

**Agency Education:
The Birthplace of Freedom and Liberty**
By Neil Flinders

Jesus offered his disciples this sage and prophetic advice:

*“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;
and ye shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free.”*
(John 8:31-32)

Therein resides the core emphasis of this essay. Jesus linked together (a) personal behavior, (b) knowledge of the truth, and (c) freedom. The implication is, without moral agency, a knowledge of the truth, and a willingness to embrace it, there can be no freedom and without freedom there will be no liberty. These are prerequisites for every individual; and the family is the intended social structure in which humanity initially pursues this mortal journey—everything else is subsidiary.

A Prologue to Preparation and Application

After eighty plus years on this earth, it seems somewhat easier to discern the nature of differences than it was during my youthful life. I recently shared some of these observations with our growing posterity (37 grandchildren). The document is entitled *The Next Generation: A Grandfather's View of Self-Evident Truths*. In a note at the beginning I suggested the following:

Let the door to your life swing on these three hinges:

Attach the temporal to the spiritual.
This will *change your priorities*.

Place others beside or ahead of self.
This will *change your attitudes*.

Connect your present with the future.
This will *change your behavior*.

My motive was simple. I wanted to offer them a supportive challenge. Hopefully, it will cause them to think and feel something worthwhile. I can testify that what we think with, when we think about something, makes a tremendous difference. Furthermore, regarding this current document, what you think about when you read what I have written is more valuable to you than what I have written. Your thoughts are more important than my thoughts! It is our personal impressions that reveal things to us, about our self and others; things we should know, respect, and value. *This process may well be the keystone of agency education.*

Section I presents *topics to talk about*. **Section II** poses *issues to evaluate*. **Section III** touches on *attributes to acquire*. This essay is about origins, actions, and associations. Obviously, a few pages can only be a slice-like appetizer to a subject so deep and pervasive as *agency education*. It's something like trying to comprehend and predict the weather—it may be very important but it is often difficult. There are, however, important ideas that can be identified, introduced, and explored—even in brevity. This is the invitation. Consider the effort a preview.

My focus is on a central crisis of our day: *How to nurture and educate successful children who will nurture and educate successful children*.¹ The topic is not a reigning objective in our contemporary culture. The family is under siege by a culture in decline. *Why?* (1) Because parenting demands an enormous amount of effort and a significant degree of personal sacrifice. (2) There are powerful counter-forces at work. They lead people away from making the necessary commitments to create focused, childbearing families. Increasing numbers of individuals and organizations are blind to these forces. Others consciously rebel and fight against necessary principles and practices of learning and teaching. Therefore, the contents of this message should connect with fundamentals useful in (a) our home base, (b) the work place, and (c) the general social arena. Right choices and courageous commitments are required. Putting forth popular pabulum will not suffice; the nature of the subject requires substance—considerable meat, some muscle and bone. Sometimes these truths are not easy to acquire or embrace. This message is not an academic treatise, a romance piece, or a how-to recipe book. It seeks to probe the roots of our most basic human concerns. The content needs to be pondered—not skimmed. My motivation is simple. *The next generation cries for mothers who emanate true womanhood and fathers who acquire true manhood. And now as always, the next generation needs parents who become grandparents worthy of veneration.* This treasure is needed for those who will follow. It contributes heavily to moral survival and social peace.

The Family Is Central

In the eternal sense, nurturing and educating children is the supreme adventure for humankind. No resource has greater value, no work involves more risk, and no task offers a higher reward. Most people agree that the way children are reared and educated is a central issue, a valid concern. Parents and teachers both play central roles in this process. Those who participate in *nurturing and educating the rising generation*, set the sails of social discourse and help define the nature of future human experience. That's just the way things work.

The family is the vessel, and the family relationship drives the bow that cuts through the ocean of life, and creates the wake of human affairs. True, we are individuals; family is not all that matters, but it does seem to matter most when one considers the general welfare of children. All other agencies, important as they may be, are secondary. Moreover, the ultimate value of our schools, churches, neighborhoods, communities, governments, and the marketplace itself is determined by how the legitimate family is honored and sustained. No success in agencies beyond the family endures like success within the family. Families are the key to sustained individual happiness and social solidarity.

Healthy, productive families are the primary source of healthy, productive children.

¹Alma 39:12-16 indicates the issue is not new; it is the core of Christ's ministry.

Healthy, productive children become the substance of healthy, productive neighborhoods and the foundation of constructive commerce. Solid families don't just happen; they are created by children who were *nurtured* and *educated* to be effective parents and other significant helpers. *True parenthood* is not a self-serving novelty, a cultural fad, or social experiment; it is an invitation to engage in lifelong fidelity and sacrifice. And it frames a central question: Are there better and worse ways to parent? I believe the answer to this question is, yes! I hope insights will come as you read and consider the information on the pages that follow.

The reason the family is central is because nearly every function outside the family originates in the family; for example, food, shelter, and clothing; health, education and welfare; love, leadership, and self reliance; justice, mercy, and the entire concept of vocation—these values all have historical roots in the home. Family traditions, standards, and religion form the social infrastructure that sustains a *constructive moral order*. These often non-monetary line items on our daily agenda, are the true lifeline of stable government. If we get it right in the home, the chance of getting it right elsewhere improves dramatically. Ignoring this reality is a form of self-imposed blindness at best, and self-inflicted punishment at worst. The result can be social self-destruction and cultural fratricide. *As a society we honor the family and develop, or, we dishonor the family and decay*. This conclusion is an historical reality that people ignore at their own peril. Time and experience makes the case self-evident.

Clarifying a Few Terms

Regarding the words *nurture* and *educate*—is there a difference between *nurturing* a child and *educating* a child? I believe the answer is, yes! The two terms are not synonyms. Nurturing pertains to meeting a child's immediate needs to preserve life and to develop; educating extends beyond nurturing to sharing and inculcating the necessities essential to fulfilling one's personal destiny—physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. Both of these responsibilities are challenging—neither are particularly easy when they are seriously embraced.

Nurturing Children. The word *nurture*, applied to children, is more commonly associated with *rearing* a child. Together, these terms imply responding to and caring about individual children for what they are at the moment, while envisioning what they can become in the future. We feed, care and clothe the children so they can live and grow; we minister to the sick so they will become well; help the poor to become self-reliant; teach the ignorant to enable them to nurture others. We respond to immediate needs with a greater end in view. This requires a *love-based vision*. *Why* we do *what* we do influences *how* it is done. The intent behind the act is the ultimate measure of the act. This disposition is part of the platform for *agency education*.

Nurturing begins before birth with the creation of an embryonic physical body and extends to a child's continuing development after birth. A newborn infant commonly seeks sustenance by nursing from the mother's breast. As the baby grows and develops, we speak of *rearing* the child. The word *rear* means to bring something to an *upright* position. When a human baby is born, it is physically incapable of standing upright. During infancy, children essentially live a horizontal lifestyle, unless held or placed in another position by an adult. Nurturing a child physically—feeding and protecting—enables the infant to grow and develop until it can stand and move in an *upright* manner: physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. Parents are expected to provide this type of nurturing care. It was never intended that children nurture and educate themselves.

Rearing a child implies helping the child acquire patterns of moral conduct that foster social behavior which protects the rights of others as well as self. The implication is straightforward: *upright* people should not act like little animals that travel horizontally on all fours—responding solely on the basis of biological instincts and selfish desires. Humans are unique; they are capable of more than animal-like activity. They are endowed with *moral agency*; they can act and are not just to be acted upon.² Consequently, children need more than instincts; they must be taught to act in appropriate and constructive ways. This process prepares a child for *true education*—*fulfilling one's potential in a way that helps others fulfill their potential*. Rearing children is a dynamic, demanding, and universal operation. It should not be left to tradition, chance, or casual complacency. Rearing children requires commitment and correct principles.

Educating Children. *Education is the intended extension of creation—organizing elements for some purpose.* The term, *educate* means to love and care for and to lead as well as to inform. This word implies schooling and instruction; it involves intentional and serious mentoring. To *educate* is to inform, enlighten, instill, fit, inculcate, and correct. It is more than simply nurturing a child to become a physical adult capable of subsisting socially—even with some decorum. It is the acquisition of personal understanding and the capacity to apply knowledge and skills for purposes that extend beyond the individual. Education has to do with literacy, self-reliance, and comprehending one's place in relation to other individuals, groups, and cultures. Hence we not only *nurture* or *rear* children, we *educate* them to nurture rear and educate the next generation of children. This is a necessary human cycle; it is an essential function to preserve humankind and sustain quality in human life. The process of becoming better parents enables people to become more valuable and mature. The world becomes a better place in which to live.

When used together, two other words need some operational definition: *agency* and *education*. The relevant explanation of *agency* here, was given by the Lord and is somewhat extensive because it involves *light and truth* as well as the *realm* in which these factors function.

All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. And every man who receiveth not the light is under condemnation.³

Human agency, therefore, is intrinsically a *moral* agency. It involves life in some location, the capacity to be *aware* of options (knowledge), and the willingness to make decisions, then choices and to act upon them. Exercising these capacities (investing these resources) is how *values* are created, responsibility generated, and character formed. All these are elements of *agency*. This is the message in the Garden in Eden story regarding Adam and Eve and their subsequent posterity. More will be said about this later.

What About Freedom and Liberty?

Most of what we think and feel during our trip through mortality is influenced by the

²2 Nephi 2:16, 26; Helaman 14:30

³Ibid. vss. 30-31.

kaleidoscopic patterns of our personal world-view. This seems to determine much if not most of what we experience, believe, value and pursue. The fundamentals we embrace are important because they set our sails and therefore have a significant bearing on where we go and what we do in life. For example, our views of *freedom* and *liberty* are rooted in how we discern good and evil, right and wrong, better and best, etc. It can be helpful to make a distinction between these two familiar words which are often used as interchangeable synonyms. One way to distinguish *freedom* from *liberty* is to accept the proposition that *freedom* is inherent in the human soul—God has made [us] free.⁴ And then to use the term *liberty* as a referent to how people treat each other. In this sense, *liberty* is what people bestow upon or steal from one another. This perspective can be helpful in understanding and defining the nature of *agency education*.

Because we are agents and have been provided a *realm* in which to act, we all enjoy an inherent degree of freedom.⁵ Our liberty, however, can come and go depending on the cultures in which we live, the people with whom we associate, and the activities in which we engage. When these factors are connected to *education*, a pattern is laid. This pattern soon evolves into various perceptions of *learning*, *teaching*, *following* and *leading*. Layer after layer of topics, issues, and attributes come into view. These are the foundations upon which agency education rests.

As theories and counter-theories of education are proposed and implemented, items for discussion abound. Ideas about *justice* or *fairness* come into play. Some in our society say it is the wealthy, endowed, and privileged that are advantaged; the poor, restricted, and ignored are disadvantaged. Others maintain the same *equality of opportunity* exist for both the rich and the poor. These people point to the fact that both the rich and poor are subject to and recipients of the way they apply their personal resources of *time*, *energy*, *effort*, *intention*, etc. This, they say, is the determining factor; the rich can become poor and the poor can become rich—it all depends on individual choices. Choices, however, are related to freedom and liberty—at home, at work, and at play. The basic difference between these two arguments, depends on whether one defines *opportunity* as a *socially bestowed gift* or a *personal application* of common and inherent resources available to all. As this essay will illustrate there are some important variables. Some things may be *bestowed*; others need to be *acquired*. This is a critical concept—consider for example *Godliness* or *Integrity*; they cannot be bestowed, they must be acquired.

Part I

Origins: It's About Truth and Error

The Historic Platform

The Hebrew story about the beginning of the human social order voices a clear *warning*. The literature of antiquity is peppered with references to this warning. And in one way or another the commentary seems to be associated with the ancient *doctrine of the two ways*.

Humans always appear to develop some kind of world-view and this view involves one or more of three elements: God, Man, and Nature. Everything can be categorized under these

⁴Helaman 14:30-31

⁵Doctrine and Covenants 93:29-33.

headings—including 'history' and the different ways records are constructed and deconstructed. The *doctrine of the two ways* emerged from *how* and *what* people believed regarding God, Man, and Nature. It is a historical fact that people have repeatedly developed conflicting beliefs. The tension between these conflicting beliefs are manifest in “civilizations” or “cultures” that have come and gone, and in those that are now with us. The Greeks spoke of the *mantic* vs. the *sophic* views. These preferences were identified in Judaism as the *vertical* vs. the *horizontal* traditions. In modern society the same notions are termed the *supernatural* vs. the *natural*.

This ancient problem raises two basic questions: *first*, in our search for knowledge, are we limited to what we can learn by our explorations inside the bubble of mortality in which we live, or can knowledge also come to us from outside this bubble? And *second*, must all explanations of human interest be restricted to discussions of physical evidence, or are there spiritual forces, influences, and powers which do operate and should be acknowledged?

No parent, teacher, or student can carefully consider the process of education without facing the implications of these questions—wittingly or unwittingly. There are different responses, but the questions are inherent in the subject and should be honestly addressed. To be consistent with their own assumptions, people who believe in a supernatural as well as a natural world should explain and conduct education differently than those who only believe in physical world and no other. Otherwise there is a breach in integrity; the practice will be inconsistent with the belief. Compartmentalizing beliefs and practices is seldom, if ever, a good thing to do. It is a convenience that is vulnerable to the invasion of pretense, deception, and hypocrisy.

Now back to the *warning*. The Hebrew story personalizes the *origin of the warning* in the account of Adam and Eve and members of their family. In street language the account goes like this: Two of the sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, differed in how they responded to a command of God to honor a revealed sacrificial ordinance given to their family. Cain said, “Who is the Lord that I should know him?”⁶ He rejected his parents instruction and then created his own *alternative pattern* for the sacrificial offering. This offering was rejected by the Lord because it was contrary to the order of heaven. Abel followed the prescribed procedure and his offering was accepted. Cain became angry and turned to the enticed urgings of an evil counselor (Satan), who promised him wealth and power. Cain then murdered his brother Abel, sought to co-opt his possessions, and lied about it. This event with its sordid denials triggered a split in the family of Adam and the development of a counter-culture in the land of Nod. The ageless formula is clear: God reveals to man essential truth. Man *rejects* essential truth and *substitutes* his or her own counsel. The Hebrew story summarizes the central issue in these words:

And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known to their sons and their daughters. And Satan came among them, saying: I am also a son of God; and he commanded them, saying: *Believe it not*, and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish.

This verse describes the fundamental shift in how people answer the basic questions: Adapted to philosophical terms they are: *What is real?* (metaphysics) *How do we know?*

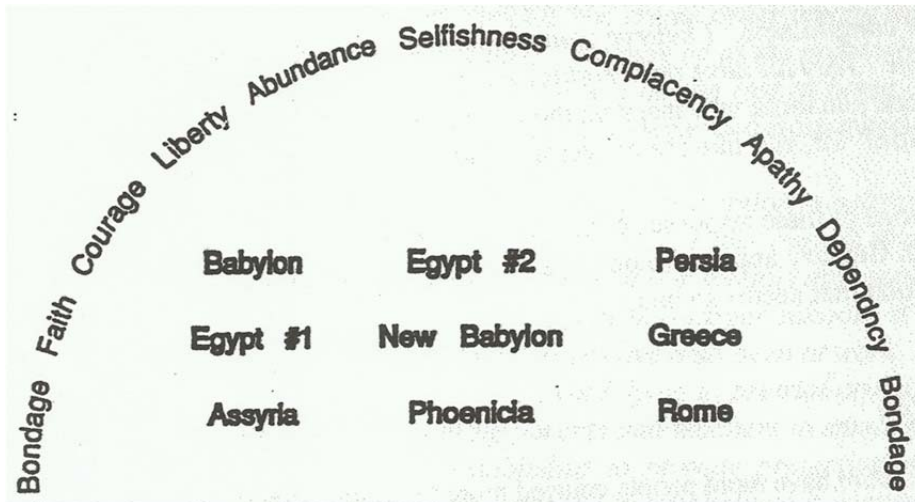
⁶Moses 5:16 (see 11-41)

(epistemology) *What is of value?* (axiology). The consequences of rejecting revelation from God, were these: From that time forth people began to (a) believe and look upon themselves only as physical beings (*carnal*), (b) accepted only that knowledge which came to them through their physical senses (*sensual*), and (c) ultimately to go off-track—to reach wrong conclusions (even to become *devilish*). The pattern persists; it is now as it has always been: reject the truth that is given by God and substitute something of our own making with the inevitable consequences that follow. This is the *warning*: *Do not reject the **moral order** that God has established for the benefit of humanity and substitute something else of our own making in its place.* This same message was delivered to subsequent dispensations: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and finally, through Joseph Smith and the authorized contemporary prophets of our own day. They all deliver the same message.

Western Culture—From There and Then to Here and Now

The intellectual battle of antiquity and its behavioral consequences continues to be waged—perhaps as intense in our generation as any before. There is a long and tedious story of revealed truth and embraced apostasy. This is the underlying story of the Greek and Roman Civilizations, the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Dark Ages, the Renaissances, the Enlightenment, the Reformation and the modern Restoration of the original instruction and authority given to Adam and Eve. Humanity, it seems, has followed a semi-hidden force that cycles its members through a repeated, dramatic, and unending rise and fall. Choosing one of many visualizations, a chart for this pattern of past civilizations could look like this: (Is it a mirror for calculating our own contemporary circumstances?)

Cycle of Civilization



The Great Divide in Modernism

The centuries-long backdrop to our modern scenes fills thousands of volumes in hundreds of libraries and is manifest in every conceivable discipline. The roots are deep and long. They

involve a Greek connection, an Apostolic and an Apologetic Church, a Great Compromise, the Dark ages, Medieval Christianity, Scholasticism, various Renaissances, an Enlightenment period, brutal Reformations, a glorious Restoration, and another re-enthronement of Secularism.⁷ Whatever else modernism might be it is an age of information. And the major message of all this information could well be linked to the *moral* implications of the age-old debate: *Who can best define what is right or wrong, good or evil, better or best: God or Man?*

The challenge is to summarize answers two questions: *How did the world we are living in got to be like it is?* and then suggest, *What might we do about it?* This can be a daunting task. The space available here, however, does permit some observations that may be useful. One of these observations is this, it is easy to become so absorbed in how things are, that we tend to ignore the importance of understanding how they got to be like this. When this happens we are prone to make the same mistakes in our personal life, that the culture repeatedly made on a larger scale and has helped create the problems we now face. When something breaks down it is important to understand, *Why? And How?* And not just blindly focus on what needs to be done to fix it. Otherwise, the tendency will be to repeat the undesirable and face the same problems anew.

A Peek at the Past. The immediate past account for our culture, from the time of Jesus Christ until the present, seems more relevant to this discussion than the one from Adam until the Savior's day in the meridian of time—though both are instructive. In either case the plot remains quite similar—*reject revealed truth and substitute human preferences*. As in Paul the apostle's time, our population is now experiencing similar conditions to those he described. Many people now “change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the creator.”⁸

The Christian doctrine and the early church organization approved by Christ emerged in the small geographic protectorate of Palestine. The homeland of the Hebrew remnant—primarily descendants of Judah—was likely an unusual pocket of conservatism in the Roman empire. Although there were serious subculture struggles between various liberal and conservative Jewish groups, the Hebrew heritage was a powerful influence on the general population between Dan and Beersheba.⁹ The city of Jerusalem was not free of crime, sin and a type of destructive corruption, but in some ways it was still decades away from the fatal conditions that were already enveloping the Roman empire.

Historians confirm the general moral malignancy of Roman society at the time of Christ. A typical description reads:

The lusty peninsula was worn out with twenty years of civil war. Its farms had been neglected, its towns had been sacked or besieged, much of its wealth had been stolen or destroyed. Administration and protection had broken down; robbers made every

⁷This pattern in western culture is summarized in some detail in Neil J Flinders, *My Decision: An Act of Faith or a Piece of Cowardice*, 1989. Available in the BYU Library.

⁸Romans 1:16-32.

⁹B. Lazare *Antisemitism: Its History and Causes* (International Library Publishing Co., 1903) pp. 27, 29; Jules Isaac *The Teaching of Contempt* ((New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964) pp. 74-107

street unsafe at night; highwaymen roamed the roads, kidnapped travelers, and sold them into slavery. Trade diminished, investment stood still, interest rates soared, property values fell. Morals which had been loosened by riches and luxury, had not been improved by destitution and chaos, for few conditions are more demoralizing than poverty that comes after wealth. Rome was full of men who had lost their economic footing and then their moral stability: soldiers who had tasted adventure and had learned to kill; citizens who had seen their savings consumed in the taxes and inflation of war and waited vacuously for some returning tide to lift them back to affluence; women dizzy with freedom, multiplying divorces, abortions, and adulteries. Childlessness was spreading as the ideal of a declining vitality; and a shallow sophistication prided itself upon its pessimism and cynicism. This was not a full picture of Rome, but a dangerous disease burning in its blood.¹⁰

Vestigial Christianity. There is growing evidence that traditional Christianity—the Christianity of the middle ages and the protestant era—was in fact a *vestigial* Christianity. The existing form was filled with spiritual echoes that resonated to man’s moral and spiritual sensitivities. These sounds were, however, more like signals than substance in the lives of many, if not most, Christians. The vitality associated with contemporary and ancient revelation was missing. The power, confidence and consistency born of clearly lighted pathways was conspicuously absent. Legitimate authority had vanished. This deterioration continued to expand and was subsequently acknowledged by the term Dark Ages which followed in the succeeding centuries. The heavens were shut; society was in deplorable turmoil.

With the apostolic influence gone and heresies in doctrine and practice epidemic, apologists (Christian defenders) of various types appeared. Church leaders first tried to secure unity through letters, then later through politically driven church councils. Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, revealed the difficulty of trying to provide leadership through the mail.

When Christians asked me to write letters I wrote them, and the apostles of the devil filled them with tares, by leaving out some things and putting in others. But woe awaits them. Therefore, it is no wonder that some have gone about to falsify even the scriptures of the Lord when they have plotted against writings so inferior.¹¹

The movement from the apostolic to the apologetic church is mirrored in the conflict and struggle that confronted early Christians. Their commitment to the faith and the doctrines of the gospel plan was not congruent with the decadent society in which they lived and attempted to educate their children. Persecution prevailed. Roman culture was crumbling because her people stumbled morally. And the various remnants of the pristine Christian congregations, were set adrift without revelatory leadership. Eventually, the doctrines, principles, practices and patterns of worship were modified and mingled with paganism. Because the God who had created both man and nature was frequently confused with nature, or entirely eliminated from nature, it became increasingly unclear as to just what this God was, to which man was to submit. The concept of God became *mysterious* and *incomprehensible* as is expressed in the creeds that developed.

¹⁰Will & Ariel Durant *History of Civilization*, Vol. III, p.211.

¹¹H. Nibley *The World and the Prophets* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964) pp. 57-72.

This abstraction was to become the dominant belief system. The resulting adversarial influence “so strongly riveted the creeds of the fathers, who inherited lies, upon the hearts of the children,” that it filled the world with confusion.¹² It grew stronger and stronger, becoming the mainstream of corruption. These conditions continued unabated until the 19th century, when the renewal of revelation and priesthood authorized apostles restored the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter-days. The battle over belief, however, did not end. These events, however, were soon to be accompanied by the vigorous resurgence of *secularism* which grew under the *secularization hypothesis*: “society moves from some sacred condition to successively secular conditions in which the sacred evermore recedes.”¹³ The more we know about the physical world the less we need the spiritual—its just a myth. Secularism was moving to center stage within modern academia and it was in need of a conscience. Contemporary *humanism* applied for and got the job. Today's *secular humanism* was born. The basis was now set for a “new moral order” to replace the Mosaic laws of Sinai.

The Modern Shift—1880-1920. The foundations for our modern society were laid during various renaissances, the Enlightenment, and the Reformation. Freedom and liberty drove the waves of change; people everywhere seemed to respond to this pervasive spirit—kingdoms fell, revolutions abounded. The church and state separated. Governments were modified; new answers to old questions were formulated and promoted. The glittering nuggets of moral truths that had persisted in the darkness of past centuries were gathered and and fought for by heroes who challenged the *status quo*. A new age of discoveries bathed the world with physical improvements in almost every field. Economies flourished, explorations and inventions changed what people thought, believed, and how they acted. Prosperity spread, middle classes emerged, travel improved, and communication expanded. Life was extended physically; knowledge of the natural world seemed to explode. The new light was intoxicating. *Personal liberty and discipline, however, were not equally yoked together.* The new answers to old questions, too often, were accompanied by incorrect assumptions. The moral order crumbled; in some localities it evaporated. The Ten Commandments were abandoned and personal or group preferences were generated—morality was deemed relative to the time, place, and the people among whom one lived. “When in Rome do what the Romans do.”

At the risk of oversimplifying, but with the intent of pointing out the powerful transition that occurred, let us briefly consider some of the more representative symbols of this change in the answers given to basic questions. In the wake of the various Renaissance pioneers such as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, etc., (1475-1725) appeared a number of students (1750-1950) from various disciplines offering new answers to old questions. Examples of these students were:

1748-1832	Jeremy Bentham	(Law)
1809-1882	Charles Darwin	(Biology)
1818-1883	Karl Marx	(Economics)
1856-1939	Sigmund Freud	(Medicine)

¹²*Doctrine and Covenants* 123:7-8.

¹³Philip E. Hammond (ed.) *The Sacred in a Secular Age* (Berkeley: University Press, 1985) pp. 1-3.

1859-1952	John Dewey	(Education)
1878-1958	John Watson	(Psychology)
1884-1976	Rudolph Bultmann	(Theology)

These individuals are credited (or blamed) with originating or popularizing new answers to some of the old questions. The old answer to the question *What makes a good law?* was essentially Whatever agrees with the commandments of God. Jeremy Bentham challenged the Lockian premises of William Blackstone and his contemporaries, claiming that the rule for judging validity of a law should be Whatever creates the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Use of this standard, he said, would lead to the creation of better laws. Happiness, he maintained, is synonymous with pleasure, and what is pleasurable can be determined by the individual. Hence, society was given a “new” answer to an old question.

Many other “new” answers soon followed:

Where did man come from? The answer By Divine creation was replaced with Charles Darwin’s explanation of evolution from a lower life form.

What should happen to the fruits of labor? Karl Marx countered the notion that the fruits of labor were to be distributed by an individual involved in the work, with the proposal that the fruits of labor be subject to a system of *redistribution* by the community or central government.

What causes some of man's unusual physical illnesses? Sigmund Freud rejected the idea that psychosomatic behavior was the result of influences exerted by the action of good or evil forces. He maintained that man’s behavior was shaped in the conflict between various manifestations of the sexual drive: the id, ego and superego.

What is education? John Dewey challenged the traditional definition that education was the process of *influencing* growth and development. For Dewey, education *was* growth and development. This fit with the new definition of progressive-ism.

Why do men behave as they do? Not because they have a soul, said John Watson. It is because the stimulus of the external environment elicits specific response patterns in the individual. No one has ever seen a soul, touched one, or created it in a test tube.

What about all those miracles in the Bible attributed to supernatural circumstance? According to Rudolph Bultmann, they were really myths, symbolizing some natural truth. True religion squares with the findings of science—not *vice versa*. The myths should be removed from the scriptures and religion redefined in light of modern scientific knowledge.

The new answers allowed man to feel free of divine responsibility; they were very persuasive. God was irrelevant. The new theories were rapidly and widely accepted. And they had one thing in common. Just as the old answers seemed to share the necessity of a Heavenly Creator and his divine power, the new answers removed the necessity of God. Man

and his intellect could be presumed sufficient, if not supreme.¹⁴ Charles Darwin himself avoided a direct denial of God's existence, but boldly declared, "I view all beings not as special creations." He was convinced man was a lineal descendent of some pre-Cambrian life form, that no "living species will transmit its unaltered likeness to a distant futurity," and that "all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection" by the powers of natural selection.¹⁵ Sigmund Freud reported that he spent his entire life trying to discover "the origins of religion and morality." His final conclusion was that life is nothing more than "a reflection of the dynamic conflicts between the ego, the id, and the super ego."¹⁶ Hence, religion and the spiritual domain it represents are merely illusions.¹⁷ John Dewey maintained "there is no God and there is no soul. Hence, there are no needs for the props of traditional religion. There is no room for fixed, natural law or permanent moral absolutes."¹⁸ John Watson claimed that "no one has ever touched a soul, or has seen one in a test tube," and that religion was the invention of selfish and lazy men who wanted to make their lives easier by controlling others through this fear producing mechanism.¹⁹

This was the newly crafted context of modern education. A mushrooming of economic affluence and a myriad of obvious temporal improvements in living conditions succeeded in making the intellectual environment very confusing. The heavy undergrowth of material progress soon choked out the moral clarity which Christian sects had claimed to represent. After the great shift in our institutions of higher learning between 1880 and 1920 the decline was rapid—significantly slowed by neither war nor peace. America was soon to follow Europe deeper into the swamp of intentional *agnosticism*. Even Albert Einstein joined the crowd proclaiming: "In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal God."²⁰

The consequences of these forces in nearly every discipline prompted the following paragraph written in 1979:

The world is experiencing a monumental change in its moral topography. An ethical earthquake of significant magnitude seems to be rearranging people's lifestyles. Out of the social landscape a great divide is emerging, creating an enormous moral watershed. Individuals, families, communities, and nations are increasingly experiencing circumstances and influences that compel them to live on one side or the other of this divide. A migration appears to be underway in both directions. People are running to and fro, looking here and there—some climbing up and others sliding down the inclines. As inhabitants of the earth we are in moral commotion. Moral perspective is a powerful force. It will shape the world in which we live during the twenty-first century. The foundation of our future is being carved right now—during

¹⁴Neil J Flinders "Moral Foundations and Modern Education" *Proceedings of The Far Western Philosophy of Education Society*, 1980, pp. 78-79.

¹⁵Charles Darwin *The Origin of Species* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1928) p. 462.

¹⁶Sigmund Freud *An Autobiographical Study* (London: Hogarth Press, 1935), pp. 133-134. Sigmund Freud *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* (New York: The Modern Library, 1938), p. 940.

¹⁷Sigmund Freud *The Future of an Illusion* (1927).

¹⁸Richard Vetterli *Storming the Citadel*, (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Educational Media Press, 1976), p. 5.

¹⁹John B. Watson *Behaviorism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1924), pp. 3-4.

²⁰Albert Einstein *Out of My Later Years* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950) pp. 29-33.

the final quarter of the twentieth century. These twenty-five years are proving to be days of division, an era of subtle but significant separation. We may or may not be aware of the transformation, but it is occurring nevertheless.²¹

Impact on Freedom and Liberty. In America the foregoing shift fueled an ongoing conflict. The struggle is essentially between two factions over who is going to control the context for legal and social decision-making. One school of thought maintains that the governing principles espoused in the *Declaration of Independence*, the *U. S. Constitution*, and the *Bill of Rights* are inseparably related to moral imperatives which are derived from natural or divine law. They maintain that the vitality of governing principles in the founding documents will be lost if they are separated from the *moral imperatives* to which they are linked.

Adherents to the other school may or may not acknowledge a natural or divine power. What they do agree on is that the founding documents do not embrace moral imperatives, but only contain rational guidelines for preserving conditions that leaves man as free as possible in his/her social interaction. The moral neutralists hold that the Constitution should be viewed strictly as a morally neutral instrument subject to changes and interpretations dictated by the evolving social context.

The proponents of the first position maintain that a document devoid of natural, unchanging moral standards is powerless to sustain or promote the moral prerequisites necessary for continued personal *freedom and liberty*. Adherents to the second position proclaim that assuming the existence of such moral standards and permitting them to rule restricts and destroys personal freedom and liberty. An important strength of the first position is that it allows the existence of opposition—of two points of view. An important weakness of the second position is that by definition it permits *only one point of view protection under the law*, a position which eventually removes morality from society. Eventually this premise permits the legal destruction of any and all who disagree with and or threaten that position. John Taylor confronted this issue by connecting it to character, which he felt was crucial. He made the point with stinging clarity and in a single sentence when he declared, “*Honorable men will be governed by constitutions, and laws, and principles, but dishonorable persons will not.*”²²

Three major assumptions upon which the government of the United States of America was founded are:

Man’s origin is spiritual. It is this spiritual nature which entitles the individual to a supreme dignity and creates a value of his person. This spiritual origin is the basis for each individual’s self-respect and mutual respect among individuals. Although this spiritual origin is not explicitly stated in the Constitution, it is depicted in the Declaration of Independence, the position from which the Constitution was drawn, and the notion is implicit in the Constitutional provisions which establish and protect man’s individual freedoms. It is this divine heritage that establishes a basis for morality in government. Acknowledgment that “all men are . . . endowed by their Creator” gives man a new dimension. A standard for appeal is established. Without this supposition, there is no basis for morality. Every man becomes a law unto himself and every group a law unto itself.

²¹Neil J Flinders *Moral Perspective and Educational Practice*, 1979. pp. 1-2

²²John Taylor, March 5th 1882 Assembly Hall, SLC JD vol. 23, p. 34.

Man is endowed at birth by his Creator with unalienable rights. Without acknowledging a divine origin, there is no moral basis for any claim to unalienable rights. According to the philosophy which generated the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, man is not authorized or empowered to alienate—to surrender, transfer or give away his God-given rights. This is why they are termed unalienable. That people may trample and ignore these rights is true, but when they do so it is contrary to natural law—if by natural law one means the order that God built into his creation. Such action is beyond the bounds of propriety and man will suffer the inherent consequences of this decision. What does come with these unalienable rights is the inseparable duty associated with every “right”, i. e., for every aspect of freedom, there is a corresponding responsibility. The duty is to God, the giver of the rights. It is man’s moral duty to preserve and make wise use of these divine gifts. Thomas Jefferson substantiated this position in his 1796 letter to John Adams: “If ever the morals of people could be made the basis of their own government it is our case.” Freedom of choice is a pervasive freedom, restricted only by the claim of others in preserving equal rights. For this purpose, just laws are instituted by a government at the request of the people to help safeguard the equal rights of all individuals in the society.

Man’s civil rights are extensions of his sacred freedom—his agency to choose, act and become. The U.S. Constitution was fashioned to maximize the opportunity to exercise individual freedom and liberty within the bounds of *moral order*. The intent seems to be to preserve for each person the opportunity to

- a. *Exert self-discipline*—achieve mastery of one’s appetites, passions, and desires.
- b. *Give and receive respect*—share in the atmosphere of honoring others and being honored by others.
- c. *Assume personal responsibility*—make a contribution, and by doing so become part of human sociability.
- d. *Experience self-development*—feel the rewards of growth and achievement.
- e. *Exhibit self-reliance*—create and provide for oneself and one’s dependents.
- f. *Pursue self-identity*—discover who one is, where one came from and what one’s destiny might be.

Part II

Actions: Its About Values and Principles

Actions, values, and principles require a closer look at the person—at *personality*. Agency educators assumes everyone is unique and everyone has a *personality*. Personality is the filament of our body that glows when powered by the energy of life. I believe each person is a source of light that reveals truth through the way they act. All truth is manifest through personality. Light is necessary to make truth safe. *Education is more than a love of learning; it is a love of learning what is true and obtaining the light to apply that truth safely.*

Light and truth are companions. The wedding of light and truth comprises intelligence or

wisdom. Light and truth are companions, not synonyms. A person may obtain knowledge, become aware of some aspect of truth, and not be intelligent or wise in the application of that truth. A search for truth without a search for light is a vain expedition, regardless of how useful, popular, or convenient it may seem at the moment. For example, a person may possess sufficient *truth* to operate an automobile. But to operate the vehicle safely for self and others requires the *light* to understand certain laws or principles beyond firing up the engine and putting the machine in gear. Parents of new drivers sense this; a first ride with an adolescent can be fearsome. Truth without light, it seems, inevitably leads to pride, vanity, error, and destruction.

As a person, I cannot avoid the interface with truth; truth and personality are also companions—for good or for ill. But my life is far more pleasant when there is sufficient light to make truth safe and enjoyable for the personality. Children deserve to receive light as well as truth as they are nurtured and educated. And this begins in the home with dedicated parents who focus on edifying, as well as loving and feeding their children. Personality is the light-globe of life; it is the manifestation of *life-light* in comparison to electric light. Without that filament, that innate intelligence, or one might say *consciousness*, all is darkness. Where there is no personality there can be no light. The death of the physical body proves this. Eliminate personality and there is no way to make truth known; it cannot be manifest. Awareness of our own being constitutes the nucleus of our personality and drives the activity in our day to day affairs.

Personality is the unit from which and through which light and truth radiate, but so does error. Consequently, truth and error can be encountered wherever there is personality—in ourselves and in others. It is through our personality that skills, emotions, and characteristics come into existence. These observations are not hidden, exclusive, or restricted. They are available to every person; once embraced, their confirmation and their fruits are self-evident. They do not need scientific experiments, or experts, for their validation, though these may apply and confirm what I am saying. Evidence of the validity of these propositions is available to every parent, teacher, and child. They are witnesses to this growth in awareness, and the manifest uniqueness of each of their children. Only through God's personality, I believe, is *all* truth and no error obtained and *all* light and no darkness manifest. Our destiny is to become like our Creator in whose image and likeness we are. This is our primary mortal opportunity and challenge. What greater cause could there be?

Personality is essential to the notion of *human agency*—*where there is no personality there can be no human agency*—because such an entity *cannot act, it can only be acted upon*. Like a stone, there is no basis for acting; it can only be acted upon. Other people are important to this agency-based dynamic; they are fountains of truth from which we nourish our very being. Hence, it is not good for man or woman to be alone, people need each other. Individuals have inherent value; they are not expendable items. I am of worth, you are of worth; we manifest truth to each other because there is light intrinsically within each personality. For this reason alone, if for no other, we should care about each other. This fact can be readily observed from the moment a mother cradles a newborn child in her arms. Everything about us attests to this truth, including death, which marks the departure of the personality and its light from the mortal body to pursue the next stage of its destiny.

Death is the unmistakable witness that we are more than our physical being. Every

mortuary houses this silent testimony, this compelling witness. It is my undeniable conviction that death is not the end of me. My personality has a continuance, and this eternal existence is the essence of meaning. To believe less than this is to set myself up as less than I am, and to be proven wrong. The denial of enduring life is a substitute belief put forth in the face of numerous witnesses who have testified otherwise. For me, this is unworthy. I sell myself short for no good reason—unless one assumes that some form of self-justification can be considered a good reason. *To believe life is not eternal is a cop-out.* Self-annihilation, were it possible, may be an argument that could obliterate personal accountability. But I feel no comfort in this rationale. What gain is there in self-destruction to avoid accountability? The notion itself is a dark and negative thought, void of compelling evidence sufficient for me to embrace it. *I cannot generate enthusiasm to embark on a trip to nowhere. Can you?*

Love Sustains Light

In order for little children to grow up in the light, they need to be loved. Love is a fundamental element in the nurture of every human being. Love is governing oneself in ways that nurture the disposition to care about others—to do for them that which they cannot do for themselves, without expecting anything in return. Love and light are natural companions. Parents and teachers are sources of light for children—not all light, but a very significant source. The key to properly acquiring and applying truth (knowledge) seems to reside in continuously seeking more light—divine light that enables one to see the truth and understand how to properly act upon it. Light ennobles and enhances; darkness shrinks and distorts human personality and the truths manifest through it. I speak here of the presence or absence of the light associated with the personality. I believe people are moved into the shadows of life by the spirit of disobedience and by the nurture of false traditions.²³

This process is confirmed by my own experience; I know when I move toward or away from light, and I see this same pattern in other people. I believe we are all aware of this phenomenon in our life. We may deny it, but we know it. I can choose the direction; light and dark, physical and spiritual, are plainly manifest to me—as I believe they are to all people. True, it is possible to make choices that move us into the dark until we disdain the light and try to blink it away. But it is also possible to choose to live in the light until one takes no pleasure at all in the dark. The evidence is in us and around us. Light and love are companions; they attract each other. So do darkness and selfish gratification. You do not need anyone to prove this or to prove this to anyone else—except yourself. It is self-evident. Understanding and accepting this context enhances and fortifies learning, teaching, following and leading. It is a boon to parents.

Adults are edified when they reside in light and truth because there is always a measure of love under such conditions. Children deserve to be reared under this umbrella of both light and truth; they naturally elicit love. Parents by nature are capable of generating love. Were it not so, there could be no enduring relationships because there would be insufficient love to sustain the necessary light to produce such happy associations. Love, that precious form of appreciation, is a fruit of truth when it is accompanied by light. That is why I believe education needs to be more than just a love of learning; it must be a love of learning what is true—which includes a fundamental respect for others. Truth without light is incapable of eliciting love; it is limited to the application of mechanics, of physical pleasure, of self-interest, of impulsive self-serving

²³Doctrine and Covenants 93:38-39.

passion, and is blind to many important consequences. Nowhere is this more evident than in our most intimate relationships. Abuse of children, spouses, the aged, the disabled, and the disadvantaged can all be traced to some application of the mechanics of truth devoid of light, and is therefore an application estranged from true love. Without light we do not have eyes that see or ears that hear; we subject ourselves to a self-inflicted handicap of social blindness and become potentially dangerous to others.

Commitment, Values, Responsibility, Character

The inward path that leads to commitment, values, and responsibility in human character, is the *central equation* of all intentional learning: *attention, → interest, → knowledge, → and → action*. This is the inherent core of intentional and informative communication. In order to deliver a message one must engage attention; attention must be sustained until it turns into interest. The interest must mature into knowledge and in order to reach practical success, the knowledge must become action. *This is how education occurs*. It is this process that reveals a person's desires; it governs the *investment* of one's resources, turning them into actions that create values. When a person acts to protect his or her investments (values) we say that person is *responsible*. When they do not act to protect their investments (values) or the values we think should be protected, we say they are irresponsible. When this *acting to protect* becomes so consistent that one can *predict* how the process will play out, we say that is a person's *character*. Character, therefore, is being able to predict how a person will act toward protecting his or her invested values (resources). Character can be good or bad depending on what values (investments) a person is acting to protect or not protect. This is what *moral* and *spiritual* education is all about.

Life has its way of teaching that sources of power both (a) deserve respect and (b) require governance. *Freedom without responsibility leads to terror; diversity without unity devours itself in various forms of cannibalistic expression—wants are seen as rights, self-interest prevails over principle*. This outcome is frequently demonstrated to the public in political circles. This is why we need good and honorable people to represent our interests in political affairs. Too often the bias of self-interest rather than correct principles is also manifest by the press, rather than just being documented. I feel comfortable with the notion that self-restraint is the better part of valor. Apparently, this view is evaporating in many aspects of our society and ill-directed indulgence is filling the void. This is why we are experiencing so much waste, fraud and wanton indulgence.

Agency requires the moral control of correct doctrines and principles in order to be constructive. Obtaining knowledge of and fostering compliance to these doctrines and principles is the ultimate form of successful education. This is the essence of successfully educating for character and the civility that inevitably follows. The manner in which this is accomplished is to acquire the proper characteristics from personalities in whom they are already established. Learning from and teaching by proper example is fundamental. The power of the witness of proper example is enormous. Frequent recourse to proper principles displayed in the lives of others is the source of joy and happiness. The world has been given a perfect pattern and people may choose to follow or abandon that pattern. This is a witness to the importance of those who nurture and educate children.

A Fork in the Road of Values

I believe morality results from conforming to correct *doctrines and principles*, just as spirituality comes by compliance to correct *principles and ordinances*. The more I analyze and ponder the evidence, the more convinced I become that morality and spirituality develop and mature in no other way. I have learned that there is a distinct linkage in human affairs— *body to mind, mind to morality, and morality to spirituality*. A serious comparison of the settled and unsettled souls in society is very revealing. The conclusion drawn from this exploration is that enduring stability in one's soul requires freedom; and freedom requires compliance to principles that safeguard against sin, crime, vanity, and blind pride. These simple linkages cannot be ignored with impunity. People need *legitimate freedom*, correct standards, and the will to comply with and honor those standards. If not, instability will mark their lives. For example, *freedom from* alcohol, tobacco, and addictive drugs brings benefits: *freedom of* better health, longer life, and greater productivity. Addictions *steal liberty and jeopardize freedom*.

Casey Stengel, a former manager of the New York Yankees, is famous for his “Stengelese.” One of his players, Yogi Berra, developed his own brand of one-liners. An example of his quips is the mentally paralyzing statement “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” The content value in this counsel is zero, but the *pause* it elicits can be priceless. Always there is that moment, however brief, that precedes an inward *decision* before it triggers an outward *choice*. This connection is a manifestation (or birth) of *desire*. We decide and then we choose or act—we commit. This process that links thoughts to acts is a captivating mystery housed in every child. Nevertheless, it charts the course of character development. So we should seek to understand whatever we can about it. This is why Joseph F. Smith taught that the most important education of all, is the education of our desires.²⁴

Experience is a form of knowledge. When driven by positive desires, experience results in solid value selection, personal commitment, and individual responsibility. Experiences are a means of expanding our awareness by providing an increase in knowledge. Increased knowledge brings with it the opportunity to organize this information according to our thoughts and feelings in preparation for acting upon it—according to our desires. Knowledge provides a field for our dreams. It's a production cycle that can produce both good and bad outcomes. As the once popular movie *Field of Dreams* suggests, when we build the knowledge base, the “players” will come. There is great wisdom in inviting the best kind of players into our lives; to do otherwise can be devastating. When a person has no knowledge, there can be no expression of desire in relationship to knowledge. Knowledge creates the opportunity for desire to be expressed in the form of *internal decisions* manifest as *external choices*. This is how knowledge enables us to be led by our own desires—our own will. Knowing the truth can make us free if we act upon it properly—with understanding, *in the light*. People are inherently capable of knowing good and evil, and all of us are destined to become subjects of our own will. *We were created to act and not simply to be acted upon*.

I have been encouraged and repeatedly reminded in my life to remember *faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, and diligence*. I consider such attributes as positive factors of personal character. People who acquire these qualities are most likely to insure a steady commitment, to nurture proper values, and to exhibit

²⁴Joseph F. Smith *Gospel Doctrine* pp. 297-298.

appropriate responsibility in the daily walks of life. I believe these ideals are a source of protection. I have repeatedly learned they are superior to their opposites: *despair, guile, ignorance, intemperance, impatience, ungodliness, selfishness, arrogance, and sloth*. My experience convinces me that personal happiness is found in the direction signaled by the first set of values; it is not found along the second route.

There is a Plan, Look for It

I do not believe people are marbles in a bag of chance. Life is more than a democracy of experience. There is eschatology of meaning, in other words, a Plan of Salvation to seek for and learn about. We can choose to pursue that Plan; the power is in us. And the path that leads to this form of happiness is the formation of a character capable of desiring and sustaining civility. The Plan will be manifest to us, regardless of our culture, tongue or race—if this is our sustained desire. It comes as an ancient writer suggested, "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." But the necessary preparation to sustain such a desire is the development of the type of character that enables us to profit from the light and truth in which we are currently enveloped. The process is not abstract or mystical, it is practical. It is available to all, but it does require *integrity*. And it is a great boon—a gift—to bestow on the next generation.

My personal experience as a parent, grandparent and great grandparent suggests the blueprints for developing personal character are attached at our conception and accompany us through the family and into the community. The blueprint can be modified, either enhanced or defaced, throughout the building process. But we were born to choose. The opportunity to choose what is right and good is our birthright but the power to choose what is wrong and evil is also apparent and willfully manifest. We are not helpless captives of determinism—genetic or environmental. We are free to choose according to our understanding and that is the boundary of our responsibility and accountability. *Ignorance of whose we are, what we are, and what we may become is the primary obstacle, not just the temporal environments or chance inheritance in a temporal domain*. Misplacing this focus is a fundamental educational error from which the rising generation deserves to be protected.

There is a War, Engage in It

Humans are moral agents. Within the scope of their awareness, people ultimately decide for themselves what to believe and how to act. To presume there is more to life than mortality affects the formulation of our purposes. Learning and teaching take on an added dimension; they become significantly more important. With this expanded context comes the challenge of overcoming ignorance, error, and corruption in spiritual as well as physical matters. The war between truth and error expands to include good and evil in addition to poverty and wealth, comfort and pain, sickness and health. And it is a war—encompassing all that warfare entails. Defining the conflict strictly within the boundaries of the temporal or physical is crippling; it changes the whole nature and meaning of life. Mists of darkness fill the firmament of mortal life, and the jostling crowd becomes immersed in a meandering, milling, meaninglessness. *It is difficult to move as if we are going someplace if we believe there is no place to go*. Our perception of who we are and what we are is shortchanged if we deny the spiritual domain.

History is a battleground strewn with enormous numbers of casualties, people who have

run to and fro among the competing forces that strive to claim them and their allegiance—sometimes by persuasion, more often by coercion. The terrain on this field of conflict is uneven, deceptive, and sometimes artificial. It is cluttered with camouflage and counterfeits. I believe we ignore these conditions at our peril. The temporal without the spiritual seems to be inherently confusing; it lacks connections to our true origins and potential destiny. My deepest feelings urge me to look beyond the temporal and embrace the spiritual in order to escape the minefields of a self-serving life. My greatest sorrow is for the casualties of this war within our own heritage. What more can be said other than to pick a side in this conflict, but to be wise in the side we pick for our sake and for the sake of our loved ones.

Part III

Associations: Its About Relationships and Skills

Because *relating* is the central function of human existence, this topic can only be briefly introduced in this context. We can write about the topic, but it requires a living commentary to be meaningful and effective. This is why life is largely experience—not just thinking or talking about experience. As individuals each of us are born into an earthly family, we have an earthly father and mother. Beyond that there are better and worse scenarios in our personal life stories. This is our *mortal family*. We are also members of a larger *heavenly family*, where we share a common Father, Elohim and mother (not named) who gave each of us a spirit body. We are all brothers and sisters. This eternal spiritual origin is a second family to which we all belong. In addition to these two families, our mortality includes an invitation to be born into a third family organization that belongs to Jehovah—our elder brother. Patterned after our mortal birth, that required *water, blood, and spirit*, entry into this family also involves *water, blood, and spirit* in order to be successful.²⁵ It is in these three families that we have the opportunity to receive, practice, and seek to perfect the relationships and skills that bring growth, development and joy into our lives.

Relating is about connections and associations. Anyone who has fussed with a tangled pile of those twisted green wires filled with tiny lights used at weddings, draped on Christmas trees, and fastened to store displays, will recognize the importance of connections. Sometimes, the failure of a single bulb, the separation of one hair-thin copper wire, or a malfunction of one socket can be quite exasperating. All this frustration is due to the malfunction of relationships, in spite of the fact that electricity can perform in fascinating and seemingly miraculous ways, when properly connected. Electricity creates light, runs motors, generates heat and makes life very comfortable when it is properly connected, directed, and controlled. There is a lesson here regarding the management of human affairs.

²⁵ We can know that to become a member of this family requires that we choose to be born again—in a special way—(John 3:3-7)—and that this birth to be successful also requires three essential elements: **(a) water, (b) blood, and (c) spirit**. (Moses 6:59-60). We can know that Jehovah is the Father of this organization that functions as a Church—a nurturing “mother” for all who accept and sustain membership therein. We can know our Savior, Jehovah, is called the Father (Bridegroom) of this spiritual family. The Church organized in Christ's name and powered by Him is the symbolic Mother (Bride) of this special family of which all are invited to become members. We can know that in order to be a worthy son or daughter in this family of Jesus Christ (Jehovah) and fulfill our ultimate destiny, it is necessary for us to willingly choose and continually sustain our membership.

Human life, like electricity, depends on connections—proper connections—in order to function well and furnish light, heat, and power. Proper connections are vital in order for people to be helpful and not harmful. Connections link associations; associations are the substance of a meaningful human life. And connections that foster associations are what make relationships possible.

All relationships begin with the *personal*—*what the people in the relationship are as individuals*. We are what we make of ourselves, and what we make of ourselves is what we bring to the relationships in our lives. As I reflect on my own life, it becomes increasingly apparent that how I learn, teach, follow, and lead are sculpted by what I am as a *person*. The *personal: our strengths and weaknesses* are most fully understood in the context of relationships. Relationships are an extension of our very “life” itself. Life is composed of relationships: biological, social, and spiritual. The nature of our relationships determines the quality of our life—internally as a physical organism; and externally, at home, at work, and at play. If all relationships are severed, there can be no biological, social, or spiritual life. If they are damaged then life is less than it might have been. If they are repaired life is better. Again, I repeat connections link associations; associations are the substance of a meaningful human life. And connections that foster associations are what make relationships possible. It seems that in this process *quality* is more important than *quantity*.

This chapter began with an emphasis on the need to search out a better way to nurture and educate children. But children grow and mature—they become youth, young adults, and adults, then they have children. The focus in this final section is to connect the development during the early stages of a person’s life to an application for a person’s later life. We grow and develop for a purpose and it happens in phases—birth to the advent of conscience; from conscience to puberty; from adolescence to adulthood. The nature of this evolving purpose involves associations. The discussions of a child’s growth and development would be incomplete were it not connected to the later associations made possible by that early growth and development. The associations, during the three major developmental phases, impacts the way a person learns and teaches, follows and leads. Ultimately, every child is a learner and a teacher, a follower and a leader. This is inherent in human destiny; *we were born to learn, teach, follow, and lead*. How these processes develop and the qualities they reflect depend on relationships. The most desirable outcomes are associated with relationships based on proper principles. If we do not understand the principles and apply them, our adult relationships will be negatively affected.

All relationships begin with the *personal*—*what the people in the relationship are as individuals*. We are what we make of ourselves, and what we make of ourselves is what we bring to the relationships in our lives. As I reflect on my own life, it becomes increasingly apparent that how I learn, teach, follow, and lead are sculpted by what I am as a *person*. The *personal: our strengths and weaknesses* are most fully understood in the context of our relationships. They are an extension of our very “life” itself. Life is composed of relationships: biological, social, and spiritual. The nature of our relationships determines the quality of our life—internally as a physical organism; and externally, at home, at work, and at play. If all relationships are severed, there can be no biological, social, or spiritual

life. If they are damaged then life is less than it might have been. If they are repaired life is better.

Generally speaking, we govern our relationships—for better or worse. There seems to be a rather persistent challenge regarding this governance—a jostling over the often conflicting demands of principles, personality attributes, needs/wants, and available resources. As parents and teachers, followers and leaders we develop a style of participating in personal and family relationships. It may be well to ask ourselves: Is my *dominant* style of dealing with relationships to *dictate, abdicate, negotiate, or educate?* This applies to children, youth, and adults. We all have our patterns. You can observe these patterns in the home, on the playground, and at work. Life is defined by relationships; they can be good, bad, or seemingly indifferent. Relationships frame our happiness, sadness, and anxiety. Relationships, or their absence, are critical. This lesson, perhaps more than any other, summarizes my informal and formal education. The relationships I have with (1) myself, (2) my surroundings and objects therein, (3) with others and (4) with God, give meaning and definition to my life and activities.

Without relationships there would be no life; all meaning would be obscured by confusion and darkness. It is vital that we not lose touch with the central importance of establishing and cultivating positive relationships. The family is the nursery—this includes all three families—where relationships are created nurtured, and prepared for productivity in the world or domain we inhabit. Everyone depends on relationships. As our life unfolds, we each create a record of and about our relationships.