who presides over the last dispensation and the latter-day Elias sent to “make ready the way” for the Second Coming of Christ. As a result of his great work, the olive tree is beginning to produce an abundance of good fruit.

From patriarchal blessings given to Joseph, son of Lehi, and to Joseph Smith Jr.; from witnesses in the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon; and from the prophecies of ancient seers—Joseph of Egypt, Isaiah, and Malachi—we see the Lord’s hand reaching through generations of time to bring salvation to “his seed.” Isaiah testified that the work of the Messiah and the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith are connected like the trunk and branches of a tree. However, their relationship is even more intimate; their roots have intertwined. Therefore, it is not surprising that Elder John Taylor would exclaim, “Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it” (D&C 135:3). As the head of this final dispensation, Joseph Smith stands as the preeminent prophetic revealer of Christ and the plan of salvation. The Lord delegated to Joseph Smith the responsibility to restore His covenants in the latter days that all might have roots and branches grafted into the “true vine” and the “true olive tree,” who is Christ. Clearly, Joseph Smith is inseparably connected with the Messiah in the work of salvation.

Notes


2. See also Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:3, “And all those who are ordained unto this priesthood [Melchizedek] are made like unto the Son of God” (emphasis added).


5. The Hebrew word *boter*, translated as rod in the KJV, could also have been translated “branch” or “twig,” meaning an offshoot or green sprout. The Hebrew word *geza*, translated as “stem,” could have been translated “stock” or “trunk.” In the case of a tree that had been cut down, “stump” would also be appropriate.


7. Elder Bruce R. McConkie compares Zenos with Isaiah as being one of the great prophets who testified of Christ. “I do not think I overstate the matter when I say that next to Isaiah himself—who was the prototype, pattern, and model for all the prophets—there was not a greater prophet in all Israel than Zenos.” (Bruce R. McConkie, “The Doctrinal Restoration," in *The Joseph Smith Translation, The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, ed. Monte Nyman and Robert Millet [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985], 17).


13. Price identifies “the Messiah as a Shoot from the stem (stump) of Jesse, and a Branch from Jesse’s family roots” (Ross Price, *Beacon Bible Commentary* [Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1969], 4:69). Another source clearly identifies the passage as messianic: “They need the very incarnation of God’s life in the Messiah” (Frank E. Gaebelien, ed., *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1976], 87). Wesley believes that the stem or stump “clearly implies, that the Messiah should be born of the royal house of David” (John Wesley, *John Wesley’s Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*, URL: bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries; see also The 1599 Geneva Study Bible. bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown argue that the Messiah arises from the stump and is also the root in verse 10 (Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary: The Old and New Testaments* [Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1878], 131). Matthew Henry identifies Christ as the Messiah who is called both a rod and a branch (Leslie F. Church, ed., *Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1960], 845).

14. Clarke identifies the chapter as messianic and “represented as a slender twig shooting up from the root of an old withered stem,” but he does not attempt to identify the root or stem (Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary* [London: Butterworth, 1810–25], 1:72).


17. The Hebrew word for root, sores, is the same in verse 1 and verse 10.


19. Heber C. Kimball stated that the keys, power, and authority of the kingdom of God were in the lineage of Joseph Smith and others of the “Twelve” (Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Kimball Family, 1988], 33; and Journal of Discourses [London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86], 4:248).

20. Several Latter-day Saint scholars also believe the powerful servant is Joseph Smith Jr. (see McConkie, The Millennial Messiah, 330–40; Sydney B. Sperry, The Message of the Twelve Prophets (Independence, Missouri: Zion’s Printing, 1941), 241; Sydney B. Sperry, Voice of Israel’s Prophets (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 35; Monte S. Nyman, Great Are the Words of Isaiah (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 71, 74; Kent P. Jackson, “The Appearance of Moroni to Joseph Smith,” in Studies in Scripture, Vol. 2: Pearl of Great Price, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall, 1985), 353. Ludlow believes Joseph Smith may not be the only “root of Jesse” in these last days (see Ludlow, Isaiah, 170–74).


22. Perhaps the men with whom Joseph was speaking understood that Isaiah’s prophecy referred to him, but because of the sacredness of this relationship to Christ and his special calling he did not name himself.


25. The Malachi verses that Moroni quoted to Joseph Smith are slightly different from the KJV. The quotations used in this paper reflect those differences and are from Joseph Smith—History.


31. This is similar to Isaiah’s prophesy concerning the kingdom of Babylon: “For I will rise up against them . . . and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew” (Isaiah 14:22).
Photograph by Edward Martin, ca. 1867

Courtesy R. Q. and Susan Shupe
Brigham Young: A Disciple Indeed

W. Jeffrey Marsh

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Today the word hero has been diminished because it has been confused with the term celebrity. Author James Bradley has noted that in previous generations, the word hero had real meaning, as opposed to the shallowness of celebrity status: “Celebrities seek fame. They take actions to get attention. Most often, the actions they take have no particular moral content. Heroes are heroes because they have risked something to help others. Their actions involve courage.”

The greatest accomplishment in life, as well as the highest achievement, is to be exalted “in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation” (D&C 6:13). True heroes, then, eternally speaking, are those with the moral fortitude and spirituality to lay hold on eternal life. True heroes are disciples of Jesus Christ who not only follow Him but lead others to do the same. “The thing which [is] of the most worth,” the Savior declared, is to “bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father” (D&C 16:6).

Church history and Doctrine and Covenants courses provide ample opportunities to teach students about real heroes: latter-day disciples of Christ. Preeminent among them is President Brigham Young.

President Young had undeviating faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a devoted disciple. True disciples, like Brigham Young, are followers of Christ in both word and action: “Jesus said to those who believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31; emphasis added). “He that receiveth my law and doeth it, the same is my disciple” (D&C 41:5; emphasis added). We
can find no better example of one who “received” and “continued” in Christ’s teachings than Brigham Young. He was a true disciple indeed, and his example can inspire our students to deepen their own discipleship.

The Teachings of President Young

Significantly, the priesthood and Relief Society manuals introduced in 1998 during President Hinckley’s administration began with the teachings of Brigham Young. Some striking similarities exist between Brigham Young and Gordon B. Hinckley. These two uncommon disciples have much in common:

- Both are temple builders.
- President Young built the Tabernacle. President Hinckley built the Conference Center.
- President Young reorganized the Quorum of the Twelve and put the priesthood in order. President Hinckley reorganized the Seventy and added additional quorums to it (fulfilling the description of the Seventy found in D&C 107:93–98).
- President Young was given responsibility to improve the presentation of the endowment in temples. So was President Hinckley.
- President Young presided over the Church when the train and the telegraph connected America coast to coast. President Hinckley has presided when the Internet and e-mail have come to connect us continent to continent.
- Wagons, handcarts, and the Mormon Trail west were used by Brigham Young in 1847 to lead the Saints into relative obscurity. That same trail in 1997, a reenactment of the trek, and President Hinckley’s willingness to meet with the media have helped bring the Church, as prophesied, out of obscurity (see D&C 1:30).

While visiting the National Archives in Washington, D.C., I noticed displayed on the wall, just a few feet from the Constitution of the United States, a letter praising Brigham Young for his outstanding leadership in colonizing the American West. I also saw a life-size marble monument of him (sculpted by his grandson, Mahonri M. Young) in the nation’s capitol building, and I have seen the heroic-size bronze statue of him that rests in the rotunda of the Utah state capitol building. All three portray President Young as a man of action and indomitable will. He was a remarkable leader with the “vision to see and faith to do, no matter how great the task or how difficult the obstacle.”

Brigham Young was known as the "Lion of the Lord." He was a unique individual, as George Q. Cannon observed, "a man of extraordinary will and great firmness of purpose. He was prudent in counsel, and wise in action. No hesitation, no vacillation of purpose but great tenacity and firmness in carrying out his views of right. . . . His courage was wonderful; he never knew what it was to have moral fear. The only question in his mind was, is it right? When this was decided, he pressed forward to its accomplishment, and no obstacle could deter him."

President Young possessed an extraordinary self-confidence born of faith in God. After leading over sixty thousand people into the vast deserts of the West, he founded hundreds of cities, established universities (despite the fact that he had only eleven days of formal schooling), and created numerous farming, mining, economic, transportation, and communication systems. I admire President Young's devotion to God and his determination to make things happen, but I most especially admire the qualities of his character that reflected true discipleship. These traits mark all true disciples of our Savior.

True Disciples of Christ Receive the Words of Truth

The ability to apply wise counsel is a key to a disciple's success and achievements. Brigham and his wife Miriam were seekers who were looking for the truth. They joined the Church after two years of intense study. He said he waited a little while because he wanted to apply his heart to the teachings, adding, "I wished time sufficient to prove all things for myself." "I could not more honestly and earnestly have prepared myself to go into eternity than I did to come into this Church; and when I had ripened everything in my mind, I drank it in, and not till then." But once he joined, he never looked back, and he never regretted it: "In all my researches into the doctrine of Jesus, I have never found an error."

His conversion came from reasoned study and from the divine witness of the Spirit: "If all the talent, tact, wisdom and refinement of the world had been sent to me with the Book of Mormon and had declared in the most exalted of earthly eloquence the truth of it, undertaking to prove it by learning and worldly wisdom, they would have been to me like the smoke which arises, only to vanish away. But when I saw a man [Eleazer Miller] without eloquence, or talents for public speaking who could only say, 'I know by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of the Lord,' the Holy Ghost proceeding from that individual illuminated my understanding, and light, glory, and immortality were
before me. I was encircled by them, filled with them, and I knew for myself that the testimony was true.’”

He gladly received all he could from the Prophet Joseph Smith: “An angel never watched [Joseph] closer than I did, and that is what has given me the knowledge I have today. I treasure it up, and ask the Father, in the name of Jesus, to help my memory when information is wanted.” Brigham “hunger[ed] and thirst[ed] after righteousness,” and he was filled with the Spirit (see 3 Nephi 12:6). He commented: “In my experience I never did let an opportunity pass of getting with the Prophet Joseph and of hearing him speak in public or in private, so that I might draw understanding from the fountain from which he spoke, . . . [and] such moments were more precious to me than all the wealth of the world. No matter how great my poverty—if I had to borrow meal to feed my wife and children, I never let an opportunity pass of learning what the Prophet had to impart. This is the secret of the success of your humble servant.”

**True Disciples Respond to Calls from the Lord**

All of us are faced with the challenge of setting priorities. For true disciples, the Lord is always the *first* priority, and He rearranges our other priorities according to His will. Brigham was called on to make numerous sacrifices to help build the kingdom of God. His family often made great sacrifice so that Brigham could do what God had asked of him. After Brigham had served ten missions from 1832 to 1840, the Lord spoke to him these commending and consoling words: “My servant Brigham, it is no more required at your hand to leave your family as in times past, for your offering is acceptable to me. I have seen your labor and toil in journeyings for my name. I therefore command you to send my word abroad, and take especial care of your family from this time, henceforth and forever. Amen” (D&C 126:1–3).

Brigham had the courage to respond to calls even when they seemed impossible to fulfill. While contemplating how to build the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith asked the brethren if they knew of anyone who could help them undertake the difficult task. Joseph Young replied that he knew of a man named Artemus Millet who lived in Canada but who was not a member of the Church. Joseph turned to Brigham and said: “Brother Brigham, I give you a mission. You are to go to Canada. You are to convert Artemus Millet. You are to bring him back to Kirtland with his family and tell him to bring at least a thousand dollars in cash.’ It is a testament of the mettle of Brigham that he said, ‘All right, Brother Joseph, I’ll go.’”

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11. Ibid., p. 22.
12. Ibid., p. 23.
Such unhesitating response to calls was seemingly second nature to him. "Go he did. He did convert Artemus Millet and his family. They did come to Kirtland with the thousand dollars. Brother Millet oversaw the construction of that temple and later the Manti Temple."  

Brother Millet also trained Truman Angell, who later served as the architect for the magnificent Salt Lake Temple—the globally recognized symbol of the Latter-day Saints.

**True Disciples Experience the Gifts of the Spirit**

President Young had the type of personality and presence that attracted people, but he was also charismatic in the sense of having power bestowed by the Holy Spirit. He experienced the gifts of the Spirit in his life. The Apostle Paul taught that spiritual gifts are the "earnest of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:13–14). In other words, the gifts of the Spirit are given like a promissory note, or a down payment, so to speak, on all the eternal blessings God has covenanted that we will one day receive. The fact that spiritual gifts were so much a part of President Young's life illustrates that the covenant was in force with him.

On 22 September 1827 (the same night Joseph Smith received the Book of Mormon plates from the angel Moroni at the Hill Cumorah), Brigham and his wife were living in Mendon, New York. They witnessed an unusual manifestation in the night sky. "The veil was taken from his eyes, and in the nighttime's western sky, toward Cumorah, he saw a bright light. Calling his wife excitedly to his side, they watched in amazement as for two hours the shimmering light formed itself into marching armies."  

Heber C. Kimball and others had seen the same remarkable event, and he felt it signified that God was marshaling His forces and that an army of righteousness would now march forth. But that night, all Brigham could do was marvel at the sign that had been given and ponder what might come to pass.

Brigham spoke in tongues the very day he met the Prophet Joseph Smith. This was apparently the first time the Prophet Joseph had heard someone speak in tongues. Only Joseph understood what was said. He later disclosed that Brigham had spoken in the pure Adamic language and had prophesied that he would one day succeed Joseph as the President of the Church. The Prophet Joseph stayed close to him from that moment on. Brigham Young experienced this same gift of tongues at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple.

While serving a mission in England, Brigham received an inspiration that saved the missionaries he presided over from harassment and embarrassment. He wrote: "I had organized the Priesthood in
Manchester to meet every Sabbath morning, and distribute themselves throughout the different parts of the city to preach in the streets. In this way they occupied about forty preaching stations, at each one of which the congregation were notified of our regular meetings in the Carpenter's Hall. This so annoyed the sectarians, particularly the Methodists, that they made complaints to the mayor, who issued an order to have all street preachers arrested. I went to the Priesthood meeting in the morning and felt impressed to tell the brethren to go home. The police, who had been instructed to arrest all street preachers that morning, took up about twenty, who all proved to be Methodists. When the magistrate learned they were not 'Mormons,' they were dismissed.920

President Young had seen the Salt Lake Valley in vision long before he arrived with the first company of pioneers. In 1838, while the Saints were being driven from Missouri, Church leaders contemplated heading west. But Brigham saw in vision that the Saints were first to go east, settle temporarily, and then later travel toward the west.93 Later, as the Saints prepared to leave Nauvoo, President Young had a dream in which he was shown the Salt Lake Valley and the hill that became known as Ensign Peak. In his dream, the Prophet Joseph Smith stood atop Ensign Peak and showed him the valley below. Elder George A. Smith, Church historian and member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, described the experience:

We look around to-day and behold our city clothed with verdure and beautified with trees and flowers, with streams of water running in almost every direction, and the question is frequently asked, "How did you ever find this place?" I answer, we were led to it by the inspiration of God. After the death of Joseph Smith, when it seemed as if every trouble and calamity had come upon the Saints, Brigham Young, who was President of the Twelve, then the presiding Quorum of the Church, sought the Lord to know what they should do, and where they should lead the people for safety, and while they were fasting and praying daily on this subject, President Young had a vision of Joseph Smith, who showed him the mountain that we now call Ensign Peak, immediately north of Salt Lake City, and there was an ensign fell upon that peak, and Joseph said, "Build under the point where the colors fall and you will prosper and have peace."922

When President Young saw the Salt Lake Valley for the first time, he received a divine manifestation that they had found the place designated by God for the Saints to live. Speaking at a 24th of July celebration years later, President Woodruff related: "I drove my carriage with President Young lying on a bed in it into the open valley,
the rest of the company following. When we came out of the canyon into full view of the valley I turned the side of my carriage around, open to the west, and President Young arose [leaned up] from his bed and took a survey of the country. While gazing upon the scene before us, he was enwrapped in vision for several minutes. He had seen the valley before in vision and upon this occasion he saw the future glory of Zion and of Israel as they would be planted in the valleys of the mountains. When the vision had passed, [Brigham Young] said, ‘This is the right place, drive on.’”

Despite the bleak reports about the valley, Brigham prophesied that God had promised He “will temper the elements, . . . rebuke the frost and the sterility of the soil, and the land shall become fruitful.”

Within a few days after the arrival of the first company of pioneers into the valley, President Young walked north of their encampment and suddenly “struck the point of his cane into the ground and exclaimed, ‘Here we will build the Temple of our God.’” He later testified, “I have never looked upon that ground, but the vision of it was there. I see it as plainly as if it was in reality before me. Wait until it is done. I will say, however, that it will have six towers, to begin with, instead of one. Now do not any of you apostatize because it will have six towers, and Joseph only built one. It is easier for us to build sixteen, than it was for him to build one.” He also prophesied of other buildings, including one like the Conference Center: “The time will come when there will be one in the center of temples, we shall build, and, on the top, groves and fish ponds. But we shall not see them here, at present.” With great interest, we can think about the recently completed Conference Center in light of President Young’s prophetic statement.

When asked by his daughter Susa Young Gates how the Saints could possibly accomplish all the temple work that needed to be done, Brigham replied that “there would be many inventors of labor-saving devices, so that our daily duties could be performed in a short time, leaving us more and more time for temple work. The inventions have come, and are still coming.”

**True Disciples Use God-Given Creativity to Bless Others**

Pioneers are those who go before and show the way. The Lord expects us to be “anxiously engaged” in good causes and to “do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness” (D&C 58:27). Brigham was forward-thinking and experimental. He grew cotton, produced silk, made iron, and so forth. One story of his creative genius is how he received the inspiration for the design of the
Tabernacle on Temple Square. In conversation with Henry Grow, a bridge-builder, President Young said: “Henry, I am desirous of constructing a building for our people, anticipating the future numbers, and I have been wondering what plan we should use. . . . I had an egg for breakfast this morning, cooked hard, and in lieu of chopping it through the center, I cut it through end-wise and set it up on tooth-picks. I was strongly impressed that we might use this plan for the building.”28

How many of us have ever used our breakfast as inspiration to create something great? President Young, apparently, was constantly using his creative ingenuity to improve life.

**True Disciples Are Confident They Can Do What God Asks**

The U.S. minister to Berlin said of Brigham Young: “At first glance, you would take him to be a successful bank or railroad president, and his quick, straightforward, business-like manner carries out the impression. . . . I studied his face sufficiently to detect the three chief qualities—great prudence, great determination, and great belief in himself.”29

Another historian observed: “If I were asked to point out the principle thing, which, more than all others, made President [Brigham] Young the great man he was, I think I should reply, without hesitation, that it was his ability to believe—his great faith. First, faith in a living God. . . . Second, faith in every principle and doctrine revealed and taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith. . . . Third, faith in himself, and in his ability to carry on the great work of establishing the Kingdom of God. . . . On his tombstone one might well have written, HE BELIEVED.”30

**True Disciples Are Light-Hearted without Being Light-Minded**

President Young was famous in his time. Papers could write any lurid tale about him to sell their papers, whether it was true or not. He was living in a puritanical world during the reign of Queen Victoria in England. His life and marriages made interesting fodder for newspapers. Many people were curious to meet him.

Samuel Clemens, alias Mark Twain, met Brigham Young while traveling to California. He said Brigham was “quiet, kindly, easy-mannered, dignified, self-possessed old gentleman of fifty-five or sixty, and had a gentle craft [a twinkle] in his eye.” He added that he had a straw hat on and that President Young even teased him:

He talked about Utah, and the Indians, and Nevada, and general American matters and questions, with our secretary and certain
government officials who came with us. But he never paid any attention to me, notwithstanding I made several attempts to 'draw him out' on federal politics and his highhanded attitude towards Congress. I thought some of the things I said were rather fine. But he merely looked around at me, at distant intervals, somewhat as I have seen a benignant old cat look around to see which kitten was meddling with her tail. By and by I subsided into an indignant silence, and so sat until the end, hot and flushed, and execrating him in my heart for an ignorant savage. But he was calm. His conversation with those gentlemen flowed on as sweetly and peacefully and musically as any summer brook. When the audience was ended and we were retiring from the presence, he put his hand on my head, beamed down on me in an admiring way, and said to my brother: "Ah—your child, I presume? Boy or girl?"31

On one occasion, President Young dictated a letter to a disgruntled sister who had asked her name to be removed from the records of the Church. His response is both humorous and instructive: "Madam: I have this day examined the records of baptism for the remission of sins in the Church . . . and not being able to find [your name] recorded therein I was saved the necessity of erasing your name therefrom. You may therefore consider that your sins have not been remitted you and you may consequently enjoy the benefits therefrom."32

He had a great sense of humor. He said, "One of the nicest things in the world is to let an enemy alone entirely . . . [because doing so] mortifies him to death."33

He set apart Henry G. Sherwood as the camp grumbler for the trek crossing the plains. He officially motioned that "any one who wants to murmur, go to Henry G. Sherwood, who will do the business for them."34

When a woman complained to President Young that her husband had told her to go to hell, he replied, "Sister, don't go, don't go!"35

Historians Richard and Jeni Holzapfel have noted that a pastime for young and old women in Nauvoo was to collect autographs and messages of advice in notebooks. In one book, Brigham Young left a very humorous entry. W. W. Phelps wrote:

Two things will beautify a youth,
That is: Let virtue decorate the truth.
And so you know; every little helps,
Yours, W. W. Phelps.

The Prophet Joseph Smith, keying off of Phelps's poem, wrote:
The truth and virtue both are good
When rightly understood,  
But charity is better, Miss—  
That takes us home to bliss.  
And so forthwith  
Remember, Joseph Smith.  

And Brigham Young, “who was sometimes serious and at other times humorous in the messages he left in autograph books,” recorded:  
To live with Saints in Heaven is bliss and glory,  
To live with Saints on Earth is another story.

**True Disciples Lead by Example**

President Young taught: “A man must first learn to rightly rule himself, before his knowledge can be fully brought to bear for the correct government of a family, a neighborhood or nation, over which it is his lot to preside.” He instructed the Saints: “It matters not whether you or I feel like praying; when the time comes to pray, pray. If we do not feel like it, we should pray until we do. . . . You will find that those who wait ‘till the Spirit bids them pray will never pray much on this earth.”

One of his wives, Lucy B. Young, described an incident reflecting how President Young followed his own counsel: “I went up the hall in the Lion House. President Young had just crossed the road on South Temple and hurried into his office. With the curiosity of a good woman, I walked up to the end of the hall and listened at the door. I heard President Brigham Young say: ‘Down on your knees, Brigham! Down on your knees!’ He had had some difficulty with the men across the street. In a few moments he opened the door calmly, with perfect control, and went about his work.”

President Young believed in teaching children by example. “It is not by the whip or the rod that we can make obedient children,” he stated, “but it is by faith and by prayer, and by setting a good example before them.” “When his sons were caught donating some props (without permission) for a play written by their friends, he said to the theater manager, ‘These boys will have a play. They call it “The Robbers of the Rocky Mountains.” I don’t know much about the mountains, but they made a clean job of my old barn. Give them a date at the Theater.’”

**True Disciples Are Loyal to the Cause They Join**

President Young described his loyalty to God in various sermons. “I would rather have God my friend, and all the world enemies, than
be a friend with the world, and have God my enemy."45 "Whatever duty God places upon me, in his strength, I intend to fulfill it."46 "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord. As for me and all I have it is the Lord’s and shall be dedicated to him in all my days."47

During the dark days of Kirtland, when apostasy ran even in the highest circles of Church leadership, Brigham Young’s unyielding firmness became a strength to other loyal Saints.

He defended the Prophet Joseph Smith from apostates in the Kirtland Temple.48 The apostates became so incensed at Brigham Young that they threatened to destroy him. Their fury had become so fierce against Brigham he had to flee Kirtland, despite the fact that it was December, to save his life.

Later, after Governor Lilburn W. Boggs had issued his shameful extermination order, after the Saints had been mercilessly driven from Missouri, and while Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Parley P. Pratt, and others were still imprisoned in Missouri, Brigham Young faced the perilous decision of returning to Far West, Missouri, to fulfill a revelation. On 8 July 1838, before the Saints had fled Missouri, the Lord declared that the Twelve were to leave for a mission to England, from Far West, on the 26th of April 1839 (see D&C 118:4–5). Some suggested that the Lord would surely take the “will for the deed,” given their circumstances and having been threatened with death if they returned to Missouri. But not Brigham. In peril of his life, he obediently returned to Far West, leading twenty other Saints, and fulfilled the prophecy. He reported, “Thus was this revelation fulfilled, concerning which our enemies said, if all other revelations of Joseph Smith were fulfilled that one should not, as it had day and date to it.”49

True Disciples Combine the Practical with the Spiritual

Brigham demonstrated the balance of how to blend the practical with the spiritual, along with the perspective of the eternal. He used the October 1856 general conference to organize teams and supplies to rescue the handcart pioneers who were stranded in the Wyoming snows. He said: “The afternoon meeting will be omitted, for I wish the sisters to go home and prepare to give those who have just arrived a mouthful of something to eat, and to wash them and nurse them up. You know I would give more for a dish of pudding and milk, or a baked potato and salt, were I in the situation of those persons who have just come in, than I would for all your prayers, though you were to stay here all the afternoon and pray. Prayer is good, but when baked potatoes and pudding and milk are needed, prayer will not supply their place.”48
Speaking of that event, President Hinckley said:

I think President Young did not sleep that night. I think visions of those destitute, freezing, dying people paraded through his mind.

The next morning he came to the old Tabernacle which stood on this square. He said to the people:

"I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak. . . . It is this. . . . Many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now seven hundred miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them. The text will be, 'to get them here.' . . . I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out just such principles as I am now teaching you. Go and bring in those people now on the plains." . . .

Wonderful sermons have been preached from this pulpit, my brethren and sisters. But none has been more eloquent than that spoken by President Young in those circumstances. 49

Brigham's practicality, combined with spirituality, was further illustrated when a woman who was ill asked him for a blessing. President Young said, "Have you taken any herbs?" She replied, "Oh, no, Brother Brigham, I have the faith that if you just lay your hands upon my head I won't need any herbs or any medicine." He responded by pointing to a vacant lot and said, "You might just as well expect the Lord to cause wheat and corn to grow on that bare ground without you ever plowing or planting as to expect the Lord to do something for you that you know what to do for yourself without you putting first the effort." "But," he added, "I have the faith that if we were traveling in the mountains and all we could get was a little venison and we had some ailment then we could ask the Lord to do everything because there was nothing we could do for ourselves. And it is my faith that he could and would perform a miracle in our behalf." 50

Brigham Young's Life Shows Us the Path of Discipleship

Examples from the life of President Young such as those discussed above illustrate his undeviating faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, his devotion to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and his loyalty to the kingdom of God. He was a fervent disciple whose devotion never faltered. In a 1947 tribute to Brigham Young and the sacrifices of the pioneers he led, Vilate C. Raile wrote:
They cut desire into short lengths
And fed it to the hungry fires of courage.
Long after when the fires had died,
Molten gold gleamed in the ashes.
They gathered it in bruised palms
And handed it to their children
And their children’s children forever.\(^51\)

When we consider the sacrifices that Brigham Young and other pioneer forebears made, we might wonder if we have ever done anything to be worthy to sit with them in the future eternities. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has responded, “If you are faithful, the day will come when those deserving pioneers whom you rightly praise for having overcome the adversities in their wilderness trek will instead praise you for having made your way successfully through a desert of despair, for having passed through a cultural wilderness and having kept the faith, for having been true to the faith.”\(^52\) “Therefore, though we have rightly applauded our ancestors for their spiritual achievements (and do not and must not discount them now), those of us who prevail today will have done no small thing. The special spirits who have been reserved to live in this time of challenges and who overcome will one day be praised for their stamina by those who pulled handcarts.”\(^53\)

May God bless us to treasure the “molten gold”—the legacy of discipleship—that Brigham Young “gathered . . . in bruised palms” and has passed to all of us. Truly, he was a disciple of Jesus Christ indeed, leaving footsteps of faith for other disciples to follow.  

Notes


2. Brigham expressed an opinion on countless subjects. The register alone for Brigham Young’s papers occupies seventy-seven single-spaced pages. Materials classified include “approximately 150 boxes of . . . materials, including twenty-nine letterpress copy books with exact replicas of about 30,000 letters he had dictated and signed; forty-eight volumes [thick, handwritten histories, containing] about 50,000 pages of a manuscript chronicle of his daily doings as president of the church; four diaries written mostly in his own hand during the years 1837 to 1844; ten diaries dictated by him, 1846–77, but in the hands of his private secretary; and thousands of pages of office journals, correspondence, published and unpublished speeches, ledgers, and telegram books” (Leonard J. Arrington, Adventures of a Church Historian [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998], 113–14).


4. W. W. Phelps, Deseret News, March 1851; quoted in W. D. Bowen, “The
10. In Nibley, Brigham Young, 6.
13. See Journal of Discourses, 4:34–35, where President Young described some of the sacrifices he made while serving missions for the Church.
15. Madsen, Joseph Smith the Prophet, 58.
16. Unpublished minutes of the Young-Richards Family Meeting, Nauvoo, 18 January 1845, quoted in the CES student manual, Presidents of the Church (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 63.
19. See Lycurgus A. Wilson, comp., Life of David W. Patten, the First Apostolic Martyr (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1900), 42.
28. In Spencer and Harmer, Brigham Young at Home, 281–82.
29. Bayard Taylor, U.S. Minister to Berlin and Author, M.S. 32, 437; in Nibley, Brigham Young, 460.
30. Nibley, Brigham Young, 539.


40. As related by Oscar A. Kirkham, in Conference Report, October 1955 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1955), 127.


42. CES Student Manual, *Presidents of the Church*, 80; see also Clarissa Young Spencer with Mabel Harmer, *Brigham Young at Home*, 160.


47. *Church History in the Fulsness of Times* (Salt Lake City: Corporation of the President, 1993), 226.


52. Neal A. Maxwell, CES Fireside for College-Age Young Adults, 4 June 1995; copy of transcript in author’s possession.

Painting by Arnold Friberg, *Captain Moroni and the Title of Liberty*
Captain Moroni’s Wartime Strategies: An Application for the Spiritual Battles of Our Day

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As Mormon abridged the Nephite record, he included what he deemed most relevant for latter-day Israel, including stories of war. The so-called “war chapters” provide a rich resource of modern-day spiritual applications for teachers and students of the gospel (see Alma 43–62). One way to apply these chapters is to draw a parallel between the physical and the spiritual—between Moroni’s physical battles on the field and the spiritual battles that we face in our own lives today. To be more specific, we might ask these questions: (1) What strategies did Captain Moroni use to prepare and protect himself and his people from evil men such as Zerahemnah, Amalickiah, and Ammoron? (2) How can these strategies be implemented to build spiritual defenses of our own against Satan and the evil of our day?

Of course, we could identify numerous strategies; however, we will focus our attention on just five. First, Captain Moroni equipped those in his military with personal armor that shielded the “more vital parts of the body” (Alma 43:38). Second, Moroni extended the boundary of defense from the individual to the individual’s environment—that is, he made each city into a fortress that was protected by surrounding earthworks, trenches, and picket fences. Third, Moroni recognized that his enemy would be progressive while attempting to defeat and subject the Nephites. Therefore, he was in an ongoing mode to prepare and implement improved forms of defense to stay ahead of his enemy’s continuing efforts. Fourth, Moroni erected towers to overlook the fences surrounding each city. Not only were these
towers strategic places from which soldiers could fire stones and arrows at the enemy in the heat of battle but no doubt they were places from which watchman could see the enemy “while [they were] yet afar off” (D&C 101:54). Fifth, Moroni and his military captains used wisdom by not attacking the enemy in the enemy’s strongholds. Instead, the Nephites waited patiently for the proper time and place to make their offensive moves. Each of these strategies and its spiritual application for our lives will be discussed in this article.

Protecting Ourselves by Putting on Armor

The year was 74 B.C. Alma and his companions had just led a mission to reclaim the apostate Zoramites. Many of these Zoramites were eventually converted and joined the people of Ammon in the land of Jershon. Angered by this movement and by Alma’s preaching of the word, the “more popular part” of the Zoramites joined themselves to the Lamanites and began enticing them to go to war against the Nephites (see Alma 35). Meanwhile, Moroni, a young visionary and chief captain of the Nephite military, wisely prepared his people for possible attacks. When word reached Moroni that the Lamanites, led by Zerahemnah, were on their way to invade the Nephites, he quickly deployed his army to the land of Jershon to rebuff them. As the Lamanites drew near the city, they saw that the Nephites had “breastplates and . . . arm-shields, yea, and also shields to defend their heads, and also they were dressed with thick clothing” (43:19). In great fear, the Lamanites made a hasty retreat.

Later, when Moroni learned that Zerahemnah’s army was moving to attack “the weaker part” of the Nephites in the land of Manti, he rallied his troops to head them off (43:24–25). In the ensuing battle, the “work of death commenced on both sides, but it was more dreadful on the part of the Lamanites” because of their nakedness. The heavy blows of the Nephite swords “brought death almost at every stroke. While on the other hand, there was now and then a man fell among the Nephites, by their swords and the loss of blood, they being shielded from the more vital parts of the body, or the more vital parts of the body being shielded from the strokes of the Lamanites, by their breastplates, and their armshields, and their head-plates; and thus the Nephites did carry on the work of death among the Lamanites” (43:37–38). As the battle continued, its intensity increased with loss of life on both sides. Although less than half the size of the Lamanites, the Nephite army gained a major victory over their enemy (see Alma 43:51).
Humble Moroni attributed this miraculous victory to God’s preserving hand and the faithfulness of the people. The inspiration of Moroni to supply his army with protective armor at this critical point played a key role in their preservation. Zerahemnah himself accredited the Nephite success to their armor, although he stubbornly refused to admit any divine intervention (see Alma 44:9).

This life-preserving strategy of protecting oneself by putting on armor is, of course, a powerful spiritual metaphor for our day. Paul’s counsel to the Ephesians to “take unto [them] the whole armour of God” (see Ephesians 6:13) was reaffirmed for our generation when the Savior revealed the following:

*Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand.*

*Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you;*

*Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;*

*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen. (D&C 27:15–18)*

Spiritual armor, then, consists of such elements as truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Spirit. Church leaders have provided valuable insight into how we may go about attaining and fitting ourselves with this type of armor. Elder M. Russell Ballard recently explained:

*How do we put on the whole armor of God so that we may as Paul promises, “be able to withstand the evil day”? I like to think of this spiritual armor not as a solid piece of metal molded to fit the body, but more like chain mail. Chain mail consists of dozens of tiny pieces of steel fastened together to allow the user greater flexibility without losing protection. . . . There is not one great and grand thing we can do to arm ourselves spiritually. True spiritual power lies in numerous smaller acts woven together in a fabric of spiritual fortification that protects and shields from all evil.*

*It is a common expression to talk about the “chinks” in a person’s armor. The definition of the word chink is “a crack, a cleft, . . .*
a narrow opening. Should an arrow strike exactly one of the chinks in one's armor, a fatal wound can result.

Elder Ballard went on to suggest six ways we can eliminate any chinks in our personal spiritual armor. These include relying on the protective power of both prayer and scripture study, drawing on the merciful grace of God, watching ourselves, not wasting the days of our probation, and remembering that reverence invites revelation.

As part of a series of questions, President N. Eldon Tanner illustrated how we clothe ourselves with God's armor:

Are we studying the scriptures so that we can increase our knowledge and faith and testimony regarding the gospel? Do we keep the commandments? Are we honest and truthful in our dealings? Do we keep the Sabbath day holy? Do we observe the Word of Wisdom? Do we pay an honest tithing? Do we attend our meetings and respond to the calls made of us by our authorities? Are we virtuous and clean and pure in heart and mind and deed?

Do we fight against the evils around us—pornography, abortion, tobacco, alcohol, drugs? Do we have the courage to stand up for our convictions? Can we truly say we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ? Do we live peaceably with our neighbors and avoid gossip and backbiting and spreading unfounded rumors? Do we truly love our neighbors as ourselves?

If we can answer yes to these questions, then we will have on the whole armor of God, which will protect us from harm and preserve us from our enemies.

Clearly, then, from these statements, there are a number of fundamental actions that if implemented daily constitute putting on the Lord's armor. These things range from having personal prayer and studying the scriptures to loving others and being honest—in other words, simply living the gospel!

Another aspect concerning our modern-day armor deserves specific attention, as discussed by Elder Carlos E. Asay:

There is, however, another piece of armor worthy of our consideration. It is the special underclothing known as the temple garment, or garment of the holy priesthood, worn by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have received their temple endowment. This garment, worn day and night, serves three important purposes: it is a reminder of the sacred covenants made with the Lord in His holy house, a protective covering for the body, and a symbol of the modesty of dress and living that should characterize the lives of all the humble followers of Christ.
It is written that "the white garment symbolizes purity and helps assure modesty, respect for the attributes of God, and, to the degree it is honored, a token of what Paul regarded as taking upon one the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:13; cf. D&C 27:15). . . . Garments bear several simple marks of orientation toward the gospel principles of obedience, truth, life, and discipleship in Christ." . . .

The heavy armor worn by soldiers of a former day, including helmets, shields, and breastplates, determined the outcome of some battles. However, the real battles of life in our modern day will be won by those who are clad in a spiritual armor—an armor consisting of faith in God, faith in self, faith in one's cause, and faith in one's leaders. The piece of armor called the temple garment not only provides the comfort and warmth of a cloth covering, it also strengthens the wearer to resist temptation, fend off evil influences, and stand firmly for the right.  

When we think of putting on our personal armor, we need to recognize that it may be worthless unless it fits properly. The proper fitting of armor takes time and patience. President Boyd K. Packer emphasized that there is a special place where this fitting should be done. In speaking of "the shield of faith," he said:

[The] shield of faith is not produced in a factory, but at home in a cottage industry. . . .

Our Father's plan requires that, like the generation of life itself, the shield of faith is to be made and fitted in the family. No two can be exactly alike. Each must be handcrafted to individual specifications.

The plan designed by the Father contemplates that man and woman, husband and wife, working together, fit each child individually with a shield of faith made to buckle on so firmly that it can neither be pulled off nor penetrated by those fiery darts.

It takes the steady strength of a father to hammer out the metal of it and the tender hands of a mother to polish and fit it on. Sometimes one parent is left to do it alone. It is difficult, but it can be done.

In the Church we can teach about the materials from which a shield of faith is made: reverence, courage, chastity, repentance, forgiveness, compassion. In church we can learn how to assemble and fit them together. But the actual making of and fitting on of the shield of faith belongs in the family circle. Otherwise it may loosen and come off in a crisis.
In summary, the armor of God that Paul and, more recently, the Lord has counseled us to “put on” comes by way of keeping God’s commandments and establishing personal, temple, and home-centered gospel living. Much like Captain Moroni, who outfitted his forces with personal protection, parents must equip themselves and each child with celestial armor, knowing that many celestial battles lie ahead. Such armor will protect “the more vital parts” of our spiritual body and will, like Moroni, provide the lifesaving protection to “withstand the evil day”—or the evil in our day—and come off conquerors.

Protecting Ourselves by Protecting Our Environment

Another strategy that Moroni employed as a defense for his people was to extend the boundary of protection from the individual to the surrounding environment. While Amalickiah was deceitfully acquiring Lamanite leadership and inciting them to war, Moroni was surrounding his people with protective defenses by preparing their cities and lands in a way that “never had been known among the children of Lehi” (Alma 49:8). Moroni initiated this work by digging up ridges of earth and placing stone walls around border cities and lands that he felt needed to be fortified and that would serve as key places of resort for his army (see Alma 48:8).

Soon after this, the Lamanites, freshly fitted with new armor themselves, smugly began to mobilize their forces and attack the city of Ammonihah, believing it to be an easy target. Unaware of Moroni’s new defensive infrastructure, they were stunned at what they saw as they drew near the city (see Alma 49:3–4). Recognizing they had been outwitted, they retreated and took their march toward the land of Noah, their chief captains covenanted along the way that they would destroy the people of that city (see 49:13). Once again, they were disappointed, as Moroni had fortified all of the cities in that region, including Noah. Nevertheless, because of their chief captain’s previous decree, they reluctantly began their assault. Mormon describes what happened:

Now behold, the Lamanites could not get into their forts of security by any other way save by the entrance, because of the highness of the bank which had been thrown up, and the depth of the ditch which had been dug round about, save it were by the entrance. . . .

Now when they found that they could not obtain power over the Nephites by the pass, they began to dig down their banks of earth that they might obtain a pass to their armies, that they might
have an equal chance to fight; but behold, in these attempts they were swept off by the stones and arrows which were thrown at them; and instead of filling up their ditches by pulling down the banks of earth, they were filled up in a measure with their dead and wounded bodies.” (Alma 49:18, 22)

At this point, Mormon summarizes by saying, “Thus the Nephites had all power over their enemies; and thus the Lamanites did attempt to destroy the Nephites until their chief captains were all slain; yea, and more than a thousand of the Lamanites were slain; while, on the other hand, there was not a single soul of the Nephites which was slain” (49:23; emphasis added). Imagine that! A ratio of one thousand to zero—pretty good odds! Of course, we know that some of the Nephites had been wounded, but because of their armor, these wounds were not fatal (see Alma 49:24). Once again, the Lamanites lost a major campaign and were forced to retreat to their homeland.

During the next few years of peace, Moroni continued to expand his civil defense program by constructing defensive earthworks around all the cities possessed by the Nephites. Picket fences built on top of timbers were erected on ridges of earth with towers overlooking these fences. Moroni also drove off the Lamanites who were living in the east wilderness back to their own lands. This military maneuver allowed the Nephites to have a clear east-west borderline of defense for their own lands (see Alma 50:1–11). At this point in the record, Mormon observes, “Behold there never was a happier time among the people of Nephi, since the days of Nephi, than in the days of Moroni, yea, even at this time” (Alma 50:23). This happiness was the by-product of the Nephites’ faith and obedience in God and their increased confidence in the civil protections provided by Moroni.

What application does this story have for us? In the Doctrine and Covenants, we read, “But my disciples shall stand in holy places, and shall not be moved; but among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die” (D&C 45:32). To stand in holy places is the modern equivalent of Moroni’s city and land defense strategy. We must establish holy places of safety for ourselves where the Spirit of the Lord can reside and where worldly influences cannot penetrate.

President Ezra Taft Benson identified some of these places of resort when he taught: “Holy men and holy women stand in holy places, and these holy places include our temples, our chapels, our homes, and the stakes of Zion, which are, as the Lord declares, ‘for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth’ (D&C 115:6).”5
More recently, President James E. Faust admonished: “As we recall the commandment to stand in holy places, we should remember that beyond the temple, the most sacred and holy places in all the world should be our own dwelling places. Our homes should be committed and dedicated only to holy purposes. In our homes all of the security, the strengthening love, and the sympathetic understanding that we all so desperately need should be found.”

Earlier, I discussed the great success the Nephites had by putting on personal armor. Here, with the addition of environmental boundaries like trenches and walls surrounding their cities, the Nephites’ success was unmatched, for as Mormon put it: “[They] had all power over their enemies.” It is this same level of spiritual power that should be our goal. Truly, to have all power over evil, with zero spiritual fatalities, would truly bring us, as it did the Nephites, our happiest times.

When I teach about these two war strategies in the classroom, I like to illustrate their modern spiritual application by sketching a simple diagram on the whiteboard. First, I draw a stick figure of a person with a circle around it (see figure 1). This illustration represents each of us clothed with personal armor. Next, I draw a larger rectangle surrounding the figure to symbolize environmental borders much like the city walls that Moroni built (see figure 2). This visual represents us standing in holy places like our homes, temples, or churches.
With these models in front of the classroom, the students can then visualize and discuss what might represent their modern spiritual armor as well as their holy places of resort. They can also see how the combination of these two strategies will lead to unequaled spiritual protection for themselves, just as it did for the Nephites.

Now, here is another lesson. I help students recognize that once our personal and environmental defenses are in place, the only way Satan can have any hope of success is by sneaking his message inside our defenses, thus weakening the inner vessel. To illustrate this, I add another feature to my previous drawing—that of a roof on top of the rectangle (see figure 3). This drawing represents each of us inside a holy place we call our home. I might then draw a television or some other media device to demonstrate how Satan may covertly send propaganda via our communication lines (television, magazines, Internet, music), thereby weakening us from the inside out and deceiving us into breaking down our borders of safety and removing our armor (see figure 4). Hence, even though we may invest many hours of time in building strong personal and environmental borders, we can quickly lose them if we are not vigilant in censoring what comes inside our homes through the media.

Remember, in Alma 50, the Nephites were doing very, very well. They suffered no major problems as long as they continued to keep the commandments of the Lord and to support Moroni's call to liberty.
Unfortunately, a couple of civil factions sprang up, the first being in the city of Morianton. This disturbance was eventually quelled (see Alma 50:25–36). Then, the king-men began an antigovernment movement that distracted the Nephites just enough to allow them to be blindsided by the Lamanites, who invaded the land of Moroni (see Alma 51). Sadly, even though Moroni spent a tremendous amount of time and money in preparing the Nephites with personal armor and border protections against an outside enemy, the growing pride from within remained unchecked and led to unnecessary loss of life. Moroni knew that such inward vessel problems were the primary cause of their conflicts with the Lamanites in the first place (see Alma 60). Unless these types of dissensions were suppressed, in the end it would not matter how superior his outside defenses were (see Alma 51:16).

In much the same way, how many of us faithfully put on the armor of God by way of daily prayer and scripture study; how many of us build a holy environment to live in by decorating our homes with uplifting furnishings, all sorts of family and Church pictures, and a “Families Are Forever” cross-stitch, only to turn around and unwittingly allow the adversary in through undisciplined television viewing or Internet surfing? Like Moroni, we must eliminate these inner vessel conflicts and allow only wholesome media to be present. If we do these things and continue to maintain our personal armor and borders of safety, we can be assured that “the very powers of hell [will be] shaken forever” in our behalf (Alma 48:17).

Protecting Ourselves by Continuing to Improve Our Defenses

Like any great leader, Moroni was always thinking ahead, wondering how and where his enemy might strike next. He knew that the enemy would not rest and that they would not stop in their efforts to think of new ways to attack and subdue his people. He knew that the personnel in Amalickiah’s “Department of War” were working overtime. He knew that unless he continued to be innovative in his own wartime preparations, the Nephites would lose their liberties.

For example, during the battle between Zerahemnah and Moroni, the Nephites initially outfitted themselves with personal armor, whereas most of the Lamanites had no such protection. The outcome was a Nephite victory (see Alma 43). Years later, when Amalickiah sent his first wave of forces to attack the Nephites, he copied the Nephites’ previous example and upgraded his own army with personal armor (see Alma 48). Meantime, Moroni had continued improving his forces by building defense structures around key cities he believed would be at
risk for attacks. This vigilance had an immediate payoff, as the Nephites again shouted the cry of victory! The lesson here is simple: If Moroni had stood idle—thinking that personal armor would always be enough to protect his people—the outcome might have been significantly different. Had the “new and improved” Lamanites met them on “equal grounds,” the probability of a Nephite defeat would have been high, especially in light of the disposition and size of the Lamanite army.

Like Moroni, we need to update our spiritual defenses continually to stay ahead of Satan’s plans. He will not rest and will persistently apply newly upgraded ways of deceiving and defeating us. As society advances in technology and information, the adversary will adopt these advancements for his own purposes. President James E. Faust remarked: “I think we will witness increasing evidence of Satan’s power as the kingdom of God grows stronger. I believe Satan’s ever-expanding efforts are some proof of the truthfulness of this work. In the future the opposition will be both more subtle and more open. It will be masked in greater sophistication and cunning, but it will also be more blatant. We will need greater spirituality to perceive all of the forms of evil and greater strength to resist it.”

Though Satan’s increasing assault on society is manifest in many ways, none is more rampant than his utilization of technology and media. For example, when I was in high school in the late 1970s, I don’t recall many people in my hometown owning a VCR; nor were there a lot of video rental stores. If people wanted to watch a movie, they usually had to wait a few weeks for it to come to their local theater or drive-in and even longer to see it on television. In addition, movie rating and television programming standards were relatively strict in enforcement against immoral content.

Today, things are much different. With the advent of DVD systems, Internet streaming, and satellite dish networks, VCRs are beginning to be a thing of the past. Technology provides us with instantaneous access to all types of media, including that with morally dangerous content. The adversary has led a charge not only to relax media standards but even to subvert them. What was once classified as pornographic is now nothing more than what a typical person sees while strolling down the aisle of a local video store.

How are we to defend ourselves against this and other modern forms of attack? Spiritually speaking, if we stand idle without improving upon the same defense strategies we once used, we risk coming up short. Consequently, we must be progressive in extending our strength.
This is why the Lord blessed us with living prophets and Apostles. They are our chief captains. They foresee the enemy’s plans and provide us with updated defense tactics not only for today’s battles but also for tomorrow’s as well. To illustrate, who can measure the added power given to the Saints when in 1979 and 1981 the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible and its companion volume of the triple combination were published and distributed? This inspired development provided a foundation that would fortify a new generation of Church members to withstand today’s unique challenges. This example, of course, is only one of many in which the Lord, through His chosen servants, is in an ongoing mode of strengthening His Saints.

Knowing that Satan has and will continue to revise and improve his forces by modern means, we as Latter-day Saints must be like Moroni in our thinking and must stay abreast in our spiritual defenses. Moroni was proactive, vigilant, progressive, and innovative. He knew the scriptures. He knew the prophecies and promises. He was prayerful, and he stayed close to the Spirit. He received guidance from the Lord and His servants to foresee the enemy’s plans and then acted accordingly (see Alma 43:23–25). We must do the same.

Protecting Ourselves by Erecting Watchtowers

Part of Moroni’s bulwark for protecting his cities was that of watchtowers. In Alma 50:4–5, we see that Captain Moroni “caused towers to be erected that overlooked those works of pickets, and he caused places of security to be built upon those towers, that the stones and the arrows of the Lamanites could not hurt them. And they were prepared that they could cast stones from the top thereof, according to their pleasure and their strength, and slay him who should attempt to approach near the walls of the city.”

In ancient civilizations, watchtowers were a valuable, if not vital, aspect of military defensive strategy. With watchtowers in place, watchmen could see their enemy’s movements and provide timely alerts for the inhabitants of their city to prepare for battle. Additionally, as was the case with the Nephites, watchmen could also use these towers as strategic places from which they could fire shots against the enemy as they drew near the city walls. Elder Ballard explains: “Often in the scriptures the Lord speaks of watchmen on the towers, and of watchtowers themselves. A watchtower is generally raised so that someone can climb to the top and see a greater distance. In this way they are alerted
to danger or threat much sooner than they would otherwise be. The same principle holds true in our lives. We can raise watchtowers that help us deal with threats before they actually descend upon us."

To the Saints in Missouri, the Lord gave a parable on the redemption of Zion that underscores the value of a watchtower: "The watchman upon the tower would have seen the enemy while he was yet afar off; and then ye could have made ready and kept the enemy from breaking down the hedge thereof, and saved my vineyard from the hands of the destroyer" (D&C 101:54; emphasis added).

Using watchtowers to see "the enemy while he [is] yet afar off" takes away one of the enemy's most important strategies—the element of surprise. Satan delights in ambush and thereby takes us out before we are aware. Consequently, the Lord has provided us with several warning systems of alert, two of which are modern watchtowers and watchmen. These watchmen are our Church leaders, particularly the prophets and apostles. They receive relevant and timely alerts about Satan's current and future plans of attack. Their warnings come to us at least twice a year during general conference as well as on other special occasions. It has been said: "Members of the Church today stand in a position to see clearly the enemy and how he works, because they have living prophets who speak the mind of God. They are therefore called by the Savior both to warn the wicked of the destruction that awaits them if they do not repent and to secure Zion and protect her inhabitants. Thus, the Lord refers to his authorized servants today as watchmen upon the towers (see Isaiah 62:6 and Ezekiel 33:2–9)."

Elder Bruce R. McConkie further explained: "In their capacity as elders, prophets, ambassadors, and ministers, the Lord's agents are watchmen upon the tower. Their obligation is to raise the warning voice so that the sheepfold of Israel shall stand secure from the dangers and evils of the world.""10

Doctrine and Covenants 124:45 details one of the most important promises given to those who follow these watchmen: "If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place." To this, President Packer added: "Remember this promise; hold on to it. It should be a great comfort to those struggling to keep a family together in a society increasingly indifferent to, and even hostile toward, those standards which are essential to a happy family.""11
Protecting Ourselves by Not Attacking Our Enemies in Their Strongholds

In Alma 52, we find Teancum anxious about taking back several of the Nephite cities that had been lost to the Lamanites previously in the war. After receiving direction from Moroni to retake the city of Mulek, Teancum began mobilizing his forces. However, as he commenced to march forth against the Lamanites, “he saw that it was impossible that he could overpower them while they were in their fortifications; therefore he abandoned his designs and returned again to the city Bountiful, to wait for the coming of Moroni, that he might receive strength to his army” (52:17). When Moroni later arrived and surveyed the situation, he realized the wisdom of Teancum: the only way the Nephites would have any chance of success against the Lamanites would be to get them away from their strongholds and meet them upon “fair grounds” (52:21). Moroni and his chief captains did just that; they devised an ingenious plan that lured the Lamanites away from their fortified city, which they were then able to recapture and occupy once again.

Helaman showed this same kind of wisdom during the course of his military command. In Alma 58, we read that his army, which included the stripling warriors, had the objective of retaking the city of Manti. However, as he described it, the Lamanites “were so much more numerous than was our army that we durst not go forth and attack them in their strongholds” (Alma 58:2). After much prayer and after receiving strength and courage from the Lord, Helaman enticed the Lamanites out of their fortifications, much like Moroni, and thus accomplished his objective by regaining possession of the city of Manti.

The idea of entering into the enemy’s territory is a potentially dangerous thing, no matter what the objective. Like these great Nephite military leaders, we must be wise and cautious as we battle against evil. We especially need to stress this principle to the youth of the Church. Some of our young people who are sincere in their desire to help their wayward friends may unwittingly end up going into the enemy’s territory to try to bring them back to the gospel side of the line. They may think, “If I go to such and such a party, I can be a positive influence by not drinking and thus encourage my struggling friends who will see my good example.” Unfortunately, they don’t realize that by doing this they are entering into the adversary’s stronghold, and, like Teancum, Moroni, and Helaman, they must realize that the odds are against them.
President Spencer W. Kimball wrote in *The Miracle of Forgiveness*: "The difference between the good man and the bad man is not that one had the temptations and the other was spared them. It is that one kept himself fortified, and resisted temptation, and the other placed himself in compromising places and conditions and rationalized the situations. Hence it is obvious that to remain clean and worthy, one must stay positively and conclusively away from the devil’s territory, avoiding the least approach toward evil."\(^{12}\) President Kimball goes on to quote President George Albert Smith, who said: "My grandfather used to say to his family, “There is a line of demarkation, well defined, between the Lord’s territory and the devil’s. If you will stay on the Lord’s side of the line, you will be under his influence and will have no desire to do wrong; but if you cross to the devil’s side of the line one inch, you are in the tempter’s power, and if he is successful, you will not be able to think or even reason properly, because you will have lost the Spirit of the Lord. . . . There is safety for us only on the Lord’s side of the line.”\(^{13}\)

Instead of trying to save our wavering friends by associating with them in the enemy’s strongholds, it is much better to meet them in safe territory. For our youth, this may be as simple as having them talk to a struggling friend one-on-one at school or some other place where there is a good or neutral environment. I have found that sometimes the best time to talk with a friend who is wavering is when we are simply by ourselves—away from the strongholds of others who would seek to influence us against the truth. The bottom line is that we all must be careful to avoid enemy territory as we go about our daily associations with others.

**Faith and Obedience: The Foundation of Protection**

Although we do not know the exact reasons why Mormon decided to include a relatively large section of wartime stories in his record, we know one thing—they are there, and they must be important. If we take Nephi’s advice and liken these stories unto ourselves, applying them to our latter-day spiritual battles against evil, a rich world of parallels can be drawn.

This said, one last application should be noted. Truly, Captain Moroni was a master at implementing defensive strategies to protect his people. However, underlying it all, humble Moroni always recognized the direct relationship between the Nephites’ faith in Christ and the preserving hand of God in their wartime successes. From Moroni’s
early battles with Zerahemnah to the civil struggles with the king-men and on through his final assaults against Amalickiah and Ammoron, Moroni consistently attributed his successes to the Nephites' level of righteousness. In the end, it was God who had preserved them. It was He who guided the implementation of timely strategic defenses. Thus, the most important application of all may be to realize that no matter what spiritually defensive strategies we decide to use, we must employ them with faith in and obedience to God—just like Moroni.

Notes

8. Ballard, "Be Strong in the Lord and in the Power of His Might."
Using Writing to Enhance Learning in Religious Education: Practical Ideas for Classroom Use

Dennis A. Wright

Dennis A. Wright is an associate professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU.

Writing is essential to the kingdom of God. Adam and Eve kept a book of remembrance and taught their children to read and write (see Moses 6:5–6). Prophets and others called of God recorded the prophecies and histories of their peoples. The Nephites wrote to persuade their children and brethren to believe in Christ (2 Nephi 25:23). They kept the commandment “that all men . . . shall write the words which [the Lord spoke] unto them” (2 Nephi 29:11). Peter, Paul, and John wrote epistles expounding doctrine and strengthening the Saints. Joseph Smith wrote his prayers, recorded his visions, and sent letters of comfort to the Saints. The Lord esteems the writings of His servants so highly that He has declared He will judge the whole world from their books (see 3 Nephi 27:25–26).

But all the books have not been written. As students and teachers of the gospel, we have our own opportunity to write the words that God speaks to us. This invitation is extended to all the Saints, not just the prophets. Paul taught, “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation and comfort” (1 Corinthians 14:3). As a church, we seek to edify others through our sacrament talks, via the lessons we teach, and in our missionary efforts. The process of thinking and writing enhances the service we offer. When we help our students learn how to ponder the gospel of Jesus Christ through classroom and personal writings, we teach students to act upon an important principle of edification. When we encourage students to communicate
their faith through writing as well as through speaking, we provide an important opportunity for the Spirit to witness the truth.

As religious educators, we have a unique responsibility to help our students explore the gospel through their writing and thus improve their ability to communicate its truths with others. The act of writing encourages thinking and pondering, which enhances communication skills. Writing, as a learning vehicle, enables students to probe more deeply the wonders of God’s word. Through writing, students can clarify their thoughts and feelings and enhance their learning.

Religious educators have enough to teach without supplementing their curriculum with writing classes. That is why I have been careful to suggest activities that have an immediate classroom application. This article offers helpful tools to encourage student writing. It presents a variety of teaching ideas that will help students use writing to enhance their experience in religious education. The suggestions include various types of writing activities for different experience levels and explanations of how students benefit from each activity. My objective is to provide a list of “idea starters” that can be modified according to teachers’ individual gifts as instructors and the needs of the different classes they teach. Certain ideas may complement your style of teaching; others may work for one class and not another; and some may simply be too much for you and your class. I encourage you to experiment with the activities so you can discover what works best for you.

1. Ideas for Basic Writing

The activities for basic writing are simple and direct. Their purpose is to help students interact with course material through writing. They encourage students to think openly and directly about the scriptures while providing the teacher with continuous feedback concerning student progress and the effectiveness of the course. I have suggested an experience level that is best suited for each activity. However, you may find that with modification, the activities can be used at all levels.

**Activities for Basic Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Write a personal response to scripture reading or class discussion in a daily scripture journal.</td>
<td>Journals stimulate personal interaction with scriptures and gospel topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Journal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>Passage</td>
<td>Identify the main points of a scripture passage and write a brief summary.</td>
<td>Summaries provide instructors with feedback on student understanding. They help students clarify main ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Ideas for Analysis Writing

Students should be invited and encouraged to use writing to specifically examine their own thoughts and insights. Analytical writing requires students to develop confidence in their skill as thinkers and writers in religion. These activities require in-class time for writing. Teachers should understand that the quiet time during which students are writing can be just as productive as the time during which the teacher is talking. Students benefit from feedback regarding their writing. By providing such help, teachers encourage students’ understanding of how writing promotes clear thinking.
Activities for Analysis Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>Write a dictionary-type definition of a word from the scriptures.</td>
<td>Defining words increases students' understanding of scripture by focusing their attention on specific word meanings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>Different Perspectives</td>
<td>Write about a doctrine from an assigned perspective (i.e., a soldier, minister, person in the street, etc.).</td>
<td>Considering various perspectives encourages students to expand their thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>Problem/Solution</td>
<td>Suggest in writing a solution to a contemporary problem using a scripture passage.</td>
<td>Problem-solution analysis demonstrates how the scriptures have application to the students' personal lives and to their understanding of world affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>Scripture Annotation</td>
<td>Make notes in the margin next to a scripture passage.</td>
<td>Scripture annotation provides students with practice in focusing their reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute</td>
<td>Scripture Relationships</td>
<td>Compare in one paragraph two or more scriptures to show how they communicate the same idea differently.</td>
<td>Comparisons encourage students to use their own scripture study and analysis skills to understand important scripture themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute</td>
<td>Doctrinal Analysis</td>
<td>Write a letter to a newspaper editor about the implications of a scripture passage.</td>
<td>Doctrinal analysis invites students to articulate their own scriptural insights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute</td>
<td>Scripture Context</td>
<td>Explain in several sentences how the context of a scripture passage affects the meaning.</td>
<td>Studying context helps students analyze scripture meaning within the immediate circumstances surrounding the passage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Ideas for Application Writing

Application writing provides students with an opportunity to write using forms common in the Church. These are similar to analysis papers except they require the student to be aware of a particular type of writing. Instructors can help students by providing models as part of the activity. One benefit of this activity is that it helps students learn how the structure of writing interacts with the content.

Activities for Application Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>Bible Dictionary</td>
<td>Write a new entry for the Bible Dictionary.</td>
<td>Writing dictionary entries encourages students to be thorough in their scripture study and precise in their explanations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminary</td>
<td>Letter to a Friend</td>
<td>In a letter, explain a gospel concept to a nonmember friend.</td>
<td>Letters promote students' awareness of their nonmember peers and helps them think of ways to address such peers in religious contexts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Ideas for Creative Writing

Creative-writing assignments are usually a welcome option for students. They provide an opportunity to explore their creative talents in relation to the scriptures. Often, these activities result in some of the most innovative insights, giving students and teachers a chance to take pleasure in the aesthetic side of religious writing. Note that the ideas below are suitable for all experience levels.

**Activities for Creative Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Personal Narrative</td>
<td>Write about a personal experience in which the scriptures have a direct application.</td>
<td>Personal narratives impact the student and instructor more personally than an analysis paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Parable</td>
<td>Write a modern parable that illustrates a specific doctrinal concept or scripture teaching.</td>
<td>Writing a parable gives students the opportunity to study and model one of the Savior’s teaching methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Poems</td>
<td>Write a poem that expounds upon a particular scripture or doctrine.</td>
<td>Poetry provides a unique opportunity to ponder the scriptures and feel the Spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Write an imaginary dialogue that explores a doctrinal concept.</td>
<td>Writing a dialogue teaches students to articulate gospel concepts from different perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td>Write an advertisement related to a scripture idea or event.</td>
<td>Writing an ad requires that students exercise visual and verbal creativity to teach a gospel truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Adapt a Song</td>
<td>Write new words for a song to reflect the ideas in a scripture.</td>
<td>Song writing encourages students to express scriptural insights in a memorable way through music.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Ideas for Research Writing

Research writing provides an opportunity for an in-depth examination of scriptural ideas. It promotes the exploration of new thoughts through reading and pondering information from a variety of sources. Students can use research activities as a way to complement course material and take responsibility for self-directed learning. Although a formal research paper is usually not required in seminary or institute, informal research writing can enhance learning and add to class discussion. Although research activities are suggested only for the institute level, in certain circumstances, they could be adapted for seminary purposes.

**Activities for Research Writing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institute</td>
<td>Background Research</td>
<td>Prepare a summary of background information related to a passage.</td>
<td>Background research helps students consider the relevance of context to specific passages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute</td>
<td>Examining Different</td>
<td>Write a brief comparison of the different interpretations of a specific passage.</td>
<td>Examining different commentaries increases students' awareness of various perspectives of a scripture passage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commentaries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute</td>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>Research the life of a Church leader or a scripture character and write a short biography.</td>
<td>Writing biographies encourages students to recognize the human efforts that the Church is built upon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute</td>
<td>Alternative Translations</td>
<td>Describe how alternative translations to the King James Version of the Bible contribute to scripture understanding.</td>
<td>Examining alternative translations expands students' understanding of the Bible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final Thoughts**

Before trying any of the suggested ideas, you should determine how you want to use writing to enhance learning. You will need to consider purposefully your students and your teaching objectives. Once you have determined the role of writing in your class, carefully introduce the writing activities. Help students understand that writing magnifies learning and that it is an important part of your class. The expectations of the assignments must be clear to the students. When they see a definite starting point for the activity and a defined product expectation, they will be more likely to overcome the natural resistance that all writers face. Remember that for most students, writing in a religious education setting may seem unusual at first. Reassure them by
explaining the importance of writing in the learning process. It will be helpful if you begin with small, easy writing activities to build student confidence and to demonstrate how writing will be used to facilitate classroom discussion.

Once your students start writing, remember that for writing to be meaningful, it should be read by someone. Students will write with greater interest if they know that their teacher or others will be reading what they have written. You will find that most students enjoy sharing and discussing what they have written, providing classroom discussion with more personal and specific insights. Using student writing as part of a class discussion also promotes spontaneity and variety.

As with all new things, both you and your students will experience a learning curve when you use writing activities. Your success in implementing writing will depend upon your interest and your determination to establish a new expectation in your class. You may find that in using writing as a way to enhance learning, you will have found another way to write the law upon the hearts of your students (see Hebrews 8:10). That is, after all, our prime objective as religious educators.

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**Note**

1. The author wishes to acknowledge Erica Griggs and Casey Nelson, student research assistants at Brigham Young University, for their contributions to this article. This article was based on material from the *Writing to Learn Guidebook* published by Religious Education at Brigham Young University as part of the series *Resources for Religious Educators*. A bibliography of resources that support the content of this article follows:


Educating for Eternity: Key Principles Governing True Teaching

Mark F. Zimbelman

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Shortly after accepting employment at BYU, I sensed I had significantly integrated my life roles. Let me explain. Previously, I worked at another university and also had Church duties that required significant time in both preparation and service. Much of the preparation involved studying Church materials and preparing talks and lessons. Considering my family commitments, I felt as though I had three roles—each of which could take all my time and energy: work, church, and family. On occasion, I broke from work to develop a talk for church. Although I saw a clear connection between my church and family responsibilities, time spent studying the gospel seemed unrelated to my work duties. Thus, I felt divided in my major life roles.

Working at BYU is unique because integrated into all we do is a constant effort to increase in spirit. After being here for three years, I realize that to fulfill my obligations as a faculty member, I must continue to grow spiritually. To magnify my career duties, I must be guided by revelation. I am convinced that to touch the lives of my students, I regularly need to expend significant effort to obtain guidance from the Spirit. Thus, although I still have separate tasks in my life roles, my spiritual preparation now seems vital for fulfilling my professional duties.

Though much of this essay applies to educators at BYU, I believe the principles elaborated below have application to a much-wider audience. Specifically, in the first section, I present two key premises
that should govern our professional responsibilities as educators. In section two, I discuss some insights from the words of the prophets on teaching and learning that should govern our teaching activities. In the third section, I discuss the role of teachers in helping students become fully converted. The final section provides some thoughts on a career as a religious educator, including guidance on pride, priestcraft, and the proficiency required of a religious educator.

Premises Guiding a Religious Educator’s Professional Life

1. Truth is hierarchical. The Doctrine and Covenants states, “All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself” (D&C 93:30). This scripture suggests that the body of truth contains independent categories of truths. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained that there is a hierarchy of truth: “The restored gospel of Jesus Christ gives us a different view of truth. To begin with, there is no democracy among truths. They are not of equal significance.” He describes three categories of truth. The first category contains momentary facts or accurate descriptions of reality, such as the current weather report. The next group includes more important truths but not “ultimate truths.” He adds: “Some of these . . . are verifiable by the very serviceable scientific method. These truths can be very useful and valuable.” However, he points out that truths in this category are continually being revised as science develops new theories and measurement methods. Although Elder Maxwell admits that these truths are valuable, he reminds us that the “accumulation of knowledge without purpose and of information without wisdom constitutes ever learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth.”

The highest category of truth contains the “deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10). These come to us by revelation and are not subject to change. Even within this category, there appears to be a hierarchy among truths. Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained: “As regards knowledge, the highest priority religious knowledge is what we receive in the temple. That knowledge is obtained from the explicit and symbolic teachings of the endowment, and from the whisperings of the Spirit that come as we are desirous to seek and receptive to hear the revelation available to us in that sacred place.”

One implication of this hierarchy of truth is that “we constantly need to distinguish between the truths which are useful and those which are crucial, and between truths which are important and those which are eternal.” This hierarchy of truth has important implications for the
activities of faculty who work in a religious environment such as that at BYU.

2. Conversion is the ultimate purpose of a religious educator’s career. I believe the ultimate purpose of BYU is to help students become converted and to incorporate the highest truths into their lives. The quest to internalize eternal truth captures the meaning of the statement that BYU posts at its entrance: “The glory of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36). Elder Oaks explained BYU’s purpose as follows: “Whereas the world teaches us to know something, the gospel teaches us to become something, and it is far more significant to become than it is to know. . . . In addition to our concern with learning, Brigham Young University is also concerned with becoming, with the conversion of students and also of teachers. . . . The mission of the gospel (and in this sense the highest mission of Brigham Young University) is not just to enlarge what we know, but to change what we are.”

In this same spirit, BYU president Ernest L. Wilkinson encouraged faculty to spend time counseling students to help them become converted. He said, “I recognize, of course, that time is often short and that students sometimes do their best to avoid faculty counseling. . . . Please strive constantly to draw close to your students; give them spiritual food along with academic advice. . . . It is a serious undertaking. Without faculty counseling we cannot possibly succeed. With it, we can save hundreds of students each year.”

Thus, we are charged with transferring not only knowledge but also the application of eternal knowledge so that our students progress spiritually as well as mentally. Interestingly, as individuals become converted, their desire to learn all categories of truth increases. Elder Henry B. Eyring referred to the change that a convert experiences: “The change that comes is a desire to be someone even better, to reach for more light, and to give greater service to others. Those desires always lead to a hunger for education, to learn what is true, what is useful, and what is beautiful.” Thus, as BYU excels at helping faculty and students become fully converted, students and faculty will be more likely to excel at learning lesser categories of truth as well.

I find it interesting to consider the meaning of the portion of Doctrine and Covenants 93:36 that is not posted at BYU’s entrance. The full verse reads: “The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth” (D&C 93:36; emphasis added). Given that the Savior calls Himself the Light of the World and refers to Himself as the Truth, I believe that gaining intelligence involves becoming Christlike. Also,
in modern scripture, we read that God’s glory is “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Given that eternal life is the life that God lives and that God’s glory is giving man eternal life, we might conclude that gaining intelligence (or God’s glory) is gaining a fullness of God’s character. Thus, the ultimate purpose of education is not to obtain entrance to a career or gain knowledge but to become converted to truth and become like Him who is more intelligent than the rest of us. Teaching based on eternal principles facilitates this conversion process.

**Revealed Principles on Teaching and Learning**

Several key principles taught by the prophets can help us to be more effective teachers.

*Teach by the Spirit—the Spirit teaches.* I have often pondered the guidance Brigham Young gave Karl Maeser: “Neither the alphabet nor the multiplication table should be taught without the Spirit of God.”

I view this instruction as a lifelong challenge, and I believe President Young was teaching us that learning any topic, including secular truths, occurs when the Spirit sheds light. In support of this idea, President Young taught: “Men know how to construct railroads and all manner of machinery; they understand cunning workmanship, etc.; but that is all revealed to them by the Spirit of the Lord, though they know it not.”

More directly relevant to teaching is the following statement by President Young: “Now, I ask the wise, where did you get your wisdom? Was it taught you? Yes, I say it was taught you. By your professors in college? No, it was taught you by the influence of the spirit that is in man, and the inspiration of the Spirit of God giveth it understanding.”

Thus, a crucial teaching tenet is to recognize that we cannot dispense learning to our students; rather, we must find ways to bring the Spirit of God to the minds of students so that learning can occur. This process becomes painfully obvious to me when I try to act as a font of knowledge to my students. Although a few may light up as an occasional stroke of light hits them, most quickly become disengaged; for these, I believe that little or no learning is taking place.

Teaching with the Spirit occurs when several conditions exist. First, teachers must diligently prepare so as to have the Spirit help them teach. Elder Maxwell taught: “When we speak about teaching by the Spirit it is not about a mystical process which removes responsibility from the . . . teacher for prayerful and pondering preparation. Teaching by the Spirit is not the lazy equivalent of going on ‘automatic
pilot.' We still need a carefully worked out ‘flight plan.’ Studying out something in one’s own mind is, in itself, an invitation to the Spirit in our preparations as well as in our presentations. We must not err, like Oliver Cowdery, by taking no thought except to ask God for His Spirit (D&C 9:7). The Lord is especially willing to take the lead of an already informed mind in which things have been ‘studied out.’

I also believe that before the Spirit will be able to teach, both the teacher and student must be mentally engaged. To engage my students, I use classroom activities that involve active learning with the goal of engaging students in efforts to internalize key information and principles. An underlying philosophy of these activities is that when students are involved in teaching each other, learning by the Spirit is more likely to occur. Brigham Young expressed this as follows: “A man who wishes to receive light and knowledge . . . will find that when he imparts knowledge to others he will also grow and increase.” Though this comment is directed at spiritual knowledge, I believe it also applies to temporal learning.

Given Brigham Young’s instruction that all truth is learned by the Spirit, I believe teaching students to learn by the Spirit is an eternal skill. This can transform teaching a lesser category of truth into teaching the highest category of truth and lead to education for eternity. I have found that a vital prerequisite to teaching by the Spirit is having Christlike love for my students.

Be guided by charity, the pure love of Christ. Charity allows us to see our students clearly and to recognize that when they appear to be misbehaving, they are often crying out for help. I have often found that the student who speaks out in class needs compassion and understanding that come when I feel charity for him or her. Often, the reaction the student needs most from faculty runs counter to that which he or she usually gets in response to this type of behavior. To ensure the proper reaction in these circumstances, the classroom must develop a culture characterized by Christlike love. I have learned that I, as the teacher, can act as a catalyst to initiate this culture. I believe that charity comes as a spiritual endowment, so I must pray diligently for it and rely on the Lord to help me see my students as they are—children of God. Even so, I make an effort with this goal in mind to learn students’ names and to quickly get to know the students so this culture develops early in the class. The following counsel from President Boyd K. Packer is relevant: “It is important for a teacher to understand that little teaching will be accomplished, little learning will
take place, unless a one-to-one relationship exists between the teacher and each student. . . . It means you take the time to learn thirty names, to check out thirty backgrounds, to draw thirty students into class discussions, to pass out thirty words of encouragement, all personalized. . . . The good teacher has already studied the lesson. The superb teacher also studies the students; he studies them seriously and intently.17

Getting to know students and truly loving each individual, especially the disruptive student, is one of the most rewarding and challenging aspects of teaching. As we come to know our students, we better understand the struggles they have with the course material. We can then better select the methods that will be most effective for engaging students in the course topics.

Engage students in the learning process. In designing classroom activities, I am powerfully influenced by the premise that there is no democracy of truth. This knowledge suggests to me that class time should be used for the most valuable learning possible. Elder Maxwell stated: “Education that is only ‘for a season’ is narrow; it pertains only to a knowledge of things as they temporarily are, like today’s weather forecast or an airline schedule. Temporary facts are useful but terminal.” Although business practices and accounting techniques can quickly change and become obsolete, the ability to learn, reason, and apply judgment will be valuable not only for a career but also for eternity. This belief has important implications for what I do in the classroom and as well as for the future of education. If classroom activities are used to convey information that can be obtained through reading or technology (for example, the Internet), then I believe classrooms will be replaced with other methods. Time spent learning information should be moved outside the classroom and replaced with activities that create intelligence. As noted above, some knowledge, such as a weather report, may be temporarily useful but soon loses value. On the other hand, knowledge of principles for using weather data to accurately forecast is more valuable. Further along this continuum is the ability to reason and develop judgment, while the intelligence of highest value entails the ability to utilize all truth and to live a Christlike life.

Students who rely on the teacher to explain information they could learn independently will become dependent learners and struggle to become independent, continual learners. However, if students independently learn prior to class and if the classroom is used for interdependent
learning activities that help them assimilate more than just information, then other methods will have difficulty replacing these activities. Activities such as these must require students and teachers to interact and develop the ability to reason and articulate their thinking processes regarding information they gained outside the classroom. The objective of these activities is to lead students to develop the judgment needed to solve problems in real settings. This pedagogy entails much more than simply delivering information in an entertaining manner but rather involves getting students to become engaged in the learning process both in and out of class. I believe that getting students to focus on the subject, not on me, is a key to helping them become independent learners.

Avoid the spotlight. The Church's teacher improvement manual clearly defines a teacher's role: "What is the role of teachers? It is to help individuals take responsibility for learning the gospel. . . . Virginia H. Pearce . . . said: 'A teacher's goal is greater than just delivering a lecture about truth. It is to invite the Spirit and use techniques that will enhance the possibility that the learner will discover the truth [and] be motivated to apply it. . . . Therefore it is the pupil who has to be put into action. When a teacher takes the spotlight, becomes the star of the show, does all the talking, and otherwise takes over all the activity, it is almost certain that he is interfering with the learning of the class members. . . . The skilled teacher does not want students who leave the class talking about how magnificent and unusual the teacher is. This teacher wants students who leave talking about how magnificent the gospel is!'"

Although this instruction is centered on teaching in a Church setting, I believe it applies fully to teaching secular topics by the Spirit, as Brigham Young instructed us to do. Parker Palmer, a well-known author on reforming college-level teaching, has written the following: "I have no question that students who learn, not professors who perform, is what teaching is all about: students who learn are the finest fruits of teachers who teach. . . . Teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions."

One of Parker Palmer's precepts is that teachers need to remove themselves from the spotlight before the classroom community will be able to focus on the subject and learn most effectively. While I admit that I struggle with knowing how to do this and though I find it easy
to get into the center of classroom attention, I believe that moving the attention away from me as the teacher is critical. Furthermore, I have found that for conversion to take place, it is important to focus the student on the Savior. Unfortunately, I have learned that even with my best efforts, I sometimes fall short of what my students really need. In those instances, I take comfort in knowing that the Lord can make up the difference.

The Atonement provides healing balm. Ultimately, even with our best efforts to be Christlike in mortality, we will make mistakes of judgment that cause individuals pain. Elder Bruce C. Hafen has written about how the heartbreaks we experience as natural men who are striving to become Saints persistently interact in a manner that can be painful.21 Similarly, Elder Oaks has taught that we all make mistakes, and he distinguishes mistakes from sins. He explains, “We should seek to avoid mistakes, since some mistakes have very painful consequences. But we do not seek to avoid mistakes at all costs. Mistakes are inevitable in the process of growth in mortality.”22 Thus, while we should strive to protect students from painful experiences, we are required to assign grades, give potentially discouraging answers to questions, and administer other painful medicine. At times, we need to have a heart-to-heart talk with a student who is exhibiting behavior that will have zero tolerance in the workplace. In doing so, we must seek to be guided by the Spirit and use our best judgment.

Inspiration is especially important when we are attempting to administer justice to a “trouble student.” Just as a parent continually struggles to know if he or she is being too lenient or too harsh, I find that my best efforts fall short, as I do not always see things clearly. In times such as these, I take some comfort in knowing, and am humbly grateful, that the Savior’s Atonement can heal my students (and my family) from the negative consequences of my mistakes. Speaking of the effects of the Atonement to relieve us from the bitterness of mortality, Elder Hafen explained: “The Lord taught Adam that the Atonement was given to him and to his children to heal. . . . This healing power cleanses our spirits, upon condition of our repentance, when our souls are soiled with sin. It can also compensate for the effects of our sins upon others, when we are unable to make further restitution.”23 Elder Hafen explains that many Latter-day Saints are burdened by their inability to make full restitution for the pains they cause others.

At times, we as faculty should call attention to our students’ mistakes so they can avoid them in the future. The scriptures teach us that
after reproof we must show increased love (see D&C 121:43). Faculty must constantly strive to provide increased love after giving necessary reproof. Even so (with class sizes as they are), our students are likely to experience pain as they interpret feedback, such as a grade, as an indication that they are somehow blemished. Elder Hafen offers insight about the Atonement’s role in these circumstances: “There are many Latter-day Saints who labor under the misapprehension that they must . . . assume full responsibility to compensate for all the effects of [their] acts and shortcomings. . . . Sometimes . . . we cannot fully compensate for them. . . . [Thus,] we are utterly dependent on Christ, no matter how earnest our repentance.”

Temporal Experiences and Eternal Goals

In the highly competitive academic environment at BYU, some students feel intense pressure to succeed by getting high grades. Although this environment is less than Zion will ultimately be, I believe it lends faculty an incredible opportunity and immense responsibility to help students internalize gospel truths. The pressures in this setting are not unlike those of the business world; thus, becoming Christlike here will, hopefully, help them endure there.

I believe that the solution to many students’ troubles is to become more converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. While BYU’s religious education faculty are assigned to teach the words of the prophets, significant opportunities exist for faculty outside of religious education to help students internalize gospel truths. I believe that this environment provides powerful opportunities for students to apply gospel lessons that they may have learned all their life but never fully internalized or converted to intelligence. For example, many students struggle with the realization that they are not the smartest in class. This knowledge provides a powerful opportunity to help these students focus competition on themselves and away from others.

Compete against yourself, not others. One of the keys to becoming Christlike at BYU or in the world of business is to learn to deal humbly with competition. President Packer commented: “In this life we are constantly confronted with a spirit of competition. . . . We come to believe that wherever there is a winner there must also be a loser. To believe that is to be misled. In the eyes of the Lord, everyone may be a winner. . . . If there is competition in His work, it is not with another soul—it’s with our own former selves.”
In response to the intense competition at BYU, some students withdraw and lose motivation, whereas others resort to their natural-man instincts and develop enmity with both their fellow students and with faculty. Neither approach leads to effective learning or peace of mind. Steve Young explained how, during his professional football career, he learned to focus competition on himself. He said: “There’s no more raw form of competition than football. In the end . . . one goes home a winner, one goes home a loser. This has permeated our whole society. . . . This is a dangerous way to think. My idea of competition has nothing to do with . . . anyone else. . . . I believe competition, in its pure form, is really about yourself. . . . I’ve learned to say to myself. . . . How did I play last week? How do I need to improve next week? . . . I truly believe that competition has nothing to do with seeing how much better you can be than the next guy. . . . If you just concentrate on improving yourself, you will have a very fulfilling life. . . . That’s my concept of competition. It has nothing to do with anyone else.”

In this quote, Steve Young emphasizes that competition should not lead to a desire to beat another. President Ezra Taft Benson explained that this desire is closely associated with pride: “The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. Enmity means ‘hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition.’ It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us. . . . Pride is essentially competitive in nature. . . . The proud make every man their adversary by pitting their intellects, opinions, works, wealth, talents, or any other worldly measuring device against others.”

Soon after joining the Church, I went to play basketball with some young adults. After playing, I sensed that the members of the Church could be some of the most ruthless, intense competitors in the world! For at least a few, sportsmanship seemed far distant to the goal of winning. During the past two decades, this observation has been validated over many seasons of Church basketball, including one regional championship that erupted in a fistfight! In my BYU courses, I have sensed that some students view me as the referee in a crucial Church basketball game and that they want to get as much advantage as they can from me. I have seen that this response to competition normally leads a person to engage in behavior that is not Christlike. I believe that students who learn how to live as Christ would live in a competitive environment will find much more peace in their lifelong pursuit of excellence. Learning to deal with competition can be especially difficult when someone first realizes that he or she will not always win
every battle in life or in a career. I have found that, during these times of seeming failure, I must increase my faith in the Lord and trust that He has made “ample provision” for His purposes to be brought to pass. This outcome requires a change from trusting in man to wholeheartedly trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Faith means trusting in God.** Students in the BYU accounting program often will not get the grades that they are accustomed to getting and that they will need to if they are to get into the accounting master’s program. This outcome often leads to an intense feeling of despair. Nearly everyone who ambitiously pursues excellence in life will meet significant opposition. I have learned that experiencing obstacles creates the opportunity to internalize the first principle of the gospel: faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Prior to learning this, I understood faith to be a frame of mind similar to a positive mental attitude that was powerful enough to move mountains. This concept of faith led to despair during times of struggle as I wondered if my faith was nonexistent—let alone the size of a mustard seed. In contrast, I now equate faith with trust and have a better understanding that, if I do my best, I can trust that the Lord will take my life where He wants it to go. The mountain will move when and if He wants it to move, assuming I do my part. Ultimately, where He takes my life will be where I want it to go, even though my finite wisdom often fails to realize that without hindsight. This understanding of faith started to become clear to me when I read the following from Elder Oaks: “The first principle of the gospel is not ‘faith.’ The first principle of the gospel is ‘Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.’ . . . Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is a conviction and trust that God knows us and loves us and will hear our prayers and answer them with what is best for us. . . . In fact, God will do more than what is best for us. He will do what is best for us and for all of our Heavenly Father’s children. The conviction that the Lord knows more than we do and that he will answer our prayers in the way that is best for us and for all of his other children is a vital ingredient of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Students who experience serious despair over their careers can benefit by trusting in the Lord’s wisdom. Elder Maxwell explained how trusting faith is developed through experiencing opposition: “Dissonance can mean discovery—new ways of knowing about ourselves that often would not occur without shaking up the status quo. For instance, in the matter of developing full faith, it may be as C. S. Lewis said: ‘You never know how much you really believe anything
until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you. It is easy to say you believe a rope to be strong and sound as long as you are merely using it to cord a box. But suppose you had to hang by that rope over a precipice. Wouldn’t you then first discover how much you really trusted it? [A Grief Observed (New York: Seabury Press, 1961), 21]. No doubt this underlying need for testing and discovering is why some of our trials and experiences in life cannot be cut short.”

I believe that one of life’s main purposes is becoming converted to the extent that we have absolute, trusting faith in God and His plans. As faculty deepen their own conversions, students are likely to see how they themselves can become more converted.

Become more converted. Recently, Elder Oaks spoke of motives and identified a quartet of worldly motives. He said: “The treasures of our hearts—our priorities—should not be what the scriptures call ‘riches [and] the vain things of this world’ (Alma 39:14). The ‘vain things of [the] world’ include every combination of that worldly quartet of property, pride, prominence, and power. . . . We should be seeking the kind of treasures the scriptures promise the faithful: ‘great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures’ (D&C 89:19).”

Often, students need to realize that true happiness comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not through seeking the worldly quartet that Elder Oaks warned of—property, pride, prominence, or power. When students see teachers who are not concerned about this worldly quartet, including prominence in the classroom, those students will have their greatest likelihood of turning to Christ and being fully converted. In many respects, the spiritual challenges our students face are the same challenges faculty face. For example, employment in higher education is very competitive. I have found that observing the exceptional talents of my colleagues can either lead to inspiration or insecurity if I am not fully grounded in my faith. Faculty who have not learned to have trusting faith in the Lord and to strip pride from their lives will not be able to effectively lead students to apply gospel principles to their own challenges.

As teachers, we must be fully converted ourselves to lead our students to become more converted in all aspects of their lives. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that conversion is a lifelong process: “Being born again is a gradual thing. . . . We are born again by degrees, and we are born again to added light and added knowledge and added desires for righteousness as we keep the commandments.”
This statement suggests that I must constantly be nurturing my own conversion so I can progress to the point where I will be able to help bring my students to Christ. In doing so, I will be more likely to educate, not just for time but also for eternity.

Pride, Priestcrafts, and Proficiency

Throughout my educational process and as a teacher, I have had many opportunities to consider the role of education from an eternal perspective. In doing so, I have pondered the seemingly conflicting signals concerning learning and intelligence. For example, many verses in the Book of Mormon warn the learned and the rich against pride (see 2 Nephi 9:42; 28:15). Elsewhere, we are told that learning is good if we hearken to God’s counsel (see D&C 88:118; 2 Nephi 9:29). Thus, both wealth and education apparently can present great opportunities for us to serve and bless others; however, they also provide great spiritual risks to the receiver if pride develops. President Benson commented on these risks as follows: “The two groups who have the greatest difficulty in following the prophet are the proud who are learned and the proud who are rich. The learned may feel the prophet is only inspired when he agrees with them; otherwise, the prophet is just giving his opinion—speaking as a man. The rich may feel they have no need to take counsel of a lowly prophet.”

Although the prophets have warned members about seeking after wealth, they encourage Church members to continually seek as much education as possible. For example, President Hinckley counseled the youth of the Church to pursue their secular education as follows: “Get all the education you can... Education is the key to opportunity. The Lord has placed upon you, as members of this Church, the obligation to study and to learn of things spiritual, yes, but of things temporal also. Acquire all of the education that you can, even if it means great sacrifice while you are young.”

We also know from the prophets that pride is associated with education. Nephi instructs the learned to “hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 9:29), thereby warning us that the human tendency is such that after getting a little education, we begin to think we know more than the Lord’s servants. To keep our education in perspective, we should recognize that even if we know all there is to know about our field of study, our knowledge is a far cry from God’s. On this note, Elder Hugh B. Brown encouraged BYU faculty to keep an open mind regarding both religious doctrine and secular knowledge; he said:
While I believe all that God has revealed, I am not quite sure that I understand what he has revealed. The fact that he has promised further revelation is to me a challenge to keep an open mind and to be prepared to follow wherever my search for truth may lead. . . . We have been blessed with much knowledge by revelation from God. . . . But there is an incomprehensibly greater part of truth which we must yet discover. Our revealed truth should leave us stricken with the knowledge of how little we really know. It should never lead to an emotional arrogance based upon a false assumption that we somehow have all the answers—that we in fact have a corner on truth, for we do not. Whether you are in the field of economics or political science, history or the behavioral sciences, continue your search for truth. And maintain humility sufficient to be able to review your hypotheses as new truth comes to you by means of the spirit or the mind. Salvation, like education, is an ongoing process.19

I find it inspiring to hear a modern prophet humbly acknowledge his lack of omniscience regarding spiritual truth. This acknowledgment drives home to me how much I need to continually increase my own learning to fulfill my responsibilities and become what I can become.

*Pray for pure motives.* I believe that the worldly quartet spoken of by Elder Oaks, property, pride, prominence, and power, provides a clear measuring stick for impure motives. When I have impure motives in my teaching, I find that my ability to have charity and to teach with the Spirit evaporates. Of that worldly quartet, I suspect that the desire for prominence is more applicable to an occupation in teaching than it may be in many other occupations. Prominence is defined as “having a quality that thrusts itself into attention.” I personally have experienced the thrill of “being on stage.” When I feel this way, I fear I am guilty of priestcraft as discussed in the Book of Mormon: “He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion” (2 Nephi 26:29).

Elder Oaks explained how a motive, of either student or teacher, determines the degree to which the Spirit can teach. He said: “Motive is also important in our quest for knowledge and in the questioning that accompanies it. . . . Seeking and questioning can be a pathway to learning and service, or it can be a means of disruption and self-aggrandizement. The questions can be the same in both instances. The difference is in the questioners’ motives. One person can be seeking knowledge ‘with an eye single to eternal . . . values,’ while another person asking the same questions can be seeking nothing more than to
sow discontent and to reap profit or prominence. . . . Participants in both types of seeking and questioning could frame their questions more precisely and evaluate responses more wisely if they were more aware of the nature and importance of their personal motives.”38

Purifying our motivations is a lifelong pursuit. Making regular mental comparisons between our own knowledge and that of Heavenly Father helps us to avoid being content with what we have learned and to avoid pride in pursuing additional knowledge.

Seek proficiency, both secular and spiritual. While serving as the president of BYU, Elder Oaks explained the need for faculty to be proficient in both their discipline and in spiritual truth: “If any teacher at BYU has a doctorate in his or her discipline but only grade-school preparation in the gospel, that teacher needs some spiritual development. The reverse is also true: a doctorate-level knowledge of the gospel will not suffice if we are poorly prepared in our individual discipline.”39

Similarly, President Kimball explained that BYU faculty will achieve the greatest accomplishments by combining academic expertise with spiritual excellence. He said: “BYU can tower above other universities . . . because of the unique light BYU can send forth into the educational world . . . First among these unique features is the fact that education on this campus deliberately and persistently concerns itself with ‘education for eternity’ not just for time. The faculty have a double heritage which they must pass along: the secular knowledge . . . (and) also the vital and revealed truths that have been sent to us from heaven. . . . Your double heritage and dual concerns with the secular and the spiritual require you to be ‘bilingual.’ As LDS scholars, you must speak with authority and excellence to your professional colleagues in the language of scholarship, and you must also be literate in the language of spiritual things.”40

I have found that being a teacher offers a unique career opportunity to worship God with all my heart, might, mind, and spirit in an attempt to prepare myself and my students for eternal life. I am grateful for this opportunity and hope I can magnify my responsibilities to serve out of pure love. 41

Notes

4. Doctrine and Covenants 98:24 states: “Truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.” Given this definition, only eternal, unchangeable doctrine is truth.
10. In John 8:12, the Savior calls Himself the Light of the World; in Matthew 5:14, He tells His followers: “Ye are the light of the world.” In John 14:6, the Savior says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”
11. Both Elder Bruce R. McConkie and Doctrine and Covenants 19 teach that eternal life is God’s life.
25. For example, BYU’s School of Accountancy and Information Systems (SOAIS) is recognized as one of the top accounting programs nationally; as such, SOAIS graduates are highly recruited and have promising career opportunities. This situation has led to a significant demand to get into the SOAIS with the typical student being bright, highly motivated, and academically successful. Recent students admitted averaged a 3.7 BYU grade-point average, whereas those not admitted averaged over a 3.4!
33. Mark L. McConkie, ed., Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 53.
40. Spencer W. Kimball, “Climbing the Hills Just Ahead,” in Educating Zion, 64.
Painting by Robert E. Barrett, The Grand Council
The most important things for any human being to know are that there does exist a God of righteousness, that He is our Father, and that He is trying to help all of us inherit all that He is and has. He is righteous and acts only to maximize the happiness of every being He oversees. He is our Father because He begat us as His spirit children in our premortal existence. And He is trying to share with us His character of perfect righteousness, His omniscience, His omnipotence, and His dominion. His program to share with us is the joyous news, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To share with us, Heavenly Father provided two covenants whereby His children could demonstrate the ability to bear the weight of blessings He would like to share. Both covenants were planned from the beginning to suit the needs of His children. Each covenant allows the child of God to demonstrate an ability to perform in his or her own sphere, as evidence that the full weight of the Father’s blessings would bring happiness, not sorrow, to the individual. The full weight of the Father’s blessings is called “exaltation” and is a calling to join with God in His eternal work of righteousness to bring to pass the maximal happiness for each being in the universe.

Obedience

The first covenant, as announced in the premortal existence, is the covenant of perfect obedience. His children would be brought into mortality and would be proved to see if they would do all things whatsoever
the Lord their God would command them to do (see Abraham 3:22-25). This covenant is fulfilled only by our living a perfect mortal life, by not deviating from the path of perfect obedience one iota, no matter what the opposition or the consequences. This demonstration of perfect obedience is no idle or pointless exercise. It is a demonstration of the ability to do what exalted beings all do: to lead an absolutely disciplined existence of action in accordance with the principles of righteousness and order in the priesthood chain of command in the process of blessing others. This is the eternal path: blessing others here and now as preparation for an eternity of blessing them there and then, in a way that is selfless and holy. One deviation from the path, however minor, would show that that person cannot be trusted. And because he or she cannot be trusted, he or she cannot be given the blessings of exaltation. To be trusted is more important than to be loved. All of God’s children are loved by Him, but only a few can He trust completely.

Adam and Eve were participants in the first covenant in the Garden of Eden. Adam was determined to keep all the Father’s commandments. But before long, Adam and Eve broke the covenant of obedience and were thrust out of the garden and out of God’s presence. This fall was part of the Father’s plan so that they and their children would have an opportunity to generate the internal strength they did not already have and thus to become trustworthy. In this way, God could save and bless more that just those who were already of perfect character and therefore already trustworthy.

Repentance

The second covenant, companion to the covenant of perfect obedience, is the covenant of perfect repentance (see Moses 6:56-57). The word perfect means “complete.” Perfect obedience can be demonstrated only by persons of already perfect character. But all of God’s children, of any character, can choose to comply with the second covenant of perfect repentance by repenting until they have perfect character. Then, when they have perfect character, they can comply with the first covenant and demonstrate perfect obedience. This second covenant of perfect repentance is usually referred to as the new and everlasting covenant. It is “new” because it comes after the first covenant. It is “everlasting” because it is made possible only through the life, mission, and Atonement of Jesus Christ, one of His names being “Everlasting.”
When most people think of the work of Jesus Christ and His covenant, they think of forgiveness of sins. And forgiveness is important. But it is not the most important thing the second covenant does. The most important thing the new and everlasting covenant does is to bring about a change of character so the person can perform with perfect obedience under the first covenant. When we have attained perfect repentance through Jesus Christ, we then can prove that we can be perfectly obedient, and our Savior is pleased to be able to forgive us of our sins. And He is very forgiving. All who go to a kingdom of glory—celestial, terrestrial, or telestial—are forgiven of their sins either through Jesus Christ or through their own personal suffering. But only a few of those forgiven of their sins can be trusted completely. Only a few who can be given all knowledge, power, dominion, and freedom will then not exercise unrighteous dominion. Those few are precious. They become joint heirs with Christ in receiving all that He has, and He has received all His Father has. Those who cannot be trusted may receive glory but not a fulness. Therefore, their state in eternity is, in a sense, damnation. They receive all the blessings they have demonstrated they will use in righteousness. But where their character has not been changed so that they can be perfectly obedient, in that area they cannot receive a fulness of the blessings; this is damnation to some degree. Even the angels in the celestial kingdom are damned to a degree because they would not fully partake of the new and everlasting covenant (see D&C 131:1–4).

Thus, the main point of the new and everlasting covenant is that it allows a person to change character until he or she is a new creature. The individual may become new to any degree desired. The power of Christ in the new and everlasting covenant is sufficient to help any person attain any degree of perfection desired. Total perfection, to come into the measure of the stature of Christ, is attained only by those persons who fully keep the new and everlasting covenant. As they work through to complete repentance, they are added upon, bit by bit, until they are as noble, as selfless, and as trustworthy as is Christ Himself. Through perfect repentance, they have come to be a perfect person, renewed unto the full measure of the stature of Christ Himself.

The Merits of Christ

How is this perfection achieved? The story of this process of repenting is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Perfection comes only in and through the merits of Christ. What are His merits? First, He has a perfect character.
Second, He is exalted and has all the Father's knowledge, power, and ability. Third, He performed the Atonement and thus is able to resurrect all men and women and to plead before the Father for the forgiveness of their sins. Fourth, He is the creator of heaven and earth and all things that in them are, the governor and manager of our universe.

Because He was already perfect in character, our Savior came into mortality and kept fully the first covenant of perfect obedience. Subject to all the problems of mortality that every other human being suffers, He came into this world as a human being, denied each temptation of Satan, and fulfilled the Father's will in every single instruction.

He was and is exalted, having all power in time and in eternity to do whatever work of godliness is required for the blessing of mankind. We do not yet comprehend the great blessings He has in store for the faithful. But the faithful are not primarily faithful so that they will get the blessings; they are faithful because faithfulness is the right thing to do, the thing that will enable them to bless others.

The life and mission of Jesus Christ as a whole could be called His Atonement, or His at-one-ment, whereby He attempts to reconcile each of us with the Father. Father cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, and our Savior tries to help each person to stop sinning and to be forgiven of the sins committed so that he or she can again stand in Father's presence. He sends His gospel into the earth that all might be fully instructed as to how to enter into and complete the second covenant and be fully empowered through its ordinances to grow in character. Only those who complete the second covenant—who achieve perfect repentance—can be fully trustworthy and thus acceptable to our Father, to become one with Him, even as He and our Savior are one. The arms of mercy and repentance are extended to all mankind that everyone who wishes to partake may, without money and without price. But repent they must.

Being the creator and governor of the universe, our Savior manages all things for the instruction and blessing of each human being. Every human experience is an opportunity to repent, to change our actions and through changing our actions to change our character. Through the gifts of the Spirit, which Christ bestows, the efforts of men and women are matched with the divine power each needs to repent until repentance is complete and each has endured to the end, which is to become as Christ.

There is no more intelligent thing to do in the universe than to rely on the merits of Jesus Christ. That is the only path to happiness.
The degree to which any human being relies on the merits of Christ will be the measure of his or her happiness.

**The Measure of Our Faith and Repentance**

It is important now to say how the first principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are to be applied in this quest for complete repentance. The first principles are faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance.

To have faith in Jesus Christ means to accept His gospel message as attested to by the Holy Ghost and then to rely fully upon the merits of Christ. It means to rely on His name, to keep His commandments, and to strive for perfection of character in all things. If there is anything mean, cowardly, lascivious, untruthful, snobbish, lazy, careless, or lacking in character, our business as servants of Christ is to root out these things with all haste and effort. This is done not only that our own souls can be saved but because we cannot love anyone else purely or deeply until all of these ungodly things are rooted out of our souls through faith and repentance. To have faith in Christ means to trust in Him completely to the giving up of all our sins, bad habits, untrue ideas, evil thoughts, or untoward desires.

An essential part of trusting in Jesus Christ is knowing who His servants are and accepting them as His servants. For instance, no one alive today can fully come unto Christ and receive the fulness of His blessings in this life or in the world to come if that person cannot and does not accept Joseph Smith Jr. as the prophet of this dispensation. It is through him that the keys of the priesthood have come to this time to offer salvation to every soul on earth. Joseph Smith truly did represent Jesus Christ in full authority to bring souls to Christ. Likewise, no one can be saved today and receive all the blessings unless he or she accepts Gordon B. Hinckley as the living prophet. One thing that faithful people quickly learn is that they must also accept the leadership of their stake president and bishop—or their mission president if they are missionaries. No one who has true faith in Christ would think of making a serious life change, such as getting married or divorced, without consulting their bishop and staying close to him in the process. This phenomenon of accepting priesthood authority as part of faith in Jesus Christ is somewhat jokingly in the Church called being “priesthood broke,” the western term referring to a horse being broken to be manageable and rideable. Those who have true faith in Christ wear the priesthood harness well; they do their assignments well; they support those in authority over them; they minister to those
under their priesthood authority; and they strive to bring all humans
to Christ both by precept and by example.

One very good measure of our faith and trust in Christ is our lack
of fear. If we are His faithful servants, He has promised that all things
would and will work together for our good, no matter what happens
(see D&C 98:3). If we believe this, we can meet each day with joy and
gladness, each crisis with equanimity, and each calamity with recogni-
tion of an opportunity to do good. If we are afraid of _anything_, that
fear is the measure of our lack of trust in Christ. For if all things work
together for our good, what is there to fear? If we will only do our part
and obey Christ in all things, there is no need to fear anything except
not having faith in Jesus Christ.

The second principle of the gospel is repentance. Repentance is
changing each act of our life that is not an act of faith in Christ to
become an act of faith in Jesus Christ. To help us with this process, our
Savior sends the Holy Spirit to be the constant companion of His
covenant servants. With the help of the whisperings and promptings
of the Holy Spirit, each of us is guided into the narrow path of obedience
to Jesus Christ. Humble, willing obedience to Jesus Christ is faith in
Him. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot perfect our faith in Christ.
And perfect faith in Christ is the end or goal of repentance. To
repeat: repentance is changing our feelings, thinking, decisions, and
actions until each thing we do is an act of faith in Jesus Christ. Then
we are _faithful_.

What makes the second covenant so drastically different from the
first covenant is that in the first covenant if we make one mistake, break
one commandment of God, we are lost. In the second covenant, if we
break a commandment and misstep on our way, that can be forgiven if
we are truly sorry and get ourselves back onto the strait and narrow
way of faith. That getting back is repentance. Should we sin many
times, we still can be forgiven if we truly repent and get back onto the
track of trust in Christ. Thus, the second covenant is the covenant of
complete or perfect repentance.

All the other laws and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are
examples of the application of faith in Jesus Christ and repentance in
our lives and can be truly and fully understood only in that light. Faith,
repentance, and all of the other laws and principles of the gospel have
one end: to produce persons of perfect character whose only actions
are those of the pure love of Christ. Pure means selfless. Those who
are pure live outside of themselves in service to others. They have a
pure love for Christ, looking to Him in every thought (see D&C
6:36). They see the face of Christ in every person they encounter. They minister to every person they encounter as Christ would, discerning their needs and blessing each person with whatever he or she needs to take the next step on the individual path to happiness. Filled with the Holy Ghost and the power of the holy priesthood, the child of Christ knows what to do and has the power to do whatever is necessary to manifest the pure love of Christ.

**An Ongoing Work**

If enough of the children of Christ who have pure love happen to be in one place, they together constitute a Zion, for they are pure in heart (see Moses 7:18). To establish Zion is to encourage and entice every person to enter the new and everlasting covenant and to endure to the end, which end is to be able to love with pure love, and which end is also eternal life.

The work of establishing Zion is a work of power. It cannot be done by mortal means. Only as the powers of heaven come down and infuse the natural, mortal situation can we be saved, which salvation is to be changed from the natural, mortal condition to the stature of the character of Christ, full of pure love, as He is.

A key power that makes this transformation possible is the holy priesthood. God bestows the holy priesthood upon men, and they use it in the service of Christ to bring about the personal transformations I have been discussing. They use it to teach and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. They use it to administer the ordinances of the new and everlasting covenant. They use it to establish and guide The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They use it to bless each other, to check evil, to control the elements of nature, and to do whatever God instructs them to do.

Special mention needs to be made of the ordinances of the new and everlasting covenant as administered by the holy priesthood. The two basic parts of that second covenant are baptism and the receiving of the holy Melchizedek Priesthood.

Baptism is the first part of the new and everlasting covenant. It allows individuals formally to renounce their old, natural way of living and to announce a determination to accept the power of God to change their nature into the character of Christ. The person who truly is reborn of water and of the Spirit is as a little child: meek, submissive, patient, humble, and willing to submit to whatever the Lord sees fit to inflict upon him or her (see Mosiah 3:19). Having been given the right to the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, the person strives
to treasure that influence and to obey God in all things, putting aside all worldliness and walking in the plain path of goodness, virtue, and service to others in the pure love of Christ.

When men and women are well rooted and established as reborn children of Christ, anxiously engaged each day in selflessly pursuing the services the Master would have them render to others, they are ready to receive and profit from the holy Melchizedek Priesthood. For men, there are three steps in receiving that priesthood power to be able to minister to others as a greatly enhanced being. The first step is to be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood. The second is to receive one’s endowment in the holy temple. The third is to be sealed to an eternal companion in the temple.

To be ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood is to join the ranks of the empowered servants of God to give special service: missionary work, church work, family work, and temple work. All who receive that priesthood are assigned to a quorum, where they are to learn to serve with others and to learn to wear the priesthood harness well, pulling their load in coordination with others. As they are faithful and continue in repentance, the power of the priesthood wells up within them; they become full of the gifts and powers and knowledge of the Lord and gain the power to bless others with ordinances, miracles, direction, and insight.

In due time, the faithful servant of Christ is invited to go into the holy temple to receive the endowment. The endowment is a gift, as the name suggests. It is a gift of all the eternal powers and blessings the person needs to overcome the world and to accomplish his or her mortal mission. Without the endowment, the person has not the power to defeat Satan and to fulfill all the callings received as a servant in the kingdom of Christ. The blessings of the endowment, like that of the gift of the Holy Ghost at baptism, do not come automatically. The ordinances are the bestowing of a right to receive, and as the gifts are carefully sought for and treasured by explicit prayer and obedience, the gifts come in the sequence and degree the Lord sees is best for the development of the individual into the likeness of the character of Christ.

When endowed persons are ready to marry and establish a new eternal family, those who preside over them send them to the temple to receive a fulness of the blessings of the gospel. In the temple sealing, they receive all the other powers and rights they need to act as husband and wife, father and mother, in their own eternal kingdom. Their own eternal kingdom is not solely their property. They are Christ’s, and Christ and all of His are the Father’s. The couple joins
the eternal family and kingdom of the gods and through faithfulness enter into the order of the gods for an eternal career of blessing others with all that time and eternity afford.

A Path to Perfection

Now to sum up this discussion of the two covenants.

The first covenant is the basic covenant. It is never replaced by the second covenant. The purpose of the second, or new and everlasting covenant, is to enable us to grow in stature and character until we can fulfill the first covenant of perfect obedience. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, kept the first covenant in His mortal life and through His Atonement made the second covenant possible for us. The key to remember is that neither covenant excuses sin. The first covenant requires sinlessness, always. The second covenant is a covenant of mercy, which allows a person to learn through experiment, and in experimenting and trying, perhaps to sin, but then to repent unto not sinning. The second covenant is an inclined plane that leads gently up to perfection, whereas the first covenant demands perfection from the beginning. Both demand perfection, and the reward of each is the powers, abilities, and life of a perfect person. One is direct; the other is roundabout.

The first covenant is pure and straight justice. The second covenant is a covenant of justice mixed with temporary mercy for those who do not as yet have the character of Christ to produce and to abide perfect justice. Both come to the same end, the first by direct obedience to the Father, the second by becoming first children of Christ and then, as His children, growing until we can give direct and total obedience to the Father.

The good news is that “the leopard can change its spots.” Whatever we are and have been, we can change. By submitting ourselves to Christ through His new and everlasting covenant, we can become new creatures with new habits, new desires, a new mind, a new heart, and a new body. This is salvation indeed.

I rejoice in the goodness of our God in providing two covenants whereby mankind may join the ranks of the gods. The first is the eternal order of the gods. The second is the apprenticeship whereby we learn to abide the perfect and eternal order of the gods. I thank our Father and His Son for giving us these two great gifts to bless our lives.
Professor John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892-1973), the author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings.*
The Moral Mythmaker: The Creative Theology of J. R. R. Tolkien

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Shortly after the theatrical release of The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring in December 2001, Richard Neitzel Holzapfel encouraged me to write an article regarding The Lord of the Rings and its application to the Latter-day Saint classroom. While I believe that the proper atmosphere for teaching literature is in the literature classroom, I am keenly aware of the popularity of the works of J. R. R. Tolkien and their potential applicability to the teaching of gospel principles. I have observed, however, that most of my students are not clear as to why they enjoy the stories of Middle Earth and what draws them into this particular world of fantasy. My remarks are intended to introduce teachers to some of the reasons behind the natural gravitation of their students to Tolkien’s works. The youth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are sensitive to true principles, and they will find the truths of eternity in the writings of good people. Not every man who has written his mind or has had his works published or has been lauded by the academics of the world has been a good man. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, however, is one of the best. As to whether every teacher in the Church Educational System ought to read The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, I will say no more than to repeat my oft-quoted advice with a bit of a wry smile: “A man is not truly educated until he has.”

A Personal Introduction

Thirty-five years ago, shortly after I returned home from a mission to southern Mexico, a friend introduced me to the writings of J. R. R. Tolkien. I began with The Hobbit, the so-called prequel to The Lord of the Rings. Ten days later, I put down The Return of the King, hungering
for more, and there was no more. I scoured the bookstores for Tolkien’s poetry and prose and joyfully found *The Tolkien Reader, Smith of Wooten Major, Farmer Giles of Ham, The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, and the lovely *Leaf by Niggle*. Yet of hobbits and elves I could learn nothing more. As a result of what I considered to be a literary dearth, I returned to the original four volumes and devoured them again and again. Each reading revealed aspects of the narrative that I had missed; each reading increased the hunger for whatever it was that Tolkien’s works had addicted me to. I am not sure that I could have articulated what it was I desired; I knew only that the desire within me was waiting impatiently to be satisfied.

In an act of desperation, I began to do what I would now term a “survey of literature.” I perused the periodical indices, subsequently making copies of every news article I could find on Tolkien and his creations. In the process, I learned of Tolkien’s affection for the writings of George MacDonald, William Morris, H. Rider Haggard, and other nineteenth-century fantasists. In short order, I discovered for myself that my tastes ran in the same channel. My personal library began to grow. I learned of Tolkien’s intimate friendships with C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and the other Oxford “Inklings,” as they styled themselves. My reading of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Pere-landra* trilogy began a lifelong love of Lewis’s narrative gift and led me ultimately to his outwardly theological writings at which I was awestruck. Williams’s *The Place of the Lion* and *The Greater Trumps* left me spellbound, and I could not desist until I had acquired all of Tolkien’s scant corpus of published works. My bookshelves smiled more and more deeply at the discovery of each of these literary and personal companions that graced Tolkien’s life.

As I probed into his history, I became aware of his academic background. I learned of his love of the English language in all of its permutations, his native gift for language acquisition, and his scholarly grasp of the historical development of language. I had long been aware of and fascinated with the runic systems of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, together with the Elvish scripts in all their varieties, I began to realize that these, along with the various invented linguistic pieces of poetry and dialogue, were not merely creative frosting but were part of a vast, seamless panorama from which the stories had been taken. The more I became aware of his professional pursuits, the more I became intrigued by the obvious connection between the real world and the world of Middle Earth. I sensed that no true appreciation of what Tolkien had accomplished in his writings could ever materialize
unless I understood the fountain from which their creation sprang. So compellingly did this realization strike me that I changed majors at the time I began my master’s program. I had been a Spanish major; I would now delve into the mysteries of English language and linguistics. A year after I completed this advanced degree, I mourned the death of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, a man whom I had never met but whom I had come to know intimately.

Tolkien the Scholar

Tolkien was born 3 January 1892 in Bloemfontein, South Africa, to Arthur and Mabel Tolkien, emigrants from Birmingham, England. His father worked as the bank manager for the Bank of Africa in the Orange Free State. By February 1896, however, Ronald Tolkien and his younger brother Hillary were fatherless. Their mother returned to England with her sons in the summer of 1896 but died of diabetes eight years later. The two boys were raised by relatives under the guidance of a local parish priest, their mother having been received into the Catholic Church four years before her death. John Ronald followed a course of study at King Edward’s School, where he clearly manifested an aptitude for languages, first with Latin and Greek and later with Welsh, French, and German. Although Tolkien’s linguistic gift helped him learn ancient and foreign languages, his mind gravitated toward the reasons why languages were as they were—how and why they differed. He studied philology and in due time discovered Anglo-Saxon and the epic Beowulf and from thence to Middle English and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. He then turned to Old Norse and the Elder and Younger Eddas, the literary treasures of Iceland. In his final year at King Edward’s, he discovered the Kalavala, the principal depository of Finnish mythology.

His love of language motivated him to create languages of his own, sometimes in collaboration with cousins and friends, using English, Greek, French, Spanish, and Latin elements as the building blocks for the phonetics and vocabulary. His first serious language invention, however, evolved from his study of Gothic, the sole survivor of the East Germanic family of languages. He created words and phrases in the Gothic manner and then proposed etymologies that would link them to extant vocabulary or to languages of more ancient date. In 1912, he abandoned Gothic as the catalyst and turned to Finnish, from which would develop the family of Elvish languages with which most readers of Tolkien’s works have become familiar, Quenya in particular. A variety of language permutations would develop as Tolkien
incorporated linguistic principles from Welsh and other exotic languages, producing Sindarin, Laiquendi, Moriquendi, and others—nearly forty languages in all.

In December 1910, Tolkien was awarded an Open Classical Exhibition to Exeter College at Oxford University and matriculated there in the fall of 1911. By 1913, he was preparing for his degree in the Honours School of English Language and Literature at Exeter. As he progressed in his studies of Anglo-Saxon, he read Cynewulf's *Crist*, two lines of which struck him forcefully:

\[
\textit{Eala Earendel engla beorhtast} \\
\textit{Ofer middangeard monnum sended} \\
\textit{Hail Earendel, brightest of angels} \\
\textit{Above the middle-earth sent unto men}
\]

From this meager beginning would derive a series of poems and stories that would serve as the foundation of the mythology of Middle Earth: *The Book of Lost Tales*.

Tolkien graduated from Exeter with first class honors in the summer of 1915 and was immediately commissioned in the Lancashire Fusiliers and sent to France during the First World War. He spent almost all of 1917 convalescing in England from "trench fever" with little more to do than to write *The Book of Lost Tales*. In November of 1918, he returned to Oxford University to serve on the staff responsible for publishing the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a ten-volume work documenting the historical development of the English language from its roots to the present. In 1920, he accepted an appointment at Leeds University as reader in English language and in 1924 was elected professor of English language at the same institution. In the summer of 1925, Tolkien was invited to return to Oxford as the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon. During his tenure at Oxford, Tolkien wrote *The Hobbit*, an instant literary success published in 1937. Eight years later, he was elected Merton Professor of English Language and Literature at Oxford, a chair that he held until his retirement in 1959. While at Merton, Tolkien published *The Lord of the Rings*.

**Tolkien the Mythmaker**

*The Lord of the Rings* must be seen as part of the vast panorama devised by Tolkien twenty years before *The Hobbit* was published. As Professor Tolkien clearly states in his foreword to *The Lord of the Rings*, "This tale grew in the telling, until it became a history of the
Great War of the Ring and included many glimpses of the yet more ancient history that preceded it. It was begun soon after *The Hobbit* was written and before its publication in 1937; but I did not go on with this sequel, for I wished first to complete and set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days, which had then been taking shape for some years. I desired to do this for my own satisfaction, and I had little hope that other people would be interested in this work, especially since it was primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of ‘history’ for Elvish tongues.”

Tolkien’s narrative references to the “ancient history” are not mere literary posing for rhetorical effect. In a letter to W. H. Auden, Tolkien addressed the issue directly. After referring to his particular linguistic tastes, Tolkien writes: “All this only as background to the stories, though languages and names are for me inextricable from the stories. They are and were so to speak an attempt to give a background or a world in which my expressions of linguistic taste could have a function. The stories were comparatively late in coming.”

When the stories did come, they came with an underlying purpose, far grander than the creation of a world where his languages might be spoken. In a letter to Milton Waldman, Tolkien confesses the great design:

> Do not laugh! But once upon a time (my crest has long since fallen) I had in mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogenic, to the level of romantic fairy-story—the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths—which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country. It should possess the tone and quality that I desired, somewhat cool and clear, be redolent of our “air” (the clime and soil of the North West, meaning Britain and the hither parts of Europe: not Italy or the Aegean, still less the East), and, while possessing (if I could achieve it) the fair elusive beauty that some call Celtic (though it is rarely found in genuine ancient Celtic things), it should be “high,” purged of the gross, and fit for the more adult mind of a land long now steeped in poetry. I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama. Absurd.

This letter was drafted in 1951, three years before the first publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, and yet Tolkien already had in hand much of what he had described to Waldman. *The Book of Lost Tales,*
begun while Tolkien was yet an undergraduate at Oxford University, recounted the history of Middle Earth during the First and Second Ages of the world, vast periods of time carefully chronicled in prose and poetry. Christopher Tolkien, J. R. R. Tolkien’s son and literary executor, has, during the past thirty years, brought to light this enormous historical backdrop of which *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* were eventually made part. *The Silmarillion*, *The Book of Lost Tales*, *The Lays of Beleriand*, *The Shaping of Middle Earth*, *The Lost Road*, and *The War of the Jewels*, among others, reveal with their grandeur of scope why Tolkien’s stories regarding the War of the Ring have verisimilitude. For an accurate depiction of the grueling process and the sometimes debilitating frustration that J. R. R. Tolkien suffered during the creation of this English mythology, the reader is directed to Tolkien’s wonderful short story “Leaf by Niggle.”

**Tolkien the Moralist**

At the heart of every writer there is a teacher, a part of the author’s soul that is compelled to tell a story with a moral. Some are more blatant about the didactic act than others, but the instruction is delivered just the same. This is particularly true when the writer is fundamentally ethical—one who has a theological or religious fountain from which his or her writing flows. The degree to which a writer bares his or her soul varies, of course, but to illustrate the subtlety of technique, I turn to two of the writers I discovered for myself shortly after I came in contact with Tolkien’s works: C. S. Lewis and Charles Williams. The titles of Charles Williams’s seven novels clearly indicate the theological bent the author brought to his writing: *The Place of the Lion*, *All Hallow’s Eve*, *Descent into Hell*, *Shadows of Ecstasy*, *Many Dimensions*, *War in Heaven*, and *The Greater Trumps*. There is no obfuscating the religious aspects of the stories with allegory; the ideas are plain and clear-cut. On the other hand, though deeply religious, many of the fictional works of C. S. Lewis are less aggressive theologically. *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Perelandra* trilogy, for example, have religious icons depicted, but they are generally far more allegorically represented: Aslan and Ransom as Christ figures, heavily charged names for characters, and so forth. If Williams wears his religion on his shirt cuff, Lewis has his farther up the sleeve. Tolkien, however, is far more oblique—close to his vest, to continue the analogy.

Before the publication of *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* in 1981, debates raged over the religiosity of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. The waybread of the elves was seen by some to be the Catholic
Eucharist; Galadriel as Mother Mary; Bilbo, Frodo, and Sam as the bearers of the Cross, either as Christ figures or Cyrenesians; and so forth. Other fans and scholars dismissed the whole discussion as nonsense—that no overtly religious imagery and themes existed in Tolkien’s works. Tolkien’s letters, however, demonstrate that both extremes were in error. In a letter to Robert Murray, a Jesuit priest who had written him regarding Catholic elements in the trilogy, Tolkien wrote:

I think I know exactly what you mean by the order of Grace; and of course by your references to Our Lady, upon which all my own small perception of beauty both in majesty and simplicity is founded. *The Lord of the Rings* is of course a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything like “religion,” to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism. However that is very clumsily put, and sounds more self-important than I feel. For as a matter of fact, I have consciously planned very little.6

In a letter written to Deborah Webster in October of 1958 in which she had apparently asked for some pertinent personal facts, Tolkien somewhat clarifies his position on religion in the stories after addressing the influence of language on his writings:

And there are a few basic facts, which however drily expressed, are really significant. For instance I was born in 1892 and lived for my early years in “the Shire” in a pre-mechanical age. Or more important, I am a Christian (which can be deduced from my stories), and in fact a Roman Catholic. The latter “fact” perhaps cannot be deduced; though one critic (by letter) asserted that the invocations of Elbereth, and the character of Galadriel as directly described (or through the words of Gimli and Sam) were clearly related to Catholic devotion to Mary. Another saw in waybread (lembas) = viaticum and the reference to its feeding the *will* (vol. III, p. 213) and being more potent when fasting, a derivation from the Eucharist. (That is: far greater things may colour the mind in dealing with the lesser things of a fairy story).7

In a subsequent letter to Mrs. Ruth Austin, Tolkien issues a caveat in his amiable and kind-hearted way: “I was particularly interested in your remarks about Galadriel. . . . I think it is true that I owe much of this character to Christian and Catholic teaching and imagination about Mary, but actually Galadriel was a penitent: in her youth a leader in the rebellion against the Valar (the angelic guardians). At the end of
the First Age she proudly refused forgiveness or permission to return. She was pardoned because of her resistance to the final and overwhelming temptation to take the Ring for herself."

The temptation to interpret *The Lord of the Rings* is difficult to resist, but Tolkien warns the reader from the very beginning:

As for any inner meaning or "message", it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical. As the story grew it put down roots (into the past) and threw out unexpected branches; but its main theme was settled from the outset by the inevitable choice of the Ring as the link between it and *The Hobbit.*

\[\ldots\] Other arrangements could be devised according to the tastes or views of those who like allegory or topical reference. But I cordially dislike allegory in all its manifestations, and always have done so since I grew old and wary enough to detect its presence. I much prefer history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers. I think that many confuse "applicability" with "allegory"; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author."

Therefore, though Tolkien’s story line and narrative are naturally shaped by his religious sentiments as a Roman Catholic, one does not need to be a Catholic or even a Christian to thoroughly enjoy his works. Is the waybread of the elves the Eucharist (or sacrament)? Yes and no. It is like saying that soil, air, and moisture equal the lilies of the field. While it may be biologically true, asserting the fact reduces the description to mere chemistry and says nothing of the life of the flowers nor of the beauty perceived by the travelers as they pass the field. If we are to find morality in Tolkien’s writings, we must look deeper, avoiding facile interpretations along the way. In the space that remains, I will briefly address three elements that will serve as keys to understanding: first, the manner in which the stories were told; second, the importance of light and darkness; and finally, the contrast between destiny and free will.

**On Fairy Tales**

Most of the early criticism of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* came as the result of misunderstanding. Reviewers attempted to place Tolkien’s works in the same category as contemporary novels, not realizing that his models were nineteenth century rather than twentieth century.

Robley Evans was one of the few early critics who perceived precisely what Tolkien was about: "Unlike writers of science fiction, Tolkien relies upon the literary traditions of the past as well as upon his
imagination as the sources for his fantasy. He does not wish to break with Western culture or with the Romantic tradition that knowledge gives us power to change the world for the better. The imagination has enriched us in the past; it can continue to do so, not by throwing out our inheritance but by building upon it, and especially upon its familiar and eternally meaningful myths, symbols and dreams.”

Paul Kocher, too, acquired an early insight into Tolkien’s style and, contrary to other critics, lauded Tolkien’s facility rather than decried it: “Tolkien’s real mastery as a writer, though, consists in his power to establish for each individual race a personality that is unmistakably its own. A dwarf is as different from an elf as an ent from a hobbit, and all from a man and from one another. Further, each race has not only its gifts but also its private tragedy, which it must try to overcome as best it can. And it must work out its own often difficult way of living with its peers. All this imparts great variety and drama to the epic within the broader movement of events.”

C. S. Lewis is even more to the point in his review: “Much that in a realistic work would be done by ‘character delineation’ is here done simply by making the character an elf, a dwarf, or a hobbit. The imagined beings have their insides on the outside; they are visible souls.”

Max Lüthi in his little book, On the Nature of Fairy Tales, clarifies the stylistics associated with the traditional fairy tale and, by so doing, describes in large measure Tolkien’s manner of telling his stories: “In the fairy tale, feelings and relationships are externalized, sometimes in a manner which for us is quite peculiar. . . . The steady progression of the action, the dispensing with a detailed portrayal of the background or the characters, in the predilection for everything clearly formed (in colors as well as in shape), the tendency toward extremes and contrasts, toward metals and minerals, cities, castles, rooms, boxes, rings, and swords, and the tendency to make feelings and relationships congeal into objects, so to speak, and thus become outwardly visible—all these things give the fairy tale definiteness, firmness, and clarity. The fairy tale bestows on its hearer, without him being aware of it, something of its unaffected precision and brilliance.”

That Tolkien was clearly utilizing the fairy tale as his model for telling the stories of Middle Earth is easily discerned through his letters to readers. To Naomi Mitchison he wrote the following of the elves: “If I were pressed to rationalize, I would say that they represent really Men with greatly enhanced aesthetic and creative faculties, greater beauty and longer life, and nobility.”
To Michael Straight he provided this insight: “Of course, in fact exterior to my story, Elves and Men are just different aspects of the Humane, and represent the problem of Death as seen by a finite but willing and self-conscious person. . . . The Elves represent, as it were, the artistic, aesthetic, and purely scientific aspects of the Humane nature raised to a higher level than is actually seen in Men.”

Tolkien describes the hobbits in related terms in a letter to Milton Waldman: “The Hobbits are, of course, really meant to be a branch of the specifically human race (not Elves or Dwarves)—hence the two kinds can dwell together (as at Bree), and are called just the Big Folk and Little Folk. They are entirely without non-human powers, but are represented as being more in touch with ‘nature’ (the soil and other living things, plants and animals), and abnormally, for humans, free from ambition or greed of wealth. They are made small (little more than half human stature, but dwindling as the years pass) partly to exhibit the pettiness of man, plain unimaginative parochial man—though not with either the smallness or the savageness of Swift, and mostly to show up, in creatures of very small physical power, the amazing and unexpected heroism of ordinary man ‘at a pinch.’”

The external devices used to distinguish races and individuals are legion and can be found in every aspect of the narrative, including the nature of dialogue, the development and uses of racial scripts, and the phonological and grammatical differences among the languages of all the speaking creatures of Middle Earth. These are in association with the obvious racial preferences exhibited toward nature, light, history, art, and wealth that almost every reader senses as he or she reads the books.

Light and Dark

Tolkien’s use of light and dark is so patently obvious in the text of his books that it is almost embarrassing to mention the subject. I do so, however, without trepidation, knowing that the first blush is not always the best, nor the most revealing. Anyone who is familiar with the volumes published by Christopher Tolkien after his father’s death is unavoidably aware of how profoundly the concept nourishes the overall creation of Middle Earth. A few examples gleaned from *The Silmarillion* should whet the appetite.

The elves are divided into classes of families dependent upon how far to the West they migrated after having been awakened at the waters of Cuivienen in the uttermost East. The Valar, the gods of Tolkien’s mythology, invited the elves to join them in Aman. Some were
frightened by Melkor and would not answer the call. They became known, along with others, as the Moriquendi—literally, the Dark Elves. Those who made their way across the wide expanse of Middle Earth to the Great Sea, and from thence to Aman, the glorious city of the Valar, became known as the Calaquendi—literally, the Light Elves. Those who hesitated at the Great Sea and would not cross were the Sindar, or Grey-elves. The Woodland Elves became known as the Laiquendi, or Green Elves, referring to the predominant color with which they were most comfortable.

The Istari, too, were categorized by color. Saruman (and eventually Gandalf) is called the White, who stood at the head of the council. Gandalf was the Grey until his death and resurrection in Moria. Radgast the Brown is clearly of a different mentality or orientation than are Gandalf and Saruman, as his color indicates. We are told elsewhere that the original Istari who came into the world were five in number, the remaining two having the color blue. They went into the dark East and were never heard of again. An entertaining exercise would be to attempt to determine the character traits of Thorin Oakenshield and his traveling companions in The Hobbit by the classification given by the color of their respective hoods.

The languages of Middle Earth are light sensitive as well. A simple scanning of the Ring inscription in comparison with any of the High Elven speech will reveal that the elves favored front vowels (i, e, a) and the speakers of Black Speech preferred back vowels (o, u). A diligent study will reveal that Tolkien chooses consonants for his various languages the same way, dependent upon their affinity with light. Interestingly enough, the Glass of Galadriel is used at Minas Tirith by both Frodo and Sam to fend off evil. Both speak a language they do not know in evoking the power of the Star-Glass, yet Frodo speaks in High Elven and Sam in Sindarin. Is Tolkien not revealing something of his conception of the two characters by so doing? Clearly, he is.

Mordor is, of course, the quintessential place of darkness in Middle Earth, followed closely by the corruption that Saruman made of Isengard. Lothlorien, the Golden Wood of Galadriel, and Rivendell, the home of Elrond Half-Elven, are the counterpoints of light. The singular quibble that I have with the otherwise brilliant filming of The Fellowship of the Ring is that both Rivendell and Lothlorien are sometimes portrayed as dark (with a kind of blue patina) and somewhat somber. Tolkien’s conception in the narrative is far more golden and festive all in all.
Destiny and Free Will

At the heart of Tolkien’s creation is his fundamental acceptance of and belief in the well-developed theology of Catholicism. His is unflinching when it comes to the underlying principles by which his characters are motivated, the assumptions by which decisions are made, and by which powers rise and fall. Some of these principles are more easily illustrated than others. Tolkien’s views on the moral agency of man, for example, can be articulated by two major episodes in *The Fellowship of the Ring.*

In the second chapter, “The Shadow of the Past,” Frodo and Gandalf discuss the nature and history of the Ring, which has come to Frodo through an extraordinary chain of events. Though consistent with the whole conception of the fairy tale genre, it is a little unnerving to Frodo and to the reader to discover that the Ring has a will of its own.

“A Ring of Power looks after itself, Frodo. It may slip off treacherously, but its keeper never abandons it. At most he plays with the idea of handing it on to some one else’s care—and that only at an early stage, when it first begins to grip. But as far as I know Bilbo alone in history has ever gone beyond playing, and really done it. He needed all my help, too. And even so he would never have just forsaken it, or cast it aside. It was not Gollum, Frodo, but the Ring itself that decided things. The Ring left him.”

“What, just in time to meet Bilbo?” said Frodo. “Wouldn’t an Orc have suited it better?”

“It is no laughing matter,” said Gandalf. “Not for you. It was the strangest event in the whole history of the Ring so far: Bilbo’s arrival just at that time, and putting his hand on it, blindly, in the dark.”

Here, then, we have characters that seem to be manipulated, pawns that are swept into orbit around the near omnipotence of the Ring of Power, and what once seemed mere happenstance turns to malignant purpose. As in the contrast between light and dark, however, Tolkien’s characters become aware that in opposition to the Dark Power, there is another force—one for good—in the world.

“There was more than one power at work, Frodo. The Ring was trying to get back to its master. It had slipped from Isildur’s hand and betrayed him; then when a chance came it caught poor Deagol, and he was murdered; and after that Gollum, and it had devoured him. It could make no further use of him: he was too small and
mean; and as long as it stayed with him he would never leave his deep pool again. So now, when its master was awake once more and sending out his dark thought from Mirkwood, it abandoned Gollum. Only to be picked up by the most unlikely person imaginable: Bilbo from the Shire!

"Behind that there was something else at work, beyond any design of the Ring-maker. I can put it on plainer than by saying that Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, and not by its maker. In which case you also were meant to have it. And that may be an encouraging thought."

"It is not," said Frodo. "Though I am not sure that I understand you. But how have you learned all this about the Ring, and about Gollum? Do you really know it all, or are you just guessing still?"

Gandalf looked at Frodo, and his eyes glinted. "I knew much and I have learned much," he answered. "But I am not going to give an account of all my doings to you. The history of Elendil and Isildur and the One Ring is known to all the Wise. Your ring is shown to be that One Ring by the fire-writing alone, apart from any other evidence."

The opposing powers hinted at here become more clearly defined later in the narrative at the Bridge of Khazad-dûm. Together with the orcs and trolls, a Balrog assaults the Fellowship. Notice the contrasts of light and dark, and particularly the titles that Gandalf gives to himself and the Balrog:

The Balrog reached the bridge. Gandalf stood in the middle of the span, leaning on the staff in his left hand, but in his other hand Glamdring gleamed, cold and white. His enemy halted again, facing him, and the shadow about it reached out like two vast wings. It raised the whip, and the thongs whined and cracked. Fire came from its nostrils. But Gandalf stood firm.

"You cannot pass," he said. The orcs stood still, and a dead silence fell. "I am a servant of the Secret Fire, wielder of the flame of Anor. You cannot pass. The dark fire will not avail you, flame of Udun. Go back to the Shadow! You cannot pass."

The Balrog made no answer. The fire in it seemed to die, but the darkness grew. It stepped forward slowly on to the bridge, and suddenly it drew itself up to a great height, and its wings were spread from wall to wall; but still Gandalf could be seen, glimmering in the gloom; he seemed small, and altogether alone: grey and bent, like a wizened tree before the onset of a storm.

From out of the shadow a red sword leaped flaming.
Glamdring glittered white in answer.

There was a ringing clash and a slab of white fire. The Balrog fell back and its sword flew up in molten fragments. The wizard swayed on the bridge, stepped back a pace, and then again stood still.

“You cannot pass!” he said.

With a bound the Balrog leaped full upon the bridge. Its whip whirled and hissed.

“He cannot stand alone!” cried Aragorn suddenly and ran back along the bridge. “Elendil!” he shouted. “I am with you, Gandalf!”

“Gondor!” cried Boromir and leaped after him.

At that moment Gandalf lifted his staff, and crying aloud he smote the bridge before him. The staff broke asunder and fell from his hand. A blinding sheet of white flame sprang up. The bridge cracked. Right at the Balrog’s feet it broke, and the stone upon which it stood crashed into the gulf, while the rest remained, poised, quivering like a tongue of rock thrust out into emptiness.

With a terrible cry the Balrog fell forward, and its shadow plunged down and vanished. But even as it fell it swung its whip, and the thongs lashed and curled about the wizard’s knees, dragging him to the brink. He staggered and fell, grasped vainly at the stone, and slid into the abyss. ‘Fly, you fools!’ he cried, and was gone.

The fires went out, and blank darkness fell. The Company stood rooted with horror staring into the pit.21

In the final chapter of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Tolkien demonstrates his preference for human agency, even in the face of compulsion and intimidation. Frodo has fled the distressing confrontation with Boromir and finds himself at the summit of Amon Hen, the Hill of Seeing, with the ring on his finger. In the midst of an extraordinary vision of the lands of Middle Earth, he sees the Fortress of Sauron, and all hope leaves him:

And suddenly he felt the Eye. There was an eye in the Dark Tower that did not sleep. He knew that it had become aware of his gaze. A fierce eager will was there. It leaped towards him; almost like a finger he felt it, searching for him. Very soon it would nail him down, know just exactly where he was. Amon Lhaw it touched. It glanced upon Tol Brandir—he threw himself from the seat, crouching, covering his head with his grey hood.

He heard himself crying out: *Never, never!* Or was it: *Verily I come, I come to you?* He could not tell. Then as a flash from some
other point of power there came to his mind another thought: *Take it off! Take it off!, Fool, take it off! Take off the Ring!*

The two powers strove in him. For a moment, perfectly balanced between their piercing points, he writhed, tormented. Suddenly he was aware of himself again. Frodo, neither the Voice nor the Eye: free to choose, and with one remaining instant in which to do so. He took the Ring off his finger. He was kneeling in clear sunlight before the high seat. A black shadow seemed to pass like an arm above him; it missed Amon Hen and groped out west, and faded. Then all the sky was clean and blue and birds sang in every tree.23

Frodo will learn later that the opposing voice was Gandalf, exercising just enough of his own power against the effort of the Eye so that Frodo could decide for himself. This notion of being part of a destiny greater than one’s own life yet having agency to determine the nature of one’s own role in that destiny is not unique here. The principle is found throughout the corpus of Tolkien’s work.

**Conclusion**

It is difficult to imagine a world more cynical and debased than the one in which we presently live, and it is clear that the world’s weariness derives from those two elements more than any other. Tolkien’s works are fundamentally optimistic and assert that beauty and goodness will ultimately triumph, although there is an unavoidable price to be paid. Because Tolkien’s works are stylistically romantic, they turn the minds and hearts of the reader to a “golden age,” a time of great prosperity and peace, a time of enlightenment. While Tolkien’s cosmology does include such eras in the far-distant history of Middle Earth, it is the immediacy of the coming, glorious Fourth Age of Middle Earth that is ushered in with the destruction of the Ring of Power that is appealed to throughout the narrative—it is the Return of the King that counts in the end. Surely Latter-day Saints ought to resonate with that notion. The stories of Middle Earth can be just as morally compelling to the perceptive reader as tales told of the faithful ancestors battling against terrible odds to bring sanity and grace into an otherwise benighted world. The writings of J. R. R. Tolkien ought not to be trifled with. Middle Earth and its denizens were conceived by a gifted and educated mind, to the intent that this earth might be a better and brighter place in which to live—or at least so that we might believe that it can be, and that is essentially the beginning of the journey. 24
Notes

18. See extended discussions of each of these issues in my doctoral dissertation. Also, I refer readers to the journal *Mythlore*, wherein these and other elements of Tolkien’s narrative style have been treated at length.
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