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Introduction

The Religious Educator

Perspectives on the Restored Gospel

The editors of *The Religious Educator* are pleased to be able to provide this inaugural volume of articles for teachers and students of religious education in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our hope is to provide readers with carefully prepared, inspirational, and information-packed writings on a wide range of

subjects explicitly associated with the Restoration. Teachers, authors, researchers, and students of Latter-day Saint studies at every level will appreciate discussions of relevant ideas and issues from a perspective of faith. This issue provides a taste of what readers can expect in the future. Regular features include pieces on Teaching the Gospel; studies on Scripture and Doctrine; LDS Church History; and Devotional essays. The contributions to each issue are carefully reviewed and edited by experienced teachers, writers, and scholars.

In the area of teaching the gospel, in this issue Brothers Dahl, Richardson, and Millet provide insights about how Church members both teach and learn. Everyone involved in teaching, researching, and writing about the gospel will appreciate Larry Dahl's frank discussion of "Gospel Scholarship and Gospel Teaching." He discusses how these endeavors should be undertaken and how they strengthen the Church and its members. Using the scriptural example of Philip and the Ethiopian court official (see Acts 8), Matthew Richardson describes how every gospel teacher is a guide, facilitator, leader, manager, demonstrator, and example. Robert Millet examines the purpose and meaning of "Bearing Pure Testimony" in the Church today. Church members sometimes fail to recognize their role in this important aspect of Latter-day Saint worship. Hearing heartfelt testimonies can transform a person, and bearing testimonies can bring reforming changes as well.

Since the days of his mortal ministry, Christ's nature and his place in our world have been debated by Christians in many lands. The inspired words of the Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi to apostate Nephites reveal Christ's roles in our lives as few Christians understand these roles. Paul Hoskisson's "The Fatherhood of Christ and the Atonement" helps us understand Abinadi's teachings about this subject in Mosiah 15:1-8. Students of the Book of Mormon who are interested in the evidence of the Near Eastern origins of its

writers will also enjoy Terrence Szink's "The Personal name 'Alma' at Elba." The explanation in this article of another link between the Book of Mormon and the peoples of the Near East is easy to understand and singularly persuasive. Ammon's missionary experiences have inspired generations of readers of the Book of Mormon. Robert Line's "The Middoni Principle" culls lessons from Alma 20 that will enhance teachers' and students' understanding of how obedience to God affects their lives.

Why does Nicodemus appear only in the Gospel of John? Which lessons does John intend to teach the world through Nicodemus? In Keith Wilson's "The Message of Nicodemus," readers will find the answers to these questions and find themselves rethinking their own relationship to Jesus.

The New Testament is also the setting for Andrew Skinner as he takes readers back to a time and place in which olives were fundamental to life. Readers of "Autumn, Olives, and the Atonement" will learn that the olive symbolizes life-changing principles that apply regardless of where a person lives.

Paul Peterson's article reminds us how the Lord accomplishes his purposes through his children. President Heber J. Grant "knew such people . . . and never [forgot] their sacrifices, their contributions, their dedication." President Grant reminds us how essential we all are in building the kingdom of God.

Richard Bushman has studied how the revelations to Joseph Smith were put together. He is "impressed with how effective the revelations are. . ." and curious about their rhetorical impact upon believing readers. Professor Bushman's treatment of this seldom explored topic in "The Little, Narrow Prison of Language: The Rhetoric of Revelation" will interest everyone studying The Doctrine and Covenants.

Laura Card has studied the lives of the early settlers in the mountain west by reading thousands of pages from their journals. The thoughts and impressions these first-hand accounts brought to her mind inspired three poems that provide readers a unique view of life on the frontier: "Homesteading," "Writing Lesson, 1874, Great Basin—No Paper," and "The Garden of Sarah DeArmon Pea Rich."

The Religious Educator has the same goal that all Latter-day Saints have for themselves, their families, and their neighbors: reinforcing a personal assurance through the Holy Ghost that God lives, Jesus Christ is his Son and our Savior, and that Joseph Smith and all the prophets who have followed him were commissioned by Christ to direct the kingdom of God on earth. It is the hope of the editorial board and the authors of this issue's articles that readers' testimonies and understanding of the gospel will grow as they read these pages.

Gospel Scholarship and Gospel Teaching

Larry E. Dahl

Every field of learning has accepted rules of scholarship for those who wish to be acknowledged and respected by their peers. The so-called pure sciences have carefully defined procedures known as the "scientific method," beginning with a hypothesis and proceeding through evidence, experimentation, conclusion, and verification. The social sciences have some variations of that method, but still employ rather strict standards of procedure for any who wish to be taken seriously in their field. Anyone trained in history, for example, is well schooled in the rules for evaluating evidence—primary versus