

New developments in missionary teaching offer a window into farther-reaching developments in Church discourse and administration. They serve as a starting point for identifying ongoing trends in the Church's attempt to define "the gospel" and manage diversity.

THE NEW MISSIONARY DISCUSSIONS AND THE FUTURE OF CORRELATION

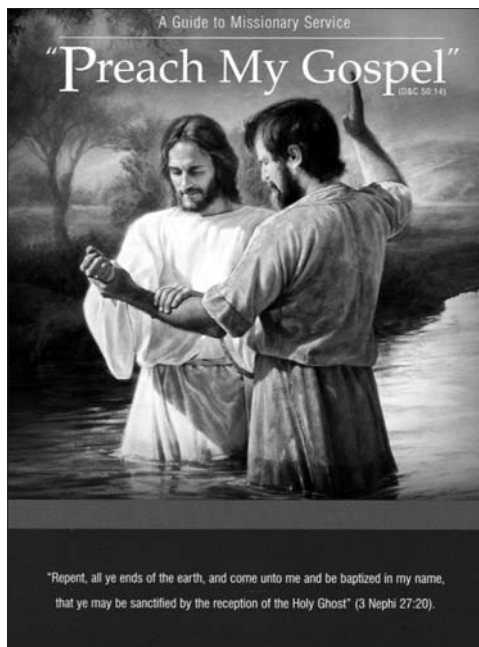
By John-Charles Duffy

AN OCTOBER 2004 SATELLITE broadcast introduced LDS mission presidents and mission leaders worldwide to *Preach My Gospel*, the redesigned missionary guide that supersedes all previous proselyting and training materials. Laid out in a colorful, user-friendly style unusual for Church manuals, the 200-page publication presents, among other things, a series of five discussions (or lessons, as they are now called) to replace those that missionaries had been using since the mid-1980s. President Boyd K. Packer told mission presidents that *Preach My Gospel* is "a major change in direction" for LDS missionary teaching, a change that had already been signaled, in part, by a First Presidency letter of December 2002 instructing missionaries to stop memorizing their presentations. The *Church News* trumpeted that *Preach My Gospel* is "perhaps the most dynamic revamping of missionary labors since the first missionary discussions were introduced in the 1930s."¹

Granted that Church publicity tends toward self-congratu-



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latory hyperbole (as is true of the promotion surrounding any organization's new initiatives). Nevertheless, *Preach My Gospel* does mark a shift in the content and method of LDS missionary teaching. Church leaders have touted the new manual as equipping missionaries to more effectively teach by the Spirit—that is, by freeing them to rely more on inspiration as opposed to following a standardized program.²

This development in missionary teaching offers a window into farther-reaching developments in Church discourse and administration. That is, the new missionary discussions serve as a starting point for identifying ongoing trends in Church correlation. In its most familiar sense, "correlation" refers to the process of centralizing, standardizing, and simplifying Church organiza-

tions and publications that has been underway since the 1960s, first through the Correlation Committee, created under the leadership of Harold B. Lee in 1961, and more recently through the Correlation Department, which, as of 1987, must approve all Church publications and programs. Correlation is about much more, though, than editing lesson manuals and streamlining channels of communication. Correlation encompasses a philosophy—one might even say, a theology—of Church governance, in which LDS doctrines about priesthood and prophetic authority are synthesized with strategies for organizational efficiency drawn from the world of business. This philosophy sets a premium on strong central authority, uniform procedures, and unified discourse. As I use the term, "correlation"

refers to this philosophy, as well as to the institutional structures and evolving initiatives by which it is implemented. Through correlation, Church headquarters moves to define “the gospel” and to manage diversity within the Church.³

One of correlation’s several objectives is to preserve purity of doctrine in Church discourse, which is to say that correlation acts as a mechanism to police and promote orthodoxy.³ What constitutes orthodox, or correlated, discourse changes over time: a small-scale example of such change would be the recent proscription on calling God’s love unconditional.⁴ A more dramatic example would be the emergence of a conspicuously Christ-centered discourse in the Church beginning in the 1950s (about which I will say more below).

Standardized missionary discussions have been one instrument of correlation—and an important one, given that missionary teaching is a preeminent arena for deploying versions of LDS orthodoxy. How and what missionaries teach goes a long way toward shaping investigators’ and new members’ understandings of LDS religion. Church leaders have therefore sought to control missionaries’ representations of the religion (no doubt with mixed success) through standardized missionary discussions and training materials. Such standardization affects not only investigators and new members; it can also influence what missionaries and other long-term Church members understand as constituting orthodox LDS belief and practice. In this regard, it is noteworthy that Church leaders have promoted *Preach My Gospel* for use not only by missionaries but also by parents teaching their children, in presidency meetings, ward councils, and so on.⁵ The Church’s control over its members’ understanding of orthodoxy is hardly absolute; but correlated missionary materials are a potentially powerful means of inculcating orthodoxy in new and long-time members alike.

My analysis of *Preach My Gospel* considers both the content and the mechanism of correlation. In examining the *content* of correlation, I will ask: What is the discourse that the Church currently promotes as orthodox gospel teaching, and how does that discourse compare to previous standardized missionary lessons, especially the 1986 discussions? In examining the *mechanism* of correlation, I will ask: How does the much-touted flexibility of the new missionary lessons relate to Church leaders’ larger efforts to establish a particular kind of relationship between uniformity and diversity in an increasingly international church?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

How have the missionary discussions changed over the last half-century?

PRIOR TO THE 1950s, there was no churchwide system of missionary lessons, though individual mission presidents might create lesson series of their own. LeGrand Richards’s extremely popular *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* began as one such series. The so-called Anderson Plan, created in the late 1940s by missionary Richard L. Anderson (later a professor in the BYU Religion Department), was another pop-

FIGURE 1. The Standardized Missionary Discussions. Since the mid-20th century, the Church has produced five sets of standardized missionary discussions. Each set superseded the one before.

- 1952** *A Systematic Program for Teaching the Gospel*
- 1961** *A Uniform System for Teaching Investigators*
- 1973** *The Uniform System for Teaching Families*
- 1986** *The Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel*
- 2004** *Preach My Gospel*

ular pre-standardized system; reputedly, eleven thousand copies of Anderson’s plan were made in response to requests from missionaries around the world. Early teaching plans typically called for extended meetings with investigators: the Anderson Plan contained twenty-eight discussion topics, while LeGrand Richards expected investigators to receive weekly lessons for at least six months before baptism.⁶

The first set of missionary lessons to come from Church headquarters, *A Systematic Program for Teaching the Gospel*, was created in 1952 under the direction of Gordon B. Hinckley. Though published by the Church, *A Systematic Program* was designated for optional use.⁷ The program consisted of only seven lessons—a dramatic reduction from previous plans. The lessons took the form of Socratic dialogues between missionaries and a hypothetical investigator named “Mr. Brady.” The lessons relied heavily on logic and scriptural prooftexts, and the dialogues had a tendency to be patronizing and manipulative.⁸ (See sidebar, pages 28–29).

In 1961, the same year as the creation of the Correlation Committee, Hinckley, then an assistant to the Twelve, unveiled *A Uniform System for Teaching Investigators* at the first worldwide seminar for mission presidents. These were the first missionary discussions intended for mandatory churchwide use.⁹ They were also the first to be called “discussions” rather than “lessons.” Six in number, the 1961 discussions were written as a series of dialogues with the investigator, now named Mr. Brown, who was led via question-and-answer into agreement with a series of numbered conclusions. Flannel board images provided a visual supplement to the spoken presentation.

The 1961 discussions were superseded in 1973 by *The Uniform System for Teaching Families*.¹⁰ These discussions, seven in all, were printed in a two-column format: the right-hand page contained the missionary’s presentation, while the facing left-hand page contained aids for teaching such as suggested scriptures and ideas for responding to potential investigator objections. As in previous discussions, the missionaries posed questions to “Mr. Brown,” but his responses were not spelled out, as they had been in the 1952 and 1961 discussions, and the questions posed were more open-ended. Flipcharts replaced flannel boards as the discussions’ accompanying visual component.

1952

ELDER: I humbly declare to you from the bottom of my heart that Joseph Smith's testimony is true. It is logical, sensible and scriptural, so it must be true. And I know that you know in your heart that it is true. . . . When Joseph Smith came out of the grove, who had the true concept of God, Joseph Smith or the ministers of the world?

MR. BRADY: Joseph Smith.

ELDER: Joseph Smith had the true knowledge of God. That being true, it follows that the churches of the world were wrong. To our knowledge, there was not a single church in the year 1820 that taught the true nature of God. Now, Mr. Brady, I notice that you have several small children in your family and I assume that you love them dearly. Is that correct?

MR. BRADY: Of course.

ELDER: Mr. Brady, is it not a serious thing to have your children taught a false doctrine of God?

MR. BRADY: I suppose so, but I have never thought of that before.

[Editor's note: The elders invite Mr. Brady to bring his children to Sunday School, then continue:]

ELDER: Mr. Brady, how did Joseph Smith get the true knowledge of God? Who appeared to him?

MR. BRADY: God and Jesus Christ.

ELDER: Yes, and when God speaks to men in this manner, they are called what?

MR. BRADY: Prophets.

ELDER: Exactly, and so that would make Joseph Smith a What?

MR. BRADY: A prophet?

ELDER: Yes, Joseph Smith became a great prophet, and I want you to know that I know with all my heart that these things are absolutely true.

1961

ELDER: I know that Joseph Smith did see the Father and the Son. In fact, he could see them just as clearly as you can see Elder Jones and me. And he could see that his own body truly was created in the image and likeness of God. At that time the churches taught that God was only a spirit, that he had no body. BUT WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT GOD FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF JOSEPH SMITH?

BROWN: That he has a real body.

ELDER: Yes, he does. THE CHURCHES ALSO TAUGHT THAT GOD THE FATHER AND JESUS CHRIST, HIS SON, WERE BOTH THE SAME BEING. BUT WHAT DID JOSEPH SMITH SEE?

BROWN: He saw two Personages in the form of men.

2. The Father and the Son have bodies.

* * *

ELDER: Of course, that is true; God does have a body; he is a real God; and he made us to be like him. From what we have said here, Mr. Brown, WHY WAS JOSEPH SMITH A PROPHET?

BROWN: Because he saw and spoke with the Father and the Son.

ELDER: SO WHAT ARE THE TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH SO IMPORTANT?

BROWN: Because his teachings come directly from God.

3. Joseph Smith was a prophet of God.

* * *

ELDER: I am sure they do. In the grove of trees that day, Joseph Smith asked the Savior which of the churches he should join. Joseph was told that he must join none of them. Why do you suppose Jesus told him that?

BROWN: They must not have been teaching the truth.

ELDER: Exactly right.

1973

MISSIONARY: Mr. and Mrs. Brown, suppose you put yourselves in the position of this young man, Joseph Smith. Picture yourselves as Joseph Smith, struggling to know the truth about religion. As you are reading in the Bible, you read the promise in James (James 1:5). Never has any scripture touched your heart so deeply. Having faith, you do as James directs and go to a grove of trees near your father's farm. Kneeling in prayer, you plead for guidance from your Father in Heaven. This is your first uttered prayer. With all your heart you want to know the truth. Visualize the feeling when, in answer to your prayers, a light descends from heaven, and within this light you see two glorious personages, the Father and the Son. Mr. Brown, could you ever be the same after that experience?

BROWN: Response

MISSIONARY: After receiving such a glorious manifestation, your heart is overwhelmed with the reality of your experience. You know it is true. Would you feel an obligation to share your experience with the rest of the world?

BROWN: Response

MISSIONARY: As a result of this and other similar experiences, you write this: (D&C 76:22, 23). *(Have Mr. Brown read this scripture, then testify to him that what you have said is true.)*

Mr. Brown, do you remember what Joseph Smith's question was when he went to the grove of trees to pray?

BROWN: Response

MISSIONARY: Answering his question, the Savior told Joseph Smith that he should join none of the churches and explained why. He said they had a form of godliness but taught the doctrines of men and not of God. Mr. Brown, how does this help you to understand why the churches today teach so many conflicting doctrines?

BROWN: Response

1986

JOSEPH SMITH WAS A PROPHET OF GOD

Through this and other experiences, Joseph Smith was called as a prophet. He was much like Moses and other biblical prophets. They also saw God and were called to preach his message.

JOSEPH IS A WITNESS OF CHRIST

Because he saw and talked with the resurrected Savior, Joseph Smith is a powerful witness of Jesus Christ. Through him, God revealed the truths of the plan of salvation, including the divine mission of Jesus Christ.

TESTIFY: Express your feelings about—

- Joseph Smith's vision of the Father and the Son.
- The importance of Joseph Smith's divine call as a witness of Christ.
- Joseph Smith's calling to restore the truth about the plan of salvation.

FIND OUT—

How the investigators feel about your instruction on Joseph Smith.

Key: These selections exemplify the teaching styles of the 1952, 1961, 1973, and 1986 discussions. Each selection is taken from the material that immediately follows the narration of the First Vision.

BY MAKING

salvation through Christ the focus of the first two discussions and postponing the Restoration to the third discussion, the 1986 discussions had deemphasized the Church's exclusive claims to authority and revelation (though those claims were never in danger of disappearing). In *Preach My Gospel*, the Church's exclusive claims return to the fore.

For reasons to be discussed later, the 1973 discussions proved problematic. They therefore underwent a series of revisions—in 1978, 1981, and 1982—that simplified and rearranged the material.¹¹ Finally, Church leaders ordered the creation of an entirely new set of lessons, dubbed the “improved discussions.” These were introduced to missionaries in 1985 as a kind of churchwide pilot program and were officially published in 1986 as *The Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel*.¹² This system consisted of twelve discussions: six to be taught before baptism and six after.¹³ The discussions were printed, as in 1973, in a two-column format. Integral to the 1986 discussions was a model of conversion called the commitment pattern, in which missionaries *prepared* investigators to feel the Spirit, *invited* them to make commitments (read the Book of Mormon, attend church, keep the Word of Wisdom, be baptized, etc.), then *followed up* and *resolved concerns* to help investigators keep their commitments. The commitment pattern and associated teaching methods were explained in the *Missionary Guide*, published in 1988, which missionaries were to study daily with their companions. *Preach My Gospel* replaces both the 1986 discussions and the *Missionary Guide*.

REDEFINING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

*What stands at the center of the gospel message—
Christ, the Restoration, or both?*

KATHLEEN FLAKE HAS explained that the First Vision became fundamental to Mormonism's account of itself at the beginning of the twentieth century as part of the transition away from an identity built on plural marriage.¹⁴ It is not surprising, therefore, that all standardized discussions, from *A Systematic Program* to *Preach My Gospel*, have introduced the First Vision as part of the first discussion.¹⁵ In the 1952, 1961, and 1973 discussions, the First Vision was presented in the context of the Restoration: in 1952, the restoration of a knowledge of the true nature of God; in 1961 and 1973, the restoration of the true church.

While the 1986 discussions also began with the First

Vision, together with an introduction to the Book of Mormon, those discussions reframed the material in a perhaps subtle but important way. Unlike its predecessors, the 1986 version of the first discussion did not present the First Vision and the Book of Mormon in the context of explaining the Restoration. Instead, the First Vision and the Book of Mormon were presented as modern or additional witnesses of Jesus Christ. Investigators were told that Joseph Smith went to the grove to pray because he was confused about the competing claims of different churches; however, the first discussion did not disclose what Jesus told Joseph regarding which church to join. That was revealed in the third discussion, as part of a narrative of the Great Apostasy and the Restoration—*after* missionaries had extended the baptismal invitation during the second discussion (which taught salvation through Christ's atonement and the first principles and ordinances of the gospel).¹⁶

This revised order of teaching, i.e., delaying teaching about the Restoration until after the baptismal invitation, indicates that the creators of the 1986 discussions did not regard an understanding of the Restoration as a necessary prerequisite for an investigator's committing to be baptized into the LDS Church. In other words, in the 1986 discussions, the ideal baptismal commitment would be made not out of a desire to gain membership in the restored true church but out of a desire to follow Jesus Christ.

Preach My Gospel reverts to the pre-1986 pattern of presenting the Restoration in the first lesson. In addition, missionaries are instructed to teach the Great Apostasy during this lesson, a move reverting even further back to pre-1973 practice. (To avoid seeming to denigrate other churches, in 1973 missionaries had been encouraged to teach the restoration of the church and the priesthood without narrating the Great Apostasy.)¹⁷ Going one step further, *Preach My Gospel* represents all human history from Adam to Joseph Smith as a cycle of apostasies and restorations, a concept not present in any of the previous standardized discussions.¹⁸ Where the 1986 discussions introduced the First Vision and the Book of Mormon as witnesses of Christ, *Preach My Gospel* presents them in relation to the Restoration.¹⁹ The Book of Mormon, investigators are taught, “provides convincing evidence that Joseph Smith is a true prophet of God,” with Moroni's promise serving to “confirm the truth of the Restoration.”²⁰ The Book of Mormon's role as a witness for Christ has not disappeared—it can be found elsewhere in *Preach My Gospel*²¹—but that role is no longer the primary focus of missionary teaching about the Book of Mormon. One manifestation of this shift is that where the 1986 discussions introduced the Book of Mormon by briefly narrating its contents, climaxing with Christ's appearance in the Americas, *Preach My Gospel* introduces the book by narrating the appearance of the angel Moroni and Joseph's translation of the book from the golden plates, which were not part of the 1986 narrative.

By making salvation through Christ the focus of the first two discussions and postponing the Restoration to the third discussion, the 1986 discussions had deemphasized the Church's exclusive claims to authority and revelation (though

those claims were never in danger of disappearing). In *Preach My Gospel*, the Church's exclusive claims return to the fore. The logic which, in 1986, had imagined that investigators could commit to baptism before they understood the Great Apostasy and Restoration is gone. Instead missionaries are told, "Investigators must understand that a universal apostasy occurred following the death of Christ and His Apostles" because the "need of a Restoration" depends on that, and "your purpose is to help them understand the need for the Restoration."²²

As compared to the 1986 system of missionary teaching, *Preach My Gospel* underscores more strongly the separation between the LDS message and other faiths. *The Missionary Guide*, which accompanied the 1986 discussions, had instructed missionaries to identify "similarities between [investigators'] beliefs and the beliefs taught in the discussions." "Point out the beliefs you have in common," *the Missionary Guide* recommended, so as to "build . . . upon the truths your investigators already believe."²³ *Preach My Gospel*, however, says nothing about building on common beliefs, an omission consistent with the new manual's focus on the Church's exclusive claims. *Preach My Gospel* does soften the exclusivism of its message by acknowledging that "teachings of other religious leaders have helped many people become more civil and ethical."²⁴ On the other hand, in explaining to missionaries the dire consequences for those who do not accept the gospel, the new manual uses stark language taken from 3 Nephi 27:17—"the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire."²⁵

A tone of militant urgency emerges both in *Preach My Gospel* and in the Church publicity surrounding the manual. "Satan is attacking the family on many fronts, and too many families are being destroyed by his efforts," warns an introductory chapter on the purpose of missionary work. Echoing this message, Richard G. Scott has explained that *Preach My Gospel* was needed because "the values which form the bedrock foundation of society are being assaulted by Satan and his allies. There has been an urgent need for an improved way to share the fulness of the truth that God has placed on earth again." Similarly, in a 2004 *Ensign* interview about *Preach My*

Gospel, Scott declared, "The world is getting worse, but our capacity to teach the gospel is improving."²⁶ This sense of heightened danger appears to motivate returning the Restoration to the fore of missionary teaching—thus making clear to auditors from the outset what is lacking and where it is to be found.²⁷

It is tempting to describe this renewed emphasis on the Restoration as a kind of retrenchment, using the term Armand Mauss made familiar to describe the backswing of a religious movement from assimilation toward distinctiveness.²⁸ In other words, it is tempting to read *Preach My Gospel* as retreating from a Christ-centered discourse that emphasizes what Latter-day Saints have in common with other Christians to a Restoration-centered discourse that underscores difference and uniqueness. But that is not the most illuminating way to understand what has happened. *Preach My Gospel* does not move away from Christ-centered discourse. Rather, the new manual seeks to integrate Christ-centered discourse with a proportionately greater emphasis on the Restoration. Both emphases, Christ and the Restoration, are brought together into a single formula: "center your teaching," missionaries are told, "on the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ." The manual elaborates: "We have one message: Through a modern prophet, God has restored knowledge about the plan of salvation, which is centered on Christ's Atonement and fulfilled by living the first principles and ordinances of the gospel."²⁹



"I want you to know . . . that I know with every fiber of my being that the Church employees who wrote this discussion, the MTC staff who field tested it, and the committee that correlated it, are true. . . ."

A Broader Perspective

THE EMERGENCE OF this integrated discourse should be viewed in a larger context. Several observers, including Gordon and Gary Shepherd and Jan Shippo, have noted the increasing prominence of what I would term an evangelical Mormon discourse, one which stresses that Mormons are Christian and, more specifically, which deploys a Protestant vocabulary about salvation by grace, the natural man, second birth, sanctification, and so on. This discourse began to emerge in the 1950s and became especially visible during the 1980s, continuing into the 1990s.³⁰ Evangelical Mormon discourse has been closely tied to the Book of Mormon, where evangelical themes dominate; the increased prominence of evangelical discourse during the 1980s thus coincided with the increased prominence placed on the Book of Mormon during Ezra Taft Benson's presidency. The 1986 discussions, with their focus on the First Vision and the Book of Mormon as witnesses of Christ, were one manifestation of the new evangelical discourse. Indeed, the discussions helped to disseminate that discourse in and out of the Church.³¹

Preach My Gospel's rhetoric about the Book of Mormon as "convincing evidence" of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling and the truthfulness of the restored church is hardly new. However, *Preach My Gospel* represents a reemergence of that rhetoric after a period of obscurity. During Benson's presidency, Church rhetoric about the Book of Mormon as evidence of the Restoration was eclipsed by evangelical rhetoric which held that the "major purpose of the Book of Mormon" is "to bring men to Christ and to be reconciled to him."³² Between 1985 and 1994 (the years of the Benson presidency), almost no General Authority addresses published in the *Ensign* referred to the Book of Mormon as "evidence" for the Restoration. Instead, General Authorities focused overwhelmingly on the Book of Mormon's witness (sometimes called its "evidence") for Christ and the book's teachings about the Atonement.³³ Following Benson's death, references to the Book of Mormon as "evidence" of the Restoration reappeared, at times in reprints of talks written before Benson's presidency. Such references became more frequent and more emphatic as the Church crossed into the new millennium, leading up to the publication of *Preach My Gospel*.³⁴ (See figure 2.)

This is not to say, however, that evangelical discourse about the Book of Mormon has declined. As in *Preach My Gospel*, references in recent General Authority addresses to the Book of Mormon as evidence of the Restoration typically occur *together* with allusions to the Book of Mormon's witness of Christ or to Christ's central role in LDS faith. For example, a 2004 reprint of an address James E. Faust first gave in 1983 explains that "a confirming testimony of the Book of Mormon convinces 'that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God' and also spiritually verifies the divine calling of Joseph Smith."³⁵ Again, the trend is best understood not as a retreat from evangelical discourse but as an effort to integrate that discourse with a relatively stronger focus on the Restoration.

Shippo has suggested that the "dramatic turn . . . toward

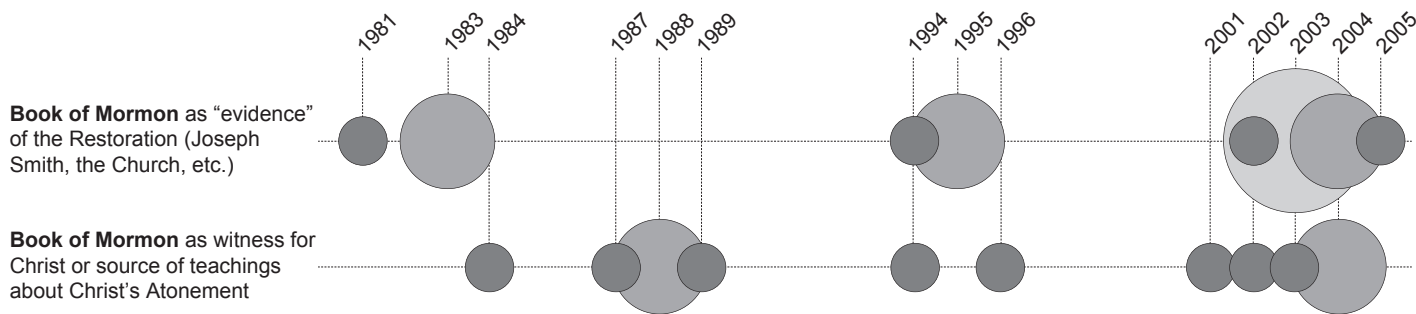
Christian rhetoric and Christian themes" during the latter half of the twentieth century is a sign that Mormons have overcome sectarianism and thus no longer need to underscore what sets them apart from other faiths.³⁶ I propose a different interpretation. The impetus toward evangelical Mormon discourse in the 1980s and 1990s began as a response to mounting opposition to Mormonism by evangelical Protestants in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as exemplified by widespread screening of *The Godmakers* and by the refusal of the Moral Majority to work with Mormons on issues that concerned both groups.³⁷ In the face of increasingly prominent claims that Mormons are cultists, evangelical Mormon discourse such as that promoted by the 1986 discussions served to assert Christian credentials.³⁸ The more recent reemergence of Restoration-centered discourse suggests that Mormons have come to feel secure enough about their Christian credentials that they can again stress the more sectarian dimension of their message. Once again, however, I want to emphasize that the new sectarianism is not a retrenchment in the sense of pulling back from Christ-centered discourse. The 1980s and 1990s have given LDS discourse an evangelical cast that is likely to remain integral to correlated Mormonism for the foreseeable future.

MAKING ROOM FOR INSPIRATION
*Missionaries now have greater flexibility to
 follow the Spirit—within limits.*

THE ASPECT OF the new lessons that has attracted most comment is that missionaries are no longer instructed to memorize them. Speaking via worldwide satellite broadcast in 2003, President Hinckley lamented that standardized missionary discussions (which, it might be noted, he had helped to make normative) had "in all too many cases . . . resulted in a memorized presentation lacking in spirit and personal conviction." "Let the missionaries shake loose from their memorized lessons," Hinckley proclaimed. "Let them speak with great conviction prompted by the Spirit of the Lord."³⁹

The very first set of standardized discussions, which Hinckley had overseen in 1952, offered similar counsel. "Never Memorize," read a boldface header in *A Systematic Program*. "A previously written presentation is apt to become a product of mind and not of heart. . . . Lose yourself in expression. Tell it from the heart."⁴⁰ But with the inauguration of the first discussions for mandatory churchwide use in 1961, the dialogues became not merely suggestions, as in 1952, but scripts to be memorized.⁴¹ Giving missionaries a text to memorize is, of course, an attempt to ensure that their teaching is orthodox and that it emphasizes what Church leaders currently prefer to have emphasized. Expectations about memorizing the discussions created an especially heavy burden for missionaries using the 1973 discussions, which contained, by one count, some 18,000 words in 125 pages. Memorization techniques were therefore an important part of missionary training during the 1970s.⁴² Realizing that the discussions were difficult to memorize, especially for missionaries learning

Figure 2. This graph plots instances of evangelical discourse about the Book of Mormon versus references to the Book of Mormon as “evidence” of the Restoration in General Authority addresses published in the *Ensign* between 1981 and 2005. Note the eclipsing of “evidence” rhetoric during the Benson presidency (1985–1994) and the increased occurrence of both evangelical and “evidence” rhetoric in the years leading up to the publication of *Preach My Gospel* (2004).



other languages, and concerned that missionaries’ presentations sounded “canned,” Church leaders approved revisions to the 1973 discussions. The language of the discussions was first simplified, then drastically cut. Instead of memorizing paragraphs, missionaries memorized sentences, interspersed with extemporaneous explanations, testimony, and questions to gauge investigator response.⁴³

The “improved discussions” of 1985–1986 sought to push this trend one step further. Written in outline form, these discussions contained very little text: a mere two or three sentences under every bold heading. This text was to be “mastered,” not “memorized.” Missionaries would present the material in “their own words,” consulting the discussion booklet during their presentations as needed. This new approach was touted as freeing missionaries to “concentrat[e] on spirituality and teaching skills.”⁴⁴ However, the distinction between “mastering” and “memorizing” the discussions was not obvious, nor was the distinction necessarily translatable out of English.⁴⁵ Judging from Hinckley’s 2003 complaints about “memorized presentation[s] lacking in spirit,” it would appear that many missionaries continued to memorize the discussions.

Unambiguously abandoning memorization and authorizing missionaries to create their own lesson plans, *Preach My Gospel* grants missionaries a degree of flexibility in how to teach the gospel that they have not officially enjoyed (but may have exercised anyway) since the introduction of the first discussions for mandatory use in 1961. This fact should not be overstated, though. Even when missionaries were expected to memorize the discussions, the instructions they received acknowledged that the Spirit might inspire them to vary from the standard plan.⁴⁶ Conversely, while *Preach My Gospel* instructs mission-

aries to present the lessons in their own words, the manual takes nearly sixty pages to specify the doctrinal material they are to cover, with a strongly preferred order for teaching that material.⁴⁷ To ensure that all requisite teachings have been given, missionaries fill out a newly designed Teaching Record containing more than sixty checkboxes to keep track of the doctrines taught and commitments extended to each investigator or family.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the new manual stresses flexibility and adaptation in missionary teaching, as well as in certain other aspects of missionary life, in a way that has not been seen since the 1950s—that is to say, since before the beginning of correlation. *Preach My Gospel* gives missionaries the “flexibility” to “study what you need when you need it.” Missionaries are urged to exercise “personal agency” and are cautioned against relying overmuch in their study on structured programs.⁴⁹ As for their teaching, they are told that they “have the flexibility to teach the lessons in whatever way best helps people fully prepare for their baptism and confirmation. . . . Adjust the order, length, and pace of the lessons to meet the needs of those you teach. . . . Continually refine your lesson plans and modify them. . . . Try new explanations, approaches, experiences, questions, and ways to invite others to make commitments.”⁵⁰ *Preach My Gospel* provides suggested outlines for short, medium, and full versions of each of the first three lessons, thus equipping missionaries to present the contents of a lesson in anywhere from three to forty-five minutes. One advantage of this type of flexibility is that it allows missionaries to actually teach—rather than making appointments to teach later—in settings that would not have permitted an entire discussion as these were supposed to be presented under previous systems.

AS IT PLACES

greater stress on the agency of the Spirit, *Preach My Gospel* likewise places greater stress on the agency of investigators. Investigators' agency is invoked to explain why missionaries should not measure their success by "outward results" such as baptisms but rather by the quality of their commitment to the work.

This new emphasis on flexibility is represented as openness to the inspiration of the Spirit. Introducing *Preach My Gospel* to missionaries via worldwide satellite broadcast, Gordon B. Hinckley explained the new manual's flexibility as an application of the statement in D&C 46:2 that "notwithstanding those things which are written, it always has been given to the elders of my church from the beginning, and ever shall be, to conduct all meetings as they are directed and guided by the Holy Spirit." A conviction that missionaries need to be led by the Spirit was one motivation for the "raising of the bar" for missionary service, which M. Russell Ballard announced during the October 2002 General Conference, three years before the publication of *Preach My Gospel*. "We need vibrant, thinking, passionate missionaries who know how to listen to and respond to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit," Ballard explained. "This isn't a time for spiritual weaklings."⁵¹

Here another important shift in the history of missionary discussions becomes apparent, one which allows *Preach My Gospel* to be typed as a return to an earlier pattern of missionary teaching. In the first standardized discussions of 1952, the Spirit's role in missionary teaching was presented primarily in terms of the Spirit's influence on *missionaries*, inspiring them to know what to say and how to adapt their teaching to a particular investigator's needs or interests. The same is also true of *The Missionary's Hand Book*, the 1937 churchwide missionary guide that preceded the 1952 discussions.⁵² As compared to later systems, the first standardized discussions paid little attention to the Spirit's influence on *investigators*. For instance, the 1952 discussions presented Moroni's promise to investigators as evidence that the Book of Mormon is inspired (since "only an inspired man would include" such a promise in a book), but the investigator was not urged to try the promise in order to seek the witness of the Spirit himself, a glaring omission by the standard of subsequent missionary practice.⁵³

Correlation, with its emphasis on following the authorized program, set in motion what would, after some vacillation, become a pronounced shift in how "teaching by the Spirit" was understood.⁵⁴ Where the 1937 *Missionary's Hand Book* and the

1952 discussions had described teaching by the Spirit as inspired "flexibility" and "adaptation" on the part of the missionary, the 1961 discussions instructed missionaries to "follow the [prescribed] dialogues." As a corollary to this move, the 1961 discussions describe the Spirit's role in missionary teaching in terms of the Spirit's influence not on missionaries but on *investigators*, who would feel the Spirit as a result of missionary testimony.⁵⁵ Subsequent sets of discussions defined teaching by the Spirit in different ways. The 1973 discussions explained teaching by the Spirit in terms of the Spirit's influence on *both* missionaries and investigators. The 1981 revision of the 1973 discussions briefly reverted to a primary focus on the Spirit's guidance of missionaries, but a 1984 missionary training booklet called *Proselyting* resumed the dual explanation that the Spirit must influence missionary and investigator alike.⁵⁶

In the early 1980s, researchers for the Missionary Department developed a schematic model of conversion that came to be known as the commitment pattern. Introduced to missionaries in the 1984 manual *Proselyting*, the commitment pattern was the organizing framework of the 1986 discussions and the 1988 *Missionary Guide*.⁵⁷ While inspiration to missionaries was implicit in the commitment pattern (missionaries needed to be sensitive to the Spirit's promptings in applying commitment pattern principles to specific situations), the pattern had the effect of making the Spirit's influence on investigators the central preoccupation of missionary teaching. "Your goal," the 1986 discussions told missionaries, "is to help investigators become converted by the Spirit. . . . To do this, you must help them feel and recognize the influence of the Spirit." The *Missionary Guide* added that "the most important process in conversion is for people to feel the Spirit of the Lord. . . . The only way you can help people return to live with God is by helping them feel the Spirit and inviting them to change."⁵⁸

Spiritual feelings on the part of investigators were the engine of the commitment pattern's theory of conversion: feeling the Spirit would motivate investigators to accept gospel commitments, the fulfillment of which would produce further spiritual feelings, motivating further commitments. While it might be unfair to type this as a "mechanistic" approach to conversion, it was certainly "schematic" inasmuch as it presented an ostensibly universal conversion process operating in step-by-step fashion: missionaries prepared investigators to feel the Spirit, then invited them to make commitments and followed up on those commitments, resolving concerns as necessary along the way to keep the process moving.⁵⁹ The commitment pattern could also be called a "technology" of conversion in the sense that missionaries were trained to execute a series of techniques ("principles," "skills," or "methods," in the language of the *Missionary Guide*). Teaching by the Spirit meant effective application of these techniques: expressing empathy, bearing testimony in particular ways, asking "find out" questions, extending invitations as direct "will you?" questions, and so on.

Language from the commitment pattern continues in *Preach My Gospel*: the manual speaks of commitments,

inviting, following up, resolving concerns. But the commitment pattern itself, as a schema or technology of conversion, is gone: the term “commitment pattern” is never used, and the familiar schematic from the *Missionary Guide* is nowhere to be found. Missionaries are still taught that conversion occurs as investigators feel the Spirit in response to missionary teaching and testimony and as a result of keeping commitments. But missionaries are no longer taught methods to “help investigators feel the Spirit”; that phrase, fundamental to the 1986 discussions, is conspicuously absent in *Preach My Gospel*.⁶⁰ Together with *Preach My Gospel*’s recurring emphasis on the need for missionaries to be guided by the Spirit, the shift away from rhetoric about helping investigators feel the Spirit places relatively greater stress on the Spirit’s agency—that is, on a conception of the Spirit as a personality acting according to its own will—than did the *Missionary Guide*, which tended toward a conception of the Spirit as a feeling produced by missionary teaching.⁶¹ An entire chapter of the *Missionary Guide* had been dedicated to methods for helping investigators feel the Spirit: bear testimony, share experiences, identify the influence of the Holy Ghost. By contrast, a single paragraph in *Preach My Gospel* encourages missionaries to create a “climate” where the Spirit can be present. This is to be accomplished not through specific teaching methods but by teaching the designated doctrines (the “message of the Restoration”) and following the Spirit’s promptings.⁶²

As it places greater stress on the agency of the Spirit, *Preach My Gospel* likewise places greater stress on the agency of investigators. Investigators’ agency is invoked to explain why missionaries should not measure their success by “outward results” such as baptisms but rather by the quality of their commitment to the work.⁶³ Stress on investigators’ agency leads *Preach My Gospel* to insist that goals should be an expression of missionaries’ hopes for the particular individuals with whom they are working, not a target imposed on missionaries by leaders nor a device for measuring missionaries’ success. Indeed, according to *Preach My Gospel*, leaders are not even supposed to ask missionaries to report their goals.⁶⁴ If actually put into practice, *Preach My Gospel*’s guidelines for the use of goals could

do much to reduce unrealistic expectations, feelings of failure, and a salesmanship mentality among missionaries. However, while *Preach My Gospel* forbids leaders to set goals for missionaries, it does allow leaders to set “standards of excellence,” which sound like they may be subject to the same liabilities as leader-imposed goals.

The abandonment of the commitment pattern as schema and the greater stress on the agency of the Spirit and of investigators suggest that the creators of *Preach My Gospel* wanted to steer well away from a mechanistic sense of conversion as the outcome of missionary method. A schematic or technological model of conversion such as that provided by the *Missionary Guide* would be incompatible with *Preach My Gospel*’s focus on flexibility under inspiration. This is to say that compared to the *Missionary Guide* and the 1986 discussions, *Preach My Gospel* redefines teaching by the Spirit. For *Preach My Gospel*, teaching by the Spirit means inspired adaptation, not effectively executed technique.⁶⁵ Like the 1937 *Missionary’s Hand Book* and the 1952 discussions, *Preach My Gospel* represents teaching by the Spirit primarily in terms of the inspiration received by missionaries, not primarily in terms of spiritual feelings produced in investigators.

Instead of a schema or technology of conversion, *Preach My Gospel* aims to present universal principles which missionaries must then adapt across cultures and for individual circumstances as prompted by the Spirit. An illustration of the “universal principles, local adaptation” pattern is *Preach My Gospel*’s explanation that the manual contains “guidelines” or “suggestions that you can apply throughout your mission. However,” the manual quickly continues, “do not feel that you



JEANETTE ATWOOD, BASED ON CONCEPT BY JOHN CHARLES DUFFY AND HUGO OLAIZ

must use every guideline in every situation. Instead, apply these guidelines to meet your needs and as you are guided by the Spirit.”⁶⁶ Another example of this pattern occurs in *Preach My Gospel*'s discussion of finding people to teach. “The principles for finding are universal,” the manual states; at the same time, though, “finding is different in different parts of the world” and therefore “missionaries and mission presidents need to adapt to circumstances.” Contrast that last statement with the instruction on the same subject in the 1986 *Missionary Handbook* (the so-called “white bible” of missionary rules). The handbook provided a list of “proven methods” for finding, ranked in order of effectiveness, with no indication that the relative merit of these methods might vary by local circumstance.⁶⁷

A Broader Perspective

THE PATTERN OF universal principles and inspired local adaptation is not only the new model for missionary teaching. This pattern has come to be one of the LDS hierarchy's major strategies for administering the international church. The development of *Preach My Gospel* is related to a wide-reaching, years-long correlation project undertaken by the Quorum of the Twelve in the 1990s to “revitalize and improve teaching in the Church.” This project encompassed teaching in sacrament meeting, Sunday School, priesthood quorums, and auxiliaries; home and visiting teaching; interviews and training meetings; instruction of children by their parents at home—in theory,

any setting in which LDS beliefs, standards, or policies are communicated. The fruits of this correlation effort have included the new schedule for priesthood quorums and Relief Society (first-Sunday meetings, fourth-Sunday meetings, etc.); the new “Teachings of Presidents of the Church” series; quotations plus minimalist manuals for Sunday School and other church courses, consisting merely of scriptures or other readings and open-ended discussion questions; a new guide for local leaders titled *Improving Gospel Teaching*; and a new version of *Teaching: No Greater Call*.⁶⁸

A guiding principle behind these new materials has been to simplify—to pare the content of the manuals down to basic gospel principles and doctrines. As Dallin H. Oaks has explained, the new philosophy is to “forgo teaching specific rules or applications” on the grounds that applying principles is “generally the responsibility of individuals and families” under the guidance of the Spirit. In language foreshadowing *Preach My Gospel*, local leaders have been encouraged to “be flexible in adapting” suggested subjects for first-Sunday meetings “to meet the needs and circumstances of their members.”⁶⁹

James Allen and Glen Leonard have remarked that the “new genre” of short, simplified Church manuals (which were already in the making in the 1980s though they had not yet become as minimalist as some manuals used today) is a strategy to avoid transmitting the gospel “in American terms.” That is, since the same manuals are to be used by Latter-day Saints worldwide, stripping the manuals of specific applications, illustrations, or anecdotes reduces the likelihood of culture-specific content. The simplified materials thus attempt to transcend cultural difference by focusing on scriptures and basic principles—understood to be universal—and leaving it to “local teachers to expand according to their own concerns and inspiration.”⁷⁰

The Worldwide Leadership Training Meetings that the Church has been conducting semiannually via satellite broadcast since 2003 are likewise understood by Church leaders as a way to disseminate universal principles for local adaptation. As the First Presidency explained in the letter announcing the first broadcast, “We see this as an important opportunity to teach foundation doctrines and principles and their application in local circumstances.”⁷¹ As part of this



“... The good news is the missionaries are no longer reporting new converts named George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln.”

strategy for Church administration, *principle* is replacing *program* as a preeminent term in correlated discourse. Of course, Church leaders have long insisted, as James E. Faust recently has, that “principles are more important than programs.” But under the new pattern of correlation, it is becoming true to a degree it has not been previously that Church leaders “are trying to teach principles and guidelines more than to promote programs, as [they] seek to strengthen the inner person with the Spirit of God.”⁷² *Preach My Gospel’s* movement from schema and technique toward adaptation and inspiration is one enactment of this effort.

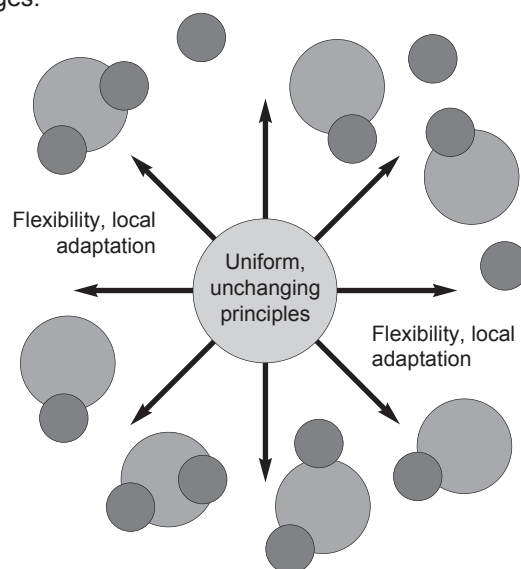
THE FUTURE OF CORRELATION:
PROSPECTS AND CONCERNS

Is “principles-oriented” correlation enough to move
the Church beyond its Americanism?

I HAVE ANALYZED *Preach My Gospel* in the context of the historical development of the Church’s standardized missionary discussions and against the background of trends apparent elsewhere in Church discourse. My analysis reveals that the new missionary manual is an extension of recent developments in both the content and the mechanism of Church correlation. In terms of content, correlation currently promotes as the essence of the LDS message a discourse that integrates the evangelical Mormonism of the 1980s and 1990s with a proportionately greater emphasis on the Restoration and thus on the Church’s exclusive claims to truth and authority. One sign of this shift in the content of correlation is the reemergence of rhetoric about the Book of Mormon as “evidence” of the prophetic claims of Joseph Smith, which had been eclipsed during the 1980s by evangelical rhetoric about the Book of Mormon as a witness for Jesus Christ. As for the mechanism of correlation, *Preach My Gospel* typifies Church leaders’ preferred pattern for negotiating uniformity and diversity in Church teaching and administration: to broadcast foundational, universal principles with the expectation that members will adapt these according to their cultural, local, and personal situations under the inspiration of the Spirit. The increased application of this pattern of correlation has resulted in a relatively greater frequency of rhetoric about flexibility and about valuing principles over programs. These two trends—proportionately greater stress on the Restoration and on adapting principles under inspiration—appear to be the future of correlation.

In a church that values hierarchical authority as much as the LDS Church does, a greater emphasis on flexibility, adaptation, and personal inspiration might be risky. *Preach My Gospel* confronts the potential threat to hierarchical authority when it cautions missionaries, “As you pray for inspiration, you should also confirm your feelings. . . . [C]ompare your decisions with the scriptures and the teachings of the living prophets.”⁷³ There is little risk, however, that the new, relatively greater emphasis on adaptation will produce antinomianism or agitation for local autonomy. Any risk of that sort is offset by the simultaneous emphasis on the Restoration—that is, on the divine

FIGURE 3. In the “universal principles, local adaptation” model, uniform principles are broadcast from Church headquarters out to the members, where the principles can then be adapted. Uniformity and immutability are thus the Church’s central governing values; flexibility and adaptation occur “at the edges.”



authority of the Church and its prophetic leaders. “Those who listen to and follow the counsel of living prophets and apostles will not go astray,” *Preach My Gospel* has missionaries promise investigators. “We are to prepare ourselves so that when the prophets and apostles speak, the Holy Ghost can confirm the truths they teach, and we can then determine to follow the counsel they give us.” *Preach My Gospel* further reinforces prophetic authority by introducing into missionary teaching an innovative description of a prophet “as a steward to oversee the household of God here on earth.”⁷⁴

This is to say that as *Preach My Gospel*, or the principles-oriented approach to correlation more generally, calls for greater flexibility and inspired initiative on the part of members in applying gospel principles, it simultaneously moves to contain such initiative. I already noted that the long-rehearsed call to place principles over programs is now being enacted to a degree not seen previously. Comparatively speaking, however, that isn’t saying very much. Notwithstanding recent developments, the basic premise of correlation—that centralized authority must ensure uniformity in the Church for the sake of efficiency and doctrinal purity—remains unchanged. Rhetoric about flexibility and adaptation only softens the impulse to uniformity at the edges. That statement is true both in the general idiomatic sense of the expression “soften at the edges” and in the more specific sense that flexibility and adaptation are lo-

Continued on page 42

SUNSTONE GALLERY

MARATHON MAN

NO MATTER THE TRACK, NO MATTER ITS SURPRISES, William D. Russell—“Bill” to everyone he knows—is accustomed to staying the course, going the distance.

Bill was born sixty-seven years ago and raised in America’s heartland, the youngest of four children. His parents are Robert Melvin Russell, a career minister in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now the Community of Christ), and Eleanor Williams, also a well-pedigreed RLDS church member. Many who know Bill’s wonderful humor and mischievous smile today may be surprised at his description of his early self as a “churchy kid, not too wild.” He was shy, he claims, quite comfortable within a world deeply immersed in mid-western Protestant values that forbade dancing and other frivolities.

A natural athlete, Bill excelled in all sports including his favorite, baseball, but eventually focused on cross-country and track. Following a strong high school running career, he continued his track superiority at Graceland University, the Community of Christ-sponsored college in Lamoni, Iowa. By the time he graduated, he held seven school records. All but one were broken the next year, but the remaining one, a relay mark, stayed on the books until erased by a team led by Graceland student and future Olympic decathlon champion, Bruce Jenner.

Bill continued to enjoy running long past his 1960 Graceland graduation, eventually challenging himself with marathons. Again, he met this course with determination, completing twenty-five marathons, including Boston in 1979, which he ran in under three hours.

BILL’S HIGH SCHOOL years gave rise to many changes, including the first hints of a sense of citizenship in a world far larger than he had imagined during his circumscribed childhood. Though the student body of his Flint, Michigan, high school was approximately 40 percent black, he estimates the percentage of black track members at about 90 percent. His friendships with these teammates coincided with his being drawn powerfully to the images of the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott and other civil rights actions unfolding on the television screen.

Bill’s sense of connection to this larger world of human concern increased during his days at Graceland. He took to heart beloved teacher Roy Cheville’s axiom, “An unexamined faith is not worth having.” And, as he embraced the challenge to examine his faith, he was drawn to a study of

the Bible, especially of Jesus and the Hebrew prophets. Upon graduation, Bill became editor of *Stride* magazine, the RLDS equivalent of the *New Era*, while also serving as an assistant editor for the *Saints Herald*. In 1966, he returned to Graceland as a faculty member, where he has taught everything from Bible and history of Christianity to American history and government. Before he began his Graceland teaching career, Bill earned a master’s of divinity from Saint Paul School of Theology and, starting in 1967, attended the University of Iowa for the next ten summers, where he studied with prominent historian Sidney Mead before switching to the College of Law, where he earned his degree in 1976.

IN MANY WAYS, Bill’s transformative journey mirrors that of his beloved faith tradition. As the Community of Christ worked to face up to challenging aspects of its history and to rethink its mission, so did Bill. For both of them, the life and ministry of Jesus ultimately became the first source of authority, and a Christ-centered theology of peace, their overriding concern.

As a mantra of sorts for his own sense of calling, Bill chooses Jesus’s announcement in the synagogue at Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry: “to heal the broken-hearted, . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised” (Luke 4:18). Yet while Jesus’s earthly ministry was brief—a sprint, if you will—Bill’s has taken a form closer to his marathoning. Bill’s call to Christian social action has led him to be an active and outspoken advocate for the past four decades for civil rights, women’s issues, and, most recently, gay rights, for which he’s a strong voice in today’s Community of Christ. He’s also been very active in Iowa Democratic politics, “running” and winning four terms on the school board and nearly pulling an upset in the 1972 race for a seat in the Iowa House of Representatives.

A member of the Mormon History Association since 1971, including a term as president in 1982–83, Bill attended his first Sunstone symposium in 1984. He’s missed very few since, giving passionate presentations on matters close to his heart as well as others that help us better understand the Community of Christ. “I really like the critical thinking that goes on at Sunstone symposiums,” Bill explains. “While I enjoy the MHA, the more important questions are being asked at Sunstone.”

Bill is currently preparing several books and plans to teach several more years at Graceland. Of course he is. He’s a marathon man, and the course still holds many more joys before the finish line. ☺



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL SCHOENFELD

THE CHURCH

is in an administration mode that, despite good intentions on the part of the leadership, keeps Americans, their values, and their language in a privileged position at the center of the Church.

cated “out there,” in the field, ergo at the edges, not at the center, from which unchanging, foundational principles emanate. (See figure 3.)

The essentially unchanging character of the Church and its teachings has been a recurring theme in the presidency of Gordon B. Hinckley, who calls the Church “a constant in a world of change” and “an anchor in a world of shifting values.”⁷⁵ Reproducing President Hinckley’s language, *Preach My Gospel* declares that “the teachings of living prophets provide an anchor of eternal truth in a world of shifting values.” In this rhetoric, living prophets figure as emissaries of a fixed truth, not of a progressively unfolding revelation.⁷⁶


Thus, despite a relatively greater emphasis on local adaptation of principles in recent years, uniformity and immutability remain the Church’s central governing values. Flexibility and adaptation are subordinate. Adaptation occurs at the will of the hierarchy—that is, because the hierarchy so instructs and within limits the hierarchy sets.⁷⁷ A space has been created for local and individual initiative that is not perceived as threatening the authority of the center. To recast that in doctrinal language: A space has been created for revelation to individual members that is not perceived as threatening the prophetic authority of Church leaders. For Mormons with a theologically liberal orientation, this may sound dismayingly familiar.

Church leaders appear to believe that principles-oriented correlation solves the problem (if not actually, then at least potentially) of transmitting culture-specific content in the name of gospel verities. The 1986 discussions and the *Missionary Guide* had to be revised in translation to eliminate inapplicable American or First World cultural references or to add material addressing concerns arising in other cultural contexts.⁷⁸ The writers of *Preach My Gospel* seem to have aspired to create a culturally non-descript and thus universal manual that would not require such revision when translated. As noted above, the same aspiration has recently guided the writing of other Church manuals. Church leaders see correlation as promoting a “gospel culture” that, because it is revealed, transcends the particularities of any human culture.

Armand Mauss has cautioned that the “gospel culture” project is susceptible to ethnocentrism, especially given the tendency to recruit Church leaders from among those members “who already seem most amenable and receptive to American

ideas.”⁷⁹ I would underscore that warning even more emphatically, perhaps, than Mauss does. There can be no “gospel culture” transcending human particularity. What Church leaders regard as transcendent principles or teachings in fact represent particular ways of engaging with the texts and traditions that contemporary Latter-day Saints have inherited from their forebears. Official assertions about what constitutes the transcendent essence (the “foundation doctrines and principles”) of the restored gospel reflect the interpretations, experiences, and judgments of the mostly white, American, middle-aged-to-elderly men who form the upper levels of the LDS hierarchy. Indeed, Church leaders’ concerns about separating culture from the gospel arise out of a particular historical era and the particular social and ideological trends that have influenced Church leaders’ thinking (e.g., the multicultural awareness that has permeated American society since the 1960s).

The General Authorities clearly do not want this to be an American church—and they are confident that it is not. The latter point is explicitly made in *Preach My Gospel*. “Help people recognize,” missionaries are instructed, “that the Church is not just another religion, nor is it an American church. Rather, it is a restoration of the ‘fulness of [the] gospel’ (D&C 1:23), the same as was revealed and taught from the beginning.”⁸⁰ Yet in significant respects, the LDS Church is an American church, and *Preach My Gospel* itself bears signs of that. The manual was developed by Church leaders and employees headquartered in the United States within an institution that has been heavily shaped by the patterns and values of American business; the manual was unveiled via a global satellite broadcast originating in the United States, in English; and every missionary worldwide received a copy of the new manual in English because it hadn’t been translated into other languages before it was unveiled.⁸¹ These are all symptoms of a mode of Church administration that, despite good intentions on the part of the leadership, keeps Americans, their values, and their language in a privileged position at the center of the Church.⁸²

If Church leaders want to avoid broadcasting American culture worldwide in the name of the gospel, principles-oriented correlation will not suffice. I would propose a more daring vision: a decentralizing of Church administration that would allow Saints in other parts of the world to engage with the texts and traditions we call the Restoration as freely as American Saints have. In this vision of the future, Latter-day Saints organized at the levels of region, language group, culture, or nation would arrive at more localized understandings of what messages the Restoration has for their particular contexts. They would develop their own ways of organizing in response to the call to proclaim the gospel—and thus their own guides to missionary service, not translations, or even adaptations, of an ostensibly universal English original. But enacting this vision, or something like it, would require a greater trust in the Spirit’s revelations to members, as distinct from the authority of prophets, and a greater dismantling of correlation than Church leaders seem currently prepared to imagine. Whether the long-term future may hold something different for the Church remains to be seen. 

NOTES

1. Adam C. Olson, "News of the Church," *Ensign*, January 2005, retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>; "Preach My Gospel," *Church News*, 6 November 2004, 8.
2. Olson, "News of the Church"; "Teaching from the Heart," *Ensign*, June 2004; Richard G. Scott, "The Power of *Preach My Gospel*," *Ensign*, May 2005. (*Ensign* articles retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>.)
3. The most detailed history to date of the inauguration of the Correlation Committee, including negative reactions by Church and auxiliary leaders to the Committee's growing power, is Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), ch. 7. For earlier (and farther reaching) histories of correlation, see Robert Gottlieb and Peter Wiley, *America's Saints: The Rise of Mormon Power* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984), 58–63; Richard O. Cowan, *The Church in the Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), ch. 17; James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), ch. 20; Frank O. May, Jr., "Correlation of the Church, Administration," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 323–25. One consequence of correlation has been a loss of autonomy for Church auxiliaries and missions in areas such as publishing and finances.
4. Russell M. Nelson, "Divine Love," *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>; "Update," *SUNSTONE*, March 2003, 72–73.
5. Scott, "The Power of *Preach My Gospel*," 29.
6. Jay E. Jensen, "Proselyting Techniques of Mormon Missionaries," master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1974, 75–80; available online at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?CISOROOT=/MormonThesesIK&CISOPTR=4277>, 80. For a useful overview of teaching plans created by missionaries and mission presidents prior to the first standardized discussions, see Lewis Clark Christian, "A Study of the Development of the Missionary Plan of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1950," unpublished paper, 1975, available at the LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. Jay Jensen's thesis offers a history of missionary teaching plans from the 1930s to the 1970s, while a dissertation by George Taylor extends that history up to the creation of the first field version of *The Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel*, in the mid-1980s. See George T. Taylor, "Effects of Coaching on the Development of Proselyting Skills Used by the Missionary Training Center, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Provo, Utah, 1986," dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1987, 18–31.
7. Allen and Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 568.
8. This manipulative quality followed from a tradition of missionaries being instructed to secure the investigator's "agreement" to the doctrines taught. This had been the driving principle of the Anderson Plan and was an explicit element of the philosophy behind *A Systematic Program*. Jensen, "Proselyting Techniques of Mormon Missionaries," 79–80; *A Systematic Program*, 26–27. *A Systematic Program* and its 1961 successor sought to secure investigators' agreement by posing leading questions that had one desirable answer. *A Systematic Program* was blatant in this regard: the dialogues have the elders feeding the investigator answers—e.g., by having him fill in the blank or by pointing to the correct answer on a piece of paper—then proffering compliments such as, "You really know the correct answers, Mr. Brady. It is refreshing to talk to someone who thinks ahead of me" (48, 62, 65). The 1973 discussions repudiated such tactics, instructing missionaries not to "force [investigators] to say what you want them to say." *The Uniform System for Teaching Families* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973), A1.
9. Allen and Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 568, 609–610; R. Lanier Britsch, "Missions and Missionary Work," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-Day Saint History*, ed. Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 764.
10. "News of the Church," *Ensign*, September 1973, retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>; Cowan, *Church in the Twentieth Century*, 282–83.
11. Taylor, "Effects of Coaching," 21–25. Taylor calls the 1981 and 1982 revisions the Modified Version and the Simplified Version, respectively. As near as I can tell, these are the same as the *Uniform System for Teaching Families* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981) and the *Uniform System for Teaching Families, February 1983* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), available at the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City.
12. Taylor, "Effects of Coaching," 27–28.
13. The six post-baptismal discussions were generally to be taught by stake missionaries, to facilitate new converts being fellowshipped into the local church unit (as opposed to their interacting primarily with full-time missionaries).
14. Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), ch. 5.
15. There is one exception to this statement: In October 1982, Church leaders altered the order of the 1973 discussions so that the discussion which included the First Vision was pushed to third place in the series. Consequently, from 1983 to 1985, the discussions began with an exposition of the Atonement and the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, followed (in the second discussion) with the plan of salvation from premortality to the three degrees of glory. This re-arranging of the order of the discussions appears to be an early effort at making missionary teaching more Christ-centered.
16. The instructions accompanying the pilot version of the 1986 discussions reveal that the discussions' creators sensed it might seem odd to postpone the rest of the First Vision story to the third discussion. They therefore counsel missionaries teaching the first discussion to "mention that you will give more detail about [Joseph Smith's] mission during your third visit." *Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), 1–2.
17. The 1973 discussions instructed missionaries to "emphasize the beautiful, positive aspects of the restoration" and "avoid debate about the other churches." Only "if absolutely necessary," should they jump ahead to the Great Apostasy, which in 1973 was taught as part of the fourth discussion. *Uniform System for Teaching Families* (1973), C10, C12.
18. *Preach My Gospel* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 32–33. The term "cycle" does not actually appear in *Preach My Gospel* but was used by Richard G. Scott when he introduced the new lessons to *Ensign* readers ("Teaching from the Heart," note 2, above). Situating the latter-day restoration in a cycle of apostasies and restorations is apparently important to Charles Didier, a member of the Missionary Executive Council, which oversaw the creation of *Preach My Gospel*. Didier had earlier promoted the concept in a special missionary discussion he created sometime in the late 1970s or early 1980s. A version of this discussion, in Spanish, can be found as "Charla de Elder Didier," in *Misión Paraguay Asunción* (Asunción: Paraguay Asunción Mission, 1983), 83–87.
19. The shift in emphasis can be seen from the very titles under which each discussion presents the First Vision. This section in the 1986 discussion is titled, "The Prophet Joseph Smith: A Modern Witness of Jesus Christ," while the equivalent section in *Preach My Gospel* is titled, "The Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith." *The Plan of our Heavenly Father, Discussion 1* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986), 1–10; *Preach My Gospel*, 36.
20. *Preach My Gospel*, 38–39. See also page 103, where the Book of Mormon is called "proof of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith."
21. *Ibid.*, 105. By the same token, it should be noted that the conception of the Book of Mormon as evidence that Joseph is a prophet is not new to *Preach My Gospel*. In the 1986 discussions, that concept was communicated to investigators as part of the explanation of Moroni's promise: the right column of the discussion, containing teaching aids, encouraged missionaries to testify of the power of the Book of Mormon to serve as evidence of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling (*Plan of our Heavenly Father*, 1–19). The difference lies in how Joseph's prophetic calling was explained in the 1986 version of the first discussion as compared to *Preach My Gospel*. In 1986, to say that the Book of Mormon is evidence of Joseph's prophetic calling was to say that the book provides evidence that Joseph was called by God to bear witness of Christ, since that is what the first discussion taught investigators is the calling of a prophet. In *Preach My Gospel*, the Book of Mormon functions as evidence of the Great Apostasy and the Restoration.
22. *Preach My Gospel*, 36.
23. *Missionary Guide: Training for Missionaries* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988), 64, 66.
24. *Preach My Gospel*, 46. Also, *Preach My Gospel* acknowledges that sincere people living during times of apostasy "have worshiped according to the light they possessed and have received answers to their prayers" (36).
25. *Ibid.*, 5.
26. *Preach My Gospel*, 3; Scott, "The Power of *Preach My Gospel*"; "Teaching from the Heart" (note 2, above). M. Russell Ballard likewise used urgent, militant rhetoric when he announced the "raising of the bar" to improve the spiritual preparedness of missionaries: "These are 'perilous times.' We battle literally for the souls of men. The enemy is unforgiving and relentless. He is taking eternal prisoners at an alarming rate. And he shows no sign of letting up." M. Russell Ballard, "The Greatest Generation of Missionaries," *Ensign*, November 2002, 47.
27. In response to an earlier version of this paper, I have twice been asked if I

think the new emphasis on apostasy and restoration is a reaction to declining baptismal rates, as publicized recently by Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Keeping Members a Challenge for LDS Church," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 July 2005, accessed from http://www.sltrib.com/ci_2890645. While it's not hard to imagine that Church leaders *might* have decided to promote a more urgent or militant message out of concern for declining conversions, I cannot document that they *did*. What I can document is that Church leadership characterizes the innovations in *Preach My Gospel* as a response to growing spiritual danger in today's world.

28. Armand L. Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1994).

29. *Preach My Gospel*, 6. Compare page 103, where the Book of Mormon is said to be both "powerful evidence of the divinity of Christ" and "proof of the Restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith." Like most of the 1986 discussions, *Preach My Gospel* has a painting of Christ on the cover; the cover also features a citation from 3 Nephi about coming to Christ through baptism. The effect of this cover design—as opposed to, say, a picture of the First Vision and a text about the restoration of the gospel—is to preserve a readily discernible evangelical dimension in *Preach My Gospel's* representation of missionary teaching.

30. Writing in 1984, the Shepherds observed that in the "last 30 years . . . attention to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ was the single most salient subject at general conference," while talks about Joseph Smith declined during the same period. In 1993, Shipps wrote that "in the past thirty years" there had appeared "everywhere within Mormonism—in the *Church News* and the *Ensign*, in the public statements of LDS officials, in Sunday School lessons, and in talks the Saints give in ward sacrament meetings, as well as in private conversations—an escalating emphasis on the suffering of the Savior, the atonement of Christ, personal salvation, and so on." Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd, *A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism* (University of Utah Press, 1984), 101; Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 341. Craig Blomberg presumably has this same discursive trend in mind when he writes that "Mormons widely perceive a movement over the last fifteen years or so, beginning with the presidency of Ezra Taft Benson, to call their church back to its roots, that is, to the Bible and the Book of Mormon." Craig L. Blomberg, "Is Mormonism Christian?" in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owens (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 326. Other commentators who have alluded, as if it were a given, to Mormonism's "new emphasis on Jesus" or to its "late twentieth-century Protestantism" include Kenneth L. Woodward, "A Mormon Moment," *Newsweek*, 10 September 2001, 48; and Kenneth Anderson, "The Magi of the Great Salt Lake," review of *The Refiner's Fire*, by John L. Brooke, *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 March 1995, 11. The ascendancy of what Kendall White calls Mormon neo-orthodoxy is an analogous development, though White focuses largely on non-correlated discourse. O. Kendall White, Jr., *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987). Signs of what I dub correlation's evangelical turn include the titling of the Book of Mormon (1982); the addition of many Christ-centered hymns to the new hymnal (1985); the summation of the three-fold mission of the Church as inviting all to come to Christ (1987–1988); the redesigned Church logo (1995); the joint statement by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, "The Living Christ" (2000); and the request that journalists refer to the Church as the Church of Jesus Christ (2001).

31. The evangelical tenor of the 1986 discussions had been foreshadowed by the 1982 revision to *The Uniform System for Teaching Families*. That revision rearranged the discussions so that what had been the sixth discussion, "Our Relationship to Christ," became the first. Retitled "Our Acceptance of Christ," this discussion covered the following principles: the true church bears Christ's name; Christ is creator, redeemer, and judge; all people must repent and be baptized to make Christ's atonement operative in their lives. The retitling of the discussion (from "Relationship" to "Acceptance") may have been a response to Bruce R. McConkie's public condemnations, in 1981 and early 1982, of what he perceived as George W. Pace's overly evangelical *What It Means to Know Christ*. Fearing a drift toward "sectarian" Christianity, McConkie declared that Latter-day Saints "should not strive for a special and personal relationship with Christ." Lavina Fielding Anderson, "Context and Analysis: 'You Have Heard True Doctrine Taught': Elder Bruce R. McConkie's 1981–82 Addresses," in *Case Reports of the Mormon Alliance, Volume 2, 1996*, ed. Lavina Fielding Anderson and Janice Merrill Allred (Salt Lake City: Mormon Alliance, 1997), retrieved from <http://www.mormonalliance.org/casereports/volume2/part2/v2p2c06.htm>. I interpret the Pace-McConkie controversy as symptomatic of tensions produced within the LDS community by the mounting shift toward evangelical discourse.

32. Ezra Taft Benson, "A New Witness for Christ," *Ensign*, November 1984, retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>.

33. Ezra Taft Benson, "Come unto Christ," *Ensign*, November 1987; Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God," *Ensign*, January 1988; Boyd K. Packer, "Atonement, Agency, Accountability," *Ensign*, May 1988; Dallin H. Oaks, "What Think Ye of Christ?" *Ensign*, November 1988; Gordon B. Hinckley, "Be Not Faithless," *Ensign*, April 1989; Dallin H. Oaks, "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, March 1994. A fairly well-known, anomalous reference to the Book of Mormon as evidence of the Restoration—though the word "evidence" is not actually used—occurs in Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion," *Ensign*, November 1986. Even here, though, this function of the Book of Mormon was subordinated to the book's witness of Christ and his saving doctrines. (All *Ensign* articles retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>.)

34. Using the online archive of Church magazines at [lds.org](http://www.lds.org), I searched all *Ensign* issues for the keyword combination "evidence" and "Book of Mormon." The last General Authority address in the *Ensign* prior to the Benson presidency that spoke of the Book of Mormon as "evidence" of Joseph Smith's prophetic claims was Gordon B. Hinckley, "Praise to the Man," *Ensign*, August 1983. The next General Authority address to use that rhetoric came eleven years later, just two months before Benson's death, when the *Ensign* reprinted an address Benson had given in 1981 (before his presidency). In 1995, the year following Benson's death, two Seventies referred in general conference addresses to the Book of Mormon as evidence of Joseph Smith or the Church: Robert K. Dellenbach, "The Translation Miracle of the Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, May 1995; Ted E. Brewerton, "The Book of Mormon: A Sacred Ancient Record," *Ensign*, November 1995. Subsequent addresses that used this rhetoric are: Joseph B. Wirthlin, "The Book of Mormon: The Heart of Missionary Proselyting," *Ensign*, September 2002 (the published version of an address Wirthlin gave to new mission presidents in 1999); James E. Faust, "Lord, I Believe; Help Thou Mine Unbelief," *Ensign*, November 2003; Charles Didier, "The Message of the Restoration," *Ensign*, November 2003 (Didier here uses the phrase "convincing evidence," which will reappear in *Preach My Gospel*, which Didier helped create); Henry B. Eyring, "An Enduring Testimony of the Mission of the Prophet Joseph," *Ensign*, November 2003; James E. Faust, "The Keystone of Our Religion," *Ensign*, January 2004 (a reprint of an address Faust gave in 1983, before the Benson presidency); M. Russell Ballard, "Pure Testimony," *Ensign*, November 2004; Richard C. Edgley, "A Still, Small Voice and a Throbbing Heart," *Ensign*, May 2005. Edgley makes the point that the Book of Mormon is "evidence" of Joseph Smith and the Restoration three times in his talk, which was delivered following the publication of *Preach My Gospel*. (All *Ensign* articles retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>.)

35. Faust, "The Keystone of Our Religion," note 34, above. Richard C. Edgley, who refers three times in one talk ("A Still, Small Voice") to the Book of Mormon as evidence of the Restoration, also deploys evangelical Mormon rhetoric when he writes that the Book of Mormon "testifies of the divinity of Jesus Christ" and expands his understanding of Christ's doctrine. For additional examples of recent General Authority addresses that integrate evangelical discourse with references to the Book of Mormon as evidence of the Restoration, see Wirthlin, "The Book of Mormon"; Faust, "Lord, I Believe"; Gordon B. Hinckley, "Four Cornerstones of Faith," *Ensign*, February 2004. Evangelical discourse *not* integrated to the renewed emphasis on the Restoration endured as well in General Authority addresses through the 1990s and to the present, though I am curious to see whether such discourse will now be eclipsed. See F. Melvin Hammond, "The Power of the Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, October 1996; Jeffrey R. Holland, "Missionary Work and the Atonement," *Ensign*, March 2001; W. Rolfe Kerr, "The Words of Christ—Our Spiritual Liahona," *Ensign*, May 2004. (All *Ensign* articles retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>.)

36. Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 346.

37. Shipps attributes the mounting anti-Mormon opposition from the 1970s on to (1) the increased visibility of Mormonism outside the Intermountain West and (2) a "sense of danger" felt when evangelical Protestants in the Moral Majority discovered they "shared with the Saints a common social and political agenda," requiring "strenuous measures to define the Saints as Other." (Reverend Jerry Falwell had invited Mormons into the Moral Majority only to discover that his fellow Baptists refused to be "yoked together with unbelievers.") Though Shipps describes the Saints' "escalating emphasis" on Christ as occurring during the same period as the escalation of anti-Mormon opposition, she does not seem to believe (as I do) that the former is a reaction to the latter prompted by a perceived need to bolster Mormonism's Christian credentials. On the contrary, Shipps types Christ-centered discourse as a sign of Mormon "self-confidence." Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land*, 341, 346–347, 350–351. My reading is essentially the opposite of

Shipp's: evangelical discourse grew out of a desire to avert criticism; self-confidence is betokened by Church leaders' more recent willingness to bring the Restoration back to the fore of their teaching.

38. The disappearance of General Authority statements about the Book of Mormon as "evidence" for the Restoration, beginning in 1984, coincides with the period of the Salamander Letter scandal. One might speculate that the scandal gave Church leaders additional motivation to develop a discourse about the Book of Mormon that did not focus on the evidentiary nature of the book (so as to not seem defensive or to avoid calling to mind the current controversies over questions of evidence in relation to Mormon origins).

39. Quoted in Olson, "News of the Church" (note 1, above).

40. *A Systematic Program*, 37.

41. *A Systematic Program* had insisted, "That which is given here is by way of suggestion. It should not be memorized" (6). By contrast, the 1961 discussions instructed missionaries to "follow the handbook dialogues" and "stick to the logic and scriptures given." Step-by-step instructions for memorizing the 1961 discussions were provided. *A Uniform System for Teaching Investigators* ([Salt Lake City]: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), 3–4.

42. The word count for the 1973 discussions comes from Taylor, "Effects of Coaching," 20 (note 6, above). On memorization techniques, see "Memorization Method," following the title page of *The Uniform System for Teaching Families* (1973); *Large Print Discussions with Mnemonic and Flipchart Aids* ([Provo, UT]: Missionary Training Center, 1979), 96–103.

43. In addition to helping control the orthodoxy of missionaries' presentations, memorizing the discussions could also, in theory, have aided missionaries who were learning to teach in a new language. In actuality, though, the 1973 discussions were written in such an eloquent style that the translations were that much more difficult to memorize, and they were not very useful for helping missionaries master everyday speech. This concern was part of what fueled the attempts to simplify the 1973 discussions. Taylor, "Effects of Coaching," 21.

44. "Improved Discussions 'Teach from the Heart,'" *Church News*, 6 July 1986, 5.

45. The instructions for the 1986 discussions told missionaries to "master the information" in the left hand column (the doctrinal content of the discussions). But the instructions did not tell missionaries that they were free to present that material in their own words, although this had been the intent of the discussion's creators according to both the *Church News* coverage of the inauguration of the 1986 discussions and George Taylor's doctoral dissertation on proselyting skills. *Instructions for the Discussions* ([Salt Lake City]: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986), 1; "Improved Discussions," 5; Taylor, "Effects of Coaching," 28. While I cannot attest to how this was handled in other languages, I know that the Spanish translation of the instructions rendered "master the information" as "aprenderla de memoria" [learn it by memory]. *Instrucciones para el uso de las charlas* ([Salt Lake City]: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986), 2. When I served my mission, I became aware that one of the mission presidents preceding me had expected missionaries to memorize the 1986 discussions, which is not surprising given that memorizing discussions had probably been a major pre-occupation for him during his own missionary service. It is also not surprising that missionaries learning a second language should be inclined to memorize the discussions.

46. An errata sheet in my 1977 printing of the 1973 discussions reminds missionaries "that the discussions were designed to be adapted to the individual needs of your investigators. After memorizing them verbatim, please feel free to adapt them as dictated by the Spirit." "Missionary Discussions—Errata Sheet," in the front matter of *The Uniform System for Teaching Families* (1973).

47. *Preach My Gospel* tells missionaries that "unless directed by the Spirit, you should give the full content of each of the first three lessons in the order in which they are written" (30). Missionaries should therefore "commit to memory the sequence of doctrinal principles" (20). The fourth and fifth lessons in *Preach My Gospel* are designed for greater flexibility: missionaries can decide in what order to teach the material contained in these lessons, and they can take as few or as many visits as they deem necessary to teach the material.

48. *Preach My Gospel*, 141.

49. *Ibid.*, vii, 17.

50. *Ibid.*, vii, 19–21.

51. Hinckley, as quoted in Olson, "News of the Church" (note 1, above); Ballard, "The Greatest Generation," (note 26, above).

52. See *The Missionary's Hand Book* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1937), ch. 4, which discusses the need for missionaries to be guided by inspiration so they can know how to attract a particular individual's interest in the gospel. Likewise, the 1952 discussions told missionaries, "There is no

"ELDER! I THINK
WE'RE IN
QUICKSAND!"

"AND SINKING
FAST!"



"SAY A PRAYER,
ELDER!"

"SING A HYMN,
FRIEND!"



"THIS IS IT!"

"OPEN THE
GATES,
LORD!"



"QUIT MESSING AROUND, ELDERS!
AND UNPLUG THE FONT!"



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infallible formula for teaching the gospel to all men. Character and environment demand great flexibility on the part of the missionary. Each presentation must be suited to the needs and interests of the individual you are teaching. . . . Without the spirit [sic] of the Lord you have no way of knowing the needs of your investigator. . . . [P]ray for the Spirit to direct you. Then strive to keep yourself sensitive to its promptings" (*A Systematic Program*, 20).

53. *A Systematic Program*, 105.

54. My discussion of the shift in how the standardized discussions understand "teaching by the Spirit" is a refinement of material I first presented in "Whatever Happened to that Other Spirit? A Poststructuralist Analysis of the Standardized Missionary Discussions," Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, UT, 14–17 August 1996.

55. *A Systematic Program*, 6, 20; *A Uniform System for Teaching Investigators*, 3.

56. "Instructions," *The Uniform System for Teaching Families* (1973), A1–A3; "Introduction," *Uniform System for Teaching Families* (1981), no page number; *Proselyting* ([Salt Lake City]: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984), 2. In presenting the dual explanation of teaching by the Spirit, the 1973 discussions cited D&C 50:17–22, a passage which would loom large in the 1986 discussions and the 1988 *Missionary Guide* as well. Refocusing attention on the Spirit's influence on missionaries, the 1981 revision of the 1973 discussions cited D&C 84:85 and D&C 100:5–6.

57. See *Proselyting*, 7 for an early schematic of the commitment pattern with its four components: prepare, invite, follow up, and resolve concerns, represented as a linear, though somewhat complex, process of upward spiritual movement. The *Missionary Guide's* schematic of the commitment pattern looked less like a scientific graph, perhaps in an attempt to make the pattern seem less mechanistic.

58. *Instructions for the Discussions*, 1; *Missionary Guide*, 9–10;

59. The writers of the *Missionary Guide* acknowledge that "it is impossible" to summarize the conversion process in a way that will apply "specifically for every person," but they also insist that "some general changes occur . . . with most people" (9). Not long thereafter the *Missionary Guide* uses universalizing rhetoric, calling the commitment pattern "the tool you will use to help others feel the Spirit and obey gospel principles" (42, emphasis mine) and instructing missionaries to "follow" the pattern "in all you do" (44). The definition of the commitment pattern which recurs throughout the *Missionary Guide* at the opening of each chapter on teaching skills (beginning on page 61) calls the pattern a "process" and numbers its components (1), (2), (3), reinforcing a schematic, step-by-step understanding of the pattern.

60. *Preach My Gospel*, 92–93.

61. Inasmuch as it aimed to "promote spiritual feelings" in investigators (*Instructions for the Discussions*, 2), the commitment pattern was liable to become an attempt at emotional manipulation. The 1984 manual *Proselyting* recognized this risk when it cautioned missionaries that "the influence of the Holy Ghost is a sacred gift and is manifested in very personal ways. . . . [D]o not try to force such experiences or expressions upon people" (2). No such warning appeared in the 1986 discussions or the *Missionary Guide*. *Preach My Gospel* does not explicitly repudiate attempts at emotional manipulation. However, abandoning rhetoric about "helping investigators feel the Spirit" or "promoting spiritual feelings" is probably the new manual's attempt to bend missionary teaching in a different direction.

62. *Missionary Guide*, 72–85; *Preach My Gospel*, 92.

63. *Preach My Gospel*, 10–11.

64. *Ibid.*, ix, 146.

65. Demonstrating "effective" versus "less effective" teaching methods had been a ubiquitous pedagogical device in the *Missionary Guide*. That device, together with the terms "effective" and "less effective," has virtually disappeared from *Preach My Gospel* (see pages 183–184 of the new manual for an exception), consistent with the shift from effective technique to inspired adaptation. Again, this shift should not be overstated. Previous standardized discussions acknowledged the need for missionaries to be inspired by the Spirit, and, conversely, *Preach My Gospel* reproduces techniques taught in the *Missionary Guide* (e.g., phrasing commitments as "will you?" questions). Nevertheless, a shift in emphasis has occurred. One striking demonstration of the shift from technique to inspired adaptation is to contrast the instruction about resolving investigators' concerns from *Preach My Gospel* to that from the *Missionary Guide*. The *Missionary Guide* provided an entire unit on the subject (121–140). *Preach My Gospel* contains a single page on the same topic, foregoing specific methods in favor of observing that "how you approach an investigator's concern will depend on the nature of that concern" and counseling missionaries to "pray for the gift of discernment and follow your impressions" (187).

66. *Preach My Gospel*, 20. The point about not having to use every guideline in every situation must be clarified precisely because missionaries—and perhaps

even more importantly, mission presidents—have been accustomed to working with schemas composed of methods to be applied in systematic, step-by-step fashion.

67. *Preach My Gospel*, 155; *Missionary Handbook* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986), 6–7.

68. Dallin H. Oaks, "Teaching and Learning by the Spirit," *Ensign*, March 1997; Don L. Searle, "Major Curriculum Changes in Priesthood and Relief Society," *Ensign*, December 1997; Dallin H. Oaks, "Gospel Teaching," *Ensign*, November 1999. (All *Ensign* articles retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>.)

69. Oaks, "Gospel Teaching"; Searle, "Major Curriculum Changes."

70. Allen and Leonard, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 646–647.

71. Quoted in Don L. Searle, "News of the Church," *Ensign*, April 2003, retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>.

72. James E. Faust, "Strengthening the Inner Self," *Ensign*, February 2003. A prominent earlier example of rhetoric about valuing unchanging principles over changeable programs is Boyd K. Packer, "Principles," *Ensign*, March 1985. (*Ensign* articles retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>.)

73. *Preach My Gospel*, 98. Note how the reference to "living" prophets, rather than "modern" prophets, gives the teachings of the current leaders priority over those of their predecessors.

74. *Ibid.*, 33, 75.

75. "Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley," *Ensign*, August 1996. Hinckley made a similar remark during his first press conference as Church president, in response to a question about whether the Church was likely to change some of its theological positions: Jay M. Todd, "President Gordon B. Hinckley: Fifteenth President of the Church," *Ensign*, April 1995. Hinckley frequently uses the polar star as a metaphor for the constancy the gospel affords in the midst of change. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Let Love Be the Lodestar of Your Life," *Ensign*, May 1989; Jeffrey R. Holland, "President Gordon B. Hinckley: Stalwart and Brave He Stands," *Ensign*, June 1995; Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Miracle of Faith," *Ensign*, May 2001; Gordon B. Hinckley, "Till We Meet Again," *Ensign*, November 2001; Gordon B. Hinckley, "We Look to Christ," *Ensign*, May 2002; Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stay on the High Road," *Ensign*, May 2004. (*Ensign* articles retrieved from <http://www.lds.org>.)

76. *Preach My Gospel*, 75.

77. I am summarizing here the official vision of how adaptation is supposed to occur in the Church. Clearly, in reality, members adapt Church teachings and norms independent of the hierarchy's preferences—no doubt to the hierarchy's chagrin. See, for instance, Dallin H. Oaks's complaint about teachers who use materials or topics other than those designated in the Church's lesson manuals ("Gospel Teaching," note 67, above).

78. For example, the Spanish translation of the fifth 1986 discussion included a section on the Ten Commandments, not found in the English original, to facilitate teaching investigators not to pray to images or saints. *Una vida como la de Cristo, Charla 5* ([Salt Lake City]: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986), 5–7. Revisions to eliminate inapplicable cultural references are comparatively trivial, but one example can be found in the Spanish translation of the *Missionary Guide*. The English version included an anecdote about missionaries having to take the bus to a teaching appointment because their car has broken down; the Spanish translation changed that scenario to missionaries having to walk to their appointment because of a bus strike. *Missionary Guide*, 32–33; *Guía Misionál: Capacitación para misioneros* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1988), 36.

79. Mauss, *Angel and the Beehive*, 207–208. Mauss accurately predicted that Church leaders would cope with internationalization by reducing Mormonism "to a small number of basic and indispensable doctrines and principles" which would constitute a "spiritual core [linking] Mormon communities around the world into one universal religion" while allowing "each cultural community [to] adapt and embroider the core in accordance with its own needs" (209).

80. *Preach My Gospel*, 7.

81. Scott, "The Power of *Preach My Gospel*" (note 2, above). Translations into Korean, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish were released early in 2005. Scott forecast that translations into most other missionary languages would be ready by the end of 2005.

82. Hugo Olaiz and I have elsewhere critiqued ways that correlation privileges American values and language: John-Charles Duffy and Hugo Olaiz, "Correlated Praise: The Development of the Spanish Hymnal," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 89–113; Hugo Olaiz, "Lost in the Translation: Mormon Culture and the Myth of the Perfect Language," paper presented at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, UT, 8–11 August 2001.