

Chapter 13

Education, the Church, and Globalization

Elder John K. Carmack

THE LORD HAS made it clear that our salvation is tied in with our attitudes and actions toward the poor. Apparently God loves the poor since He has made so many of them. Now President Gordon B. Hinckley and his associates in the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have given a tremendous new emphasis on sharing with the poor in announcing the formation of the Perpetual Education Fund and department. The sole purpose of this fund is to help our young men and women in poor communities of the world gain opportunities beyond what their resources allow.

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

This has been one of his themes in sermons for a long time. For example, in 1978, at Brigham Young University, he said, “I heard a man of prominence say the other day, ‘I have amended the language of my prayers. Instead of saying, “Bless the poor and the sick and the needy,” I now say, “Father, show me how to help the poor and the sick and the needy, and give me the resolution to do so.”’”¹

A Parable

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

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

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

They become excellent missionaries working side by side with elders and sisters sent from the United States and Canada. . . . They return to their homes. Their hopes are high. But many of them have great difficulty finding employment because they

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, “And the Greatest of These Is Love,” *BYU Devotional Speeches of the Year*, February 14, 1978, 24.

have no skills. They sink right back into the pit of poverty from which they came.²

These returned missionaries fit the parable's description of twelve sons who served their father obediently. Some come home to rich educational and job opportunities. They are the ones in the parable clothed in robes and occupying the place of honor. The ones who are clothed in rags are those who go home to nothing but grinding poverty and hopelessness. It is for that second group of sons that the program has been announced and is being readied. We are positioning the Church to reach out to our young men and women in less-advantaged parts of the world.

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

Training and Education

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

2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Perpetual Education Fund,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 51.

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

The scope of such a curriculum is breathtaking, requiring a lifetime of study—continuing beyond this life. In his books and sermons, President Hinckley often counsels the Saints to get all the education, knowledge, and training they can. And where the economies of the countries allow it, the Saints are making great strides in education, knowledge, and training. Church researchers, moreover, have found that the greater the attainment of formal education, the more likely it is that the person will be found attending Church meetings regularly and giving service to others.

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

Success in making new converts is often enjoyed among the poorer and more humble brothers and sisters. How can we help them without destroying their dignity, self-reliance, and initiative? It is a great concern. We are searching for the answers. Just adding to the enrollment of our few great institutions of higher learning, though

very important, is not the answer to this larger question we have raised. We know the doctrine. It admonishes us to help the poor, be one, be just in the treatment of our sons and daughters. As James points out, we can't just say, "Be ye warmed and filled" to a brother or sister who is naked and destitute of daily food. Rather, "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17).

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

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

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

Similar Initiatives

Those of us who are older remember the tremendous debt of gratitude we felt for what Tom Brokaw called “the Greatest Generation.”³ Millions of our youth had been in the service of the country for four or five years, forgoing the years they would otherwise have been working, gaining an education, and starting a career. They had performed, on the whole, a magnificent service for their countries and for the free world in the fight against tyranny. To help them, bold action was required. The nation created what became known as the GI Bill of Rights. Literally millions received education and training under this powerful program. Other millions received loans for starting businesses, buying farms, and acquiring homes. The program was a tremendous boost to them and to the nation. This bold program laid a new foundation of prosperity and opportunity.

Brokaw said, in the introduction to his best seller, that these soldiers “became part of the greatest investment in higher education that any society ever made, a generous tribute from a grateful nation. . . . They were a new kind of army now, moving onto the landscapes of industry, science, art, public policy, all the fields of American life. . . . They helped convert a wartime economy into the most powerful peacetime economy in history.”⁴ On a global and international scale, is that not what the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have in mind with the Perpetual Education Fund?

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

3. See Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998).

4. Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation*, xx.

its own and others under the noble administration of Elder Ezra Taft Benson.

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

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

We are reminded that, while serving as an envoy in Europe for his new country, John Adams, in a letter to his wife, Abigail, once said: "I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural history, naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture in order to give their children a right to study paintings, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and porcelain."⁵

Perhaps President Hinckley is saying that our young adults need to study computer technology, bricklaying, electrical installation, design and drafting, teaching skills, automobile repair, and nursing in order to allow them to marry, serve in the Church, pay tithing and fast offerings, and become contributing members of their communities. Later some of their children may have the means and

5. David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 236–37.

background to study a profession and gain all that universities have to offer. In the meantime, the work available and the skills needed should be our curriculum and the place to use our resources to help. Much of Thomas Jefferson's effort was to lead "a crusade against ignorance, establish and improve the law for educating the common people."⁶ Is that not the essence of the bold new initiative of the Church? Is it not a crusade against the lack of opportunity for the common people of the Church? Shouldn't that be a major emphasis of Church members today?

Looking Back for Answers

History often gives us context and answers to present concerns. For example, after the death of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum in Carthage Jail, Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve moved into the place of leadership. They did not forget the poor. In a meeting held in the Nauvoo Temple to discuss and plan the migration to the West, Elder George A. Smith of the Twelve recalled the covenant they had made in Missouri—not to leave behind any of the poor—and suggested it was time for another such covenant. President Brigham Young moved "that we take all the saints with us to the extent of our ability."⁷ They did that to their great credit and to the credit of the Church members who shared with each other.

Having succeeded in establishing a foothold in these valleys, they faced another great need—to emigrate the thousands of converts in Europe who wanted to join them. But how were they to do it? Knowing that a huge and complex organizational task faced them, they incorporated a new organization under the laws of the

-
6. Thomas Jefferson, *The Jeffersonian Cyclopaedia: A Comprehensive Collection of the Views of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900), 274.
 7. "Circular Regarding When Saints Were Leaving, October 11, 1845," *Messages of the First Presidency*, comp. James R. Clark (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 1:284.

provisional state of Deseret. They called it the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company. President Young, at the organizational meeting, reminded the Saints of the covenant to “never cease our exertions, by all the means and influence within our reach, till all the Saints who were obliged to leave Nauvoo should be located at some gathering place of the Saints.”⁸ He was elected president of the company and others were elected to various offices. A fund separate from tithing was established. He then called the people of Europe to gather here. They built into the program the requirement of repaying their loans to maintain self-reliance and dignity in the people. Many could and did pay their own way. Others needed partial loans to make it. Some needed assistance for all of their expenses. Never mind, they did it.

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

They boarded in Liverpool. The noted author Charles Dickens boarded one of the emigrant ships carrying the Saints to the New World and published this report:

Two or three Mormon agents stood ready to hand them on to the Inspector, and to hand them forward when they had passed. By what successful means, a special aptitude for organisation had been infused into these people, I am, of course, unable to report. But I know that, even now, there was no disorder, hurry, or difficulty. . . . I went on board their ship to bear testimony against them if they deserved it, as I fully believed they would; to my great astonishment they did not deserve it; and my predispositions and tendencies must not affect me as an honest witness. I went over the Amazon’s side, feeling it impossible to deny that, so far, some remarkable influence had produced

8. “Second General Epistle, October 12, 1849,” *Messages of the First Presidency*, 2:34.

a remarkable result, which better known influences have often missed.⁹

What these approximately 100,000 Saints added to the Church in these valleys is impossible to estimate. They became the Church in large measure. And a great many owed their ability to come to the West to the loans from the Perpetual Emigrating Fund. Repayment was hard and was often made in labor and in kind. Leaders extended tremendous efforts to keep the fund equal to its task. The Moroni Fund, the Provo Fund, the Ephraim Fund, and the Scandinavian Concerts helped. Sarah Ann Peterson's plan to have sisters donate eggs laid on Sundays spread from her community in Ephraim to surrounding communities. The plans and thoughts of the Church revolved around and were dominated by this program of emigration. There was nothing like it anywhere.

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

Back to the Present and Future

We no longer need all these people and their skills in these valleys—they are bursting with growing population. We need to do the same thing in less-advantaged countries that we once had to do here. And President Hinckley, on behalf of the Brethren, announced the plan and way to do it. Before making that announcement, he began

9. Charles Dickens, *The Uncommercial Traveller and Reprinted Pieces* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 228, 232.

developing a plan to organize a new department and establish a plan to accomplish the purposes of the new Perpetual Education Fund. He invited contributions. All contributions would go to assist the needy young adults in less-advantaged areas of the Church. The local administration of the program was delegated to institute directors in those countries.

The Perpetual Education Fund Board of Directors has approved the program designed by the new Church department. The plan of action has been created. The expenses of the department will be minimal because the only paid employee is its secretary. The budget for travel and other expenses will be paid not out of the fund but by the Church budget. The department is establishing the program on a small basis, as President Hinckley counseled, and, by the end of the year [2001], loans for worthy and needy recipients will be available in all the less-advantaged countries of the world where we have institutes of religion and a number of returned missionaries. The scope of the plan is enormous, limited only by the size and income of the fund. The fund is rapidly growing due to the generosity of the Saints. This program greatly enhances the future of disadvantaged returned missionaries and other young adults.

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

Conclusion

The meaning and value of the Perpetual Education Fund will probably not be known and appreciated for a decade or two. Surely

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

© by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Elder John K. Carmack is managing director of the Perpetual Education Fund and an emeritus member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. This essay was presented at “Education, the Church, and Globalization,” the International Society’s twelfth annual conference, August 2001, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.