

know he was God's prophet, chosen to restore the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. I pray that as we celebrate the 200th anniversary of his birth, we may learn from his life. May we incorporate into our own lives the divine principles which he so beautifully taught—by example—that we, ourselves, might live more completely the gospel of Jesus Christ. May our lives reflect the knowledge we have that God lives, that Jesus Christ is His Son, that Joseph Smith was a prophet, and that we are led today by another prophet of God—even President Gordon B. Hinckley.

This conference marks 42 years since I was called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In my first meeting with the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve in the temple, the hymn which we sang, honoring Joseph Smith the Prophet, was and is a favorite of mine. I close with a verse from that hymn:

Praise to the man who communed with
Jehovah!

Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.
Blessed to open the last dispensation,
Kings shall extol him, and nations re-
vere.¹⁰

I testify of this solemn truth, in the
name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, ed. Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (1996), 69–76.
2. Joseph Smith—History 1:10–11.
3. Joseph Smith—History 1:21–22, 25.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:71, footnote.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 135:4.
6. *History of the Church*, 6:618.
7. John 15:13.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 135:3.
9. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 456.
10. "Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27.

President Boyd K. Packer

Optimism despite declining standards

I have lived a long time and watched the standards upon which civilization must depend for survival swept aside one piece at a time.

We live in a day when the age-old standards of morality, marriage, home, and family suffer defeat after defeat in courts and councils, in parliaments and classrooms. Our happiness depends upon living those very standards.

The Apostle Paul prophesied that in our day, these last days, men would be "disobedient to parents, . . . without natural affection, . . . despisers of those that are good, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:2–4).

And he warned: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). He was right. Nevertheless, when I think of the future, I am overwhelmed with a feeling of positive optimism.

Continuing revelation prepares us

Paul told young Timothy to continue in the things he had learned from the Apostles and said he would be safe because "from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

A knowledge of the scriptures is important. From them we learn about spiritual guidance.

I have heard people say, “I would have willingly endured persecution and trials if I might have lived in the early years of the Church when there was such a flow of revelation published as scripture. Why is that not happening now?”

The revelations that came through the Prophet Joseph Smith, printed as scripture, laid the permanent foundation of the Church through which the gospel of Jesus Christ could go forth to “every nation” (2 Nephi 26:13).¹

The scriptures define the office of the prophet and president and his counselors, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Quorums of the Seventy, the Presiding Bishopric, and the stakes and wards and branches. They define the offices of the Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods. They establish the channels through which inspiration and revelation can flow to the leaders and teachers and parents and to individuals.

The opposition and trials are different now. If anything, they are more intense, more dangerous than in those early days, aimed not so much at the Church as at us as individuals. The early revelations, published as scriptures for the permanent guidance of the Church, define the ordinances and covenants and are still in force.

One of those scriptures promises, “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30).

Let me tell you what has been done to prepare us. Perhaps you will then understand why I do not fear the future, why I have such positive feelings of confidence.

I cannot possibly describe in detail or even list all that has been put in place by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in recent years. In them you will see continuing revelation, open to the Church and to each individual member. I will describe a few of them.

LDS edition of the scriptures

More than 40 years ago it was determined to make the doctrine quickly and

easily available to every member of the Church by preparing a Latter-day Saint edition of the scriptures. We set out to cross-reference the King James Bible with the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The text of the King James Bible was left completely unaltered.

Tyndale and Wycliffe prepared the way

Work was done centuries ago to prepare for our day. Ninety percent of the King James Bible is as translated by William Tyndale and John Wycliffe. We owe much to those early translators, those martyrs.

William Tyndale said, “I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than [the clergy].”²

Alma had come through great trials and faced even greater ones. And the record says, “And now, as the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God” (Alma 31:5).

That is exactly what we had in mind when we began the scripture project: that every member of the Church could know the scriptures and understand the principles and doctrines to be found in them. We set out to do in our day what Tyndale and Wycliffe had done in theirs.

Both Tyndale and Wycliffe were terribly persecuted. Tyndale suffered in a freezing prison in Brussels. His clothing was worn to rags, and he was terribly cold. He wrote to the bishops asking for his coat and cap. He begged for a candle, saying, “It is indeed wearisome sitting alone in the dark.”³ They were so enraged at this request that he was taken from prison and, before a large crowd, burned at the stake.

Wycliffe escaped death by burning, but the Council of Constance had his body

exhumed and burned at the stake and his ashes scattered.⁴

The Prophet Joseph Smith had borrowed the volumes of the *Book of Martyrs* by the 16th-century English cleric John Foxe from the mother of Edward Stevenson of the Seventy. After he read them, he said, “I have, by the aid of the Urim and Thummim, seen those martyrs, and they were honest, devoted followers of Christ, according to the light they possessed, and they will be saved.”⁵

The enormous work of preparation

To cross-reference more than 70,000 verses of scripture and provide footnotes and helps was known to be enormously difficult, perhaps even impossible. But it was begun. It took 12 years and the help of over 600 people to complete. Some were experts in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew or had a knowledge of ancient scriptures. But most were ordinary, faithful members of the Church.

The spirit of inspiration brooded over the work.

The project would have been impossible without the computer.

A remarkable system was designed to organize tens of thousands of footnotes to open the scriptures to every ploughboy and every ploughgirl.

With a subject-matter index, a member can, in just a few minutes, look up such words as *atonement*, *repentance*, and *Holy Ghost* and find revealing references from all four scriptures.

Several years into the project, we asked how they were progressing with the tedious, laborious listing of topics in alphabetical order. They wrote, “We have been through *Heaven* and *Hell*, past *Love* and *Lust*, and now we’re working toward *Repentance*.”

Original manuscripts of the Book of Mormon came into our hands. These made possible the correction of printers’

errors which creep into scriptural translations.

Most notable in the Topical Guide are the 18 pages, single-spaced, small print, under the heading “Jesus Christ,” the most comprehensive compilation of scriptural information on the name Jesus Christ that has ever been assembled in the history of the world. Follow these references, and you will open the door to whose Church this is, to what it teaches and by what authority—all anchored to the sacred name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer, our Lord.

Two new revelations were added to the Doctrine and Covenants—section 137, a vision given to Joseph Smith the Prophet on the occasion of the administration of the endowment, and section 138, President Joseph F. Smith’s vision of the redemption of the dead. Then, just as this work was being closed for printing, the marvelous revelation on the priesthood was received and announced in an official declaration (see D&C Official Declaration 2), proving that the scriptures are not closed.

Then came the enormous challenge of translation into the languages of the Church. Now the triple combination, with the Guide to the Scriptures, has been published in 24 languages, with others to follow. The Book of Mormon is now printed in 106 languages. Forty-nine translations are under way.

Other things were done. The Book of Mormon was given a subtitle—the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.

With the foundation doctrines in place as solid as the granite in the Salt Lake Temple and open to everyone, more could witness the constant flow of revelation to the Church. “We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9).

Church curriculum restructured

While the scripture publication moved on, another great work was begun. This too would take years. The entire curriculum of the Church was restructured. All courses of study in priesthood and auxiliary organizations—for children, youth, and adults—were revised to center on the scriptures, to center on Jesus Christ, to center on the priesthood, and to center on the family.

Hundreds of volunteers worked year in and year out. Some of them were experts in writing, curriculum, instruction, and other related fields, but most were ordinary members of the Church. It was all anchored in the scriptures, with emphasis on the authority of the priesthood and with focus on the sacred nature of the family.

Many evidences of continuing revelation

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”⁶ They then published “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles.”⁷

Seminaries and institutes of religion spread across the world. The teachers and students learn and teach by the Spirit (see D&C 50:17–22), and both are taught to understand the scriptures, the words of the prophets, the plan of salvation, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the Apostasy and Restoration, the unique position of the restored Church, and to identify the principles and doctrines found in them. Students are encouraged to develop a habit of daily scripture study.

Monday night was reserved for family home evening. All activities of the Church are to yield so that families can be together.

In natural sequence, missionary work was reanchored to the revelations under the title *Preach My Gospel*. Each year more

than 25,000 missionaries are released to return to their homes in 148 countries after spending two years learning the doctrine and how to teach by the Spirit and sharing their testimonies.

Principles of priesthood government have been clarified. The place of the quorums of the priesthood—Aaronic and Melchizedek—has been magnified. Always, everywhere, there are leaders who hold the keys—bishops and presidents—to give guidance, to clarify misunderstandings, to detect and correct false doctrines.

The course of study for adults in priesthood and Relief Society is based on the teachings of the Presidents of the Church.

Church magazines have been redesigned and are published now in 50 languages.

An awesome era of temple building goes on, with 122 temples opened for ordinance work and two more announced yesterday.

Genealogy was renamed “family history.” Faithful members are aided by the newest technology to prepare and bring names to the temple.

These things all witness of continuing revelation. There are other things, too numerous to describe in detail.

The Church’s power is in hearts and souls

There is in the Church a central core of power deeper than programs or meetings or associations. It does not change. It cannot erode. It is constant and certain. It never recedes or fades.

While the Church is housed in chapels, it lives in the heart and soul of every Latter-day Saint.

Everywhere in the world, humble members draw inspiration from the scriptures to guide them through life, not fully understanding that they have found that “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:46) about which the Lord spoke to His disciples.

We can each stand on Zion's hill

When Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet Joseph, collected hymns for the first hymnbook, she included "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," which is, in fact, a prayer:

When the earth begins to tremble,
Bid our fearful thoughts be still;
When thy judgments spread destruction,
Keep us safe on Zion's hill.⁸

Every soul who willingly affiliates with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and seeks to abide by its principles and ordinances is standing "on Zion's hill."

Each can receive assurance which comes through inspiration and testifies that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is just as He declared it to be, "the only true and living church upon the

face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. See also Revelation 5:9; 14:6; 1 Nephi 19:17; Mosiah 3:13, 20; 15:28; 16:1; Alma 9:20; 37:4; Doctrine and Covenants 10:51; 77:8, 11; 133:37.
2. In David Daniell, introduction to *Tyndale's New Testament*, trans. William Tyndale (1989), viii.
3. In Daniell, introduction to *Tyndale's New Testament*, ix.
4. See John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, ed. G. A. Williamson (1965), 18–20.
5. In Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (1893), 6.
6. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2.
8. *Hymns*, no. 83.

Elder Merrill J. Bateman

The universal nature of the gospel

Recently a participant on a radio program questioned the international appeal of the Church, given its origins in New York, its headquarters in Utah, and the Book of Mormon story of an ancient American people. As I thought of friends in Asia, Africa, Europe, and other parts of the world, it was apparent that the discussant did not understand the universal nature of the restored gospel or the all-encompassing applicability of its ordinances, covenants, and blessings. The worldwide significance of the Prophet Joseph Smith's First Vision and the Book of Mormon are not measured by location but by their message regarding man's relationship to God, the Father's love for His children, and the divine potential within each human being.

The prophetic call through all ages has been, "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32; see also Matthew 5:48; John 10:10; 14:6), that salvation is through the Only Begotten Son of the Father (see John 1:14, 18; D&C 29:42). The call is universal and applies to all of God's children, whether African, Asian, European, or any other nationality. As the Apostle Paul declared to the Athenians, all of us "are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29).

The Savior was rejected by many

The Father's plan of life, with its central focus on Christ's Atonement, was prepared before the foundation of the world (see Abraham 3:22–28; Alma 13:3). It was given to Adam and Eve, and they were commanded to teach it to their children