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The Chicago Experiment

After the crisis of 1930–31, Church education remained relatively intact, but the reverberations from the struggle affected the system in a number of ways.¹ The close call before the state board deeply concerned Joseph F. Merrill. Even while the crisis was ongoing, Merrill launched a system-wide reformation. He knew that many of Williamson’s claims showed legitimate flaws within the system, and he aimed to shore up the damage. Many of the concerns brought against the system did not stem from the structure of Latter-day Saint religious education, but from its educators. The system simply wasn’t very professional. Teachers hired into the system needed practically no academic qualifications other than an ability to relate to youth. One teacher from the time described the work of a seminary teacher as going “to the football games with [the students] and [doing] whatever is necessary to show them the relationship of life and their religion.”² Many of Merrill’s teachers lacked even a high school diploma. One of Merrill’s first actions as commissioner was to send out a directive asking all teachers to obtain a high school degree as quickly as possible.³ With seminaries growing and more institutes on college campuses, there was a dire need for well-trained teachers. Merrill’s efforts to

raise the standard inadvertently led to the establishment of the field of Mormon studies, along with its conservative and liberal wings.

A New Kind of Educator in the Church

Establishing a full-time corps of religious scholars raised another series of questions. In a Church of lay clergy, what was the role of a group of professional theologians? In the early Church there were no professional religious educators. Leaders in the Church hierarchy acted in this role, interpreting scripture and doctrine with the weight of ecclesiastical authority. While the intellectual lights of the Church's first generation included such luminaries as Orson Pratt, Parley Pratt, B. H. Roberts, and others, these men operated without schooling in theology. In the Church-sponsored academies, the duty of teaching theology was spread among the schools' academic departments.⁴ Even at Brigham Young University, the hub of the Church school system, the only faculty member considered a full-time professor of theology was President-Emeritus George H. Brimhall.⁵ Would this new group of religion scholars be defenders of the faith or ambitious Pharisees?

For years Church leadership showed an aversion to divinity studies. In 1911 several teachers at Brigham Young University caused an uproar when they introduced higher biblical criticism and the theory of evolution into the curriculum.⁶ Controversy over these new approaches eventually resulted in an intervention by Church leaders and the dismissal of three professors from the university. The Church Board of Education directly intervened, with Apostle Heber J. Grant later noting, "We were of a unanimous opinion that it would be unsafe for them to continue teaching at the Brigham Young University."⁷ Though the controversy appeared to center more on the teaching of evolution than the introduction of higher biblical criticism, it did produce a chilling effect on intellectuals wishing to embark in higher education with regard to religious and theological studies.⁸

This dampened enthusiasm for theological studies until Sidney B. Sperry, a young seminary teacher, left on his own initiative to attend the Divinity School at the University of Chicago in 1925.⁹ Sperry received



Russel B. Swensen (right) was one of several young scholars recruited by Joseph F. Merrill to study at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.

his master's degree from the Divinity School in 1926, specializing in Old Testament studies.¹⁰ Around the same time, Heber C. Snell, a teacher at Church-owned Snow College, attended the Pacific School of Religion and majored in biblical studies. In 1928 Snell was invited to lecture at the Aspen Grove summer school, teaching two courses entitled "Historical Development of the Religion and Literature of the Hebrews" and "Beginnings of Christianity."¹¹ The following year Sperry was invited to teach two classes in Old Testament history and literature.¹²

Snell's and Sperry's display of biblical scholarship was eye-opening for Commissioner Merrill and the other teachers. Russel B. Swensen wrote of Snell's class, "I was particularly impressed by his historical approach to the subject and his deep appreciation of the religious message of the Old Testament."¹³ T. Edgar Lyon, a teacher present at Sperry's lectures, felt "an exhilaration that he had not experienced in any religious education."¹⁴ Lyon felt he was entering a thrilling new realm of biblical scholarship involving the use of original sources and languages. Swensen noted, "[Sperry's] friendly personality and his ability as a teacher were most stimulating to me, as well as to most of the other young teachers who were planning to devote their lives to Church education."¹⁵

Joseph F. Merrill was also deeply intrigued by Sperry's teaching. Merrill's background in university work gave him more of a cosmopolitan perspective than the previous heads of the system, and he saw no danger in inviting outside scholars to instruct the teachers. Influenced by Sperry, Merrill invited Edgar J. Goodspeed, a distinguished New Testament scholar from the University of Chicago, to lecture at BYU the following year.

If Sperry's teaching had interested many teachers in studying at the University of Chicago, Goodspeed's teaching that summer completely persuaded them. As one of the most eminent New Testament scholars of the era, Goodspeed amazed young corps of Latter-day Saint teachers with his scholarship. In 1923 he published his own translation of the New Testament. It quickly became a bestseller, elevating him to the front ranks of biblical scholarship. Regarding Goodspeed's teaching

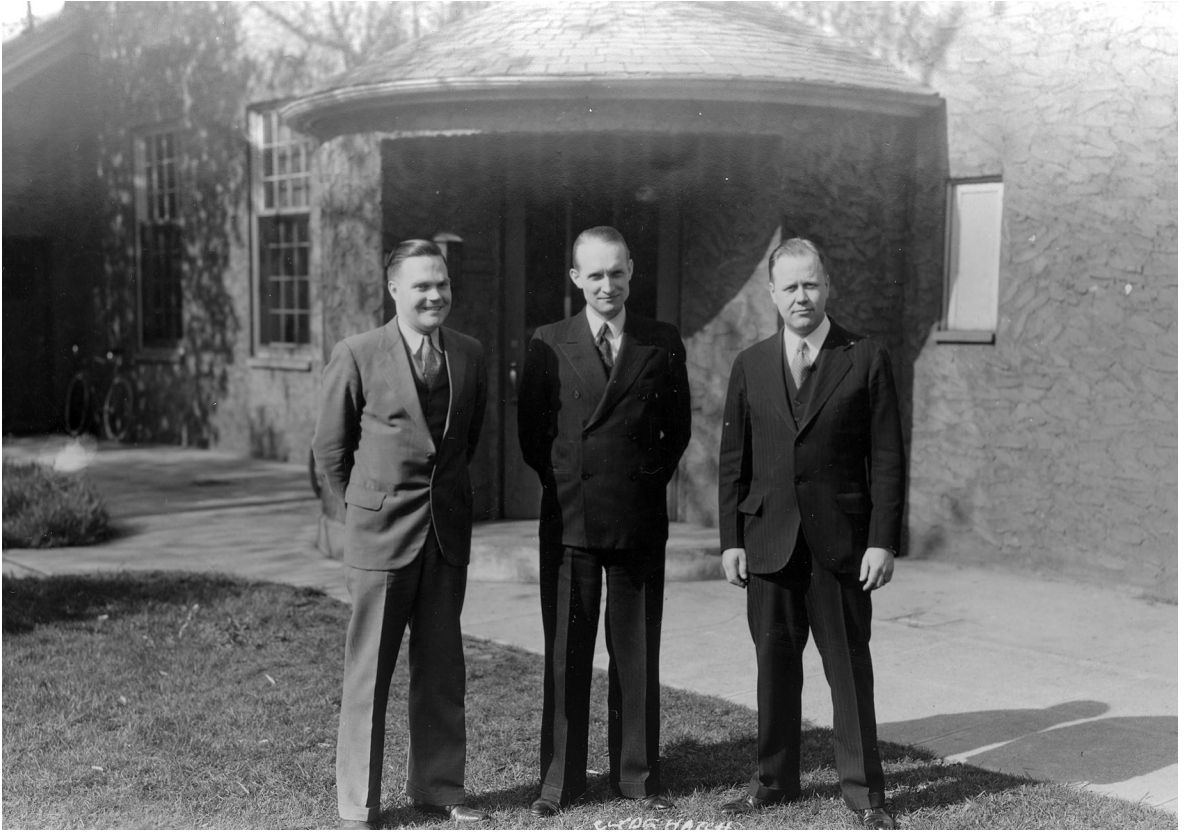
style, T. Edgar Lyon said, “He was a marvelous lecturer. I was amazed at how well he had these [things] timed. He would never allow any interruption in the classes. . . . He would start lecturing and he’d finish his lectures on the last sentence and the bell would ring. I haven’t seen anything so well timed in all my life. Then on Fridays we’d have a free-for-all discussion on what we wanted.”¹⁶

After Goodspeed had taught for several weeks, a few General Authorities attended his class. They were so impressed that they invited Goodspeed to deliver a Sunday afternoon sermon in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. To Lyon, Goodspeed’s lectures were “the most exciting class [he’d] ever had up to that time.” Lyon remarked, “I learned more in Goodspeed’s one hour lectures . . . for six weeks than I would have learned in a Sunday School class in a hundred years because the individual had his subject matter and knew how to present it. And he didn’t have any people sleeping in his class. . . . He was a scintillating lecturer.”¹⁷ Russel Swensen, another young teacher, recalled, “Those summer classes at Aspen Grove really changed my thinking. . . . It really set me on fire to really get more knowledge. I became aware of how little I knew about the scriptures and about history. . . . It was the beginning of a turning point in my life.”¹⁸

The Call to Chicago, 1930

Inspired by Goodspeed’s teaching, Merrill decided to further intertwine the Chicago Divinity School and Church education by calling several promising teachers to travel to Chicago and obtain advanced degrees in religion. With all the trouble caused by Williamson’s report, and the need for qualified teachers to staff the institutes, Merrill was taking the first steps to establish a competently trained group of religious educators.

Merrill, a highly trained scholar himself, wanted the institute teachers to have the very best training available. To him it seemed natural that a religion teacher should attend divinity school. In a letter to two Latter-day Saint professors at the University of Idaho, Merrill explained some of his reasoning: “We felt it very necessary, that at Moscow



Daryl Chase (center) was another one of the teachers asked by Joseph F. Merrill to attend the University of Chicago Divinity School. Courtesy of L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.

especially, our Director should have a scholarship in the Biblical and religious field comparable to the scholarship that the University would demand of any one appointed to head one of the departments. For example, if the University is looking for someone to head the department of Physics, it will limit its search to a trained physicist.”¹⁹ Merrill was determined to raise the bar on scholarship and professionalism in religious education, and a group of graduate-trained educators seemed the best way to accomplish this.

With all these factors in play, Merrill extended a call to three seminary teachers—Daryl Chase, Russel Swensen, and George Tanner—to

attend the University of Chicago's School of Divinity. Letters were sent to them in the spring of 1930, with Merrill explaining, "We have certain positions in the higher division of our education work for which we must prepare suitable men as soon as possible."²⁰ Merrill even went so far as to make provisions for the men to receive half salary and loans from the Church Education Department during their work in Chicago.

Besides Sidney Sperry's already existing relationship with the school and the impressions left by Goodspeed's teaching, there were several compelling reasons to send seminary teachers to the University of Chicago. Still, the choice was daring, particularly given the school's reputation and background: the Divinity School was among the most liberal in the nation. At the time, in 1930, the Divinity School was only thirty-eight years old, founded in 1892 by William Rainey Harper. Harper stressed research and academic freedom. The views of the Divinity School's scholars fell heavily on the "modernist" end of the spectrum, stressing historical methodology, along with critical, linguistic, sociological, and psychological approaches toward the scriptures.²¹ Many conclusions reached by the Chicago scholars ran contrary to orthodox views of the scriptures among Latter-day Saints. Goodspeed, probably the most well-known scholar from the school, was a good example of this departure from orthodoxy. In his writings on the New Testament, he questioned Paul's authorship of nearly half the epistles, among them Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews. Goodspeed also ascribed authorship of 1 and 2 Peter to "a Roman Christian, in the name of the apostle."²² Goodspeed also favored nontraditional explanations for authorship of many Old Testament books as well. He believed that only about half the book of Isaiah came from the prophet's pen, while the rest was "a combination of several collections," making it "a veritable anthology, or rather an anthology of the most brilliant and varied Hebrew prophecy."²³

Doubtless there were professors on both sides of the spectrum, but on the whole the young school prided itself as being a "hotbed of radical theology."²⁴ One of the school's scholars noted, "Theologically, the Chicago school broke with the older patterns of authoritative Protestantism, its creeds, confessions, and Biblical inspiration.

They attempted to retain as much as possible whatever was vital and valid in the older Protestant theology, though they believed that the deposit was relatively small.”²⁵ The school was evangelistic in promoting its views, publishing widely and sending its scholars on a variety of speaking engagements everywhere possible. At the same time the school emphasized nonconfrontational approaches toward those who held more conservative views on scripture. Russel Swensen recalled, “In all the time I was there I never heard one criticism by the professors against the fundamentalist or conservative point of view.”²⁶

The choice of the Chicago school also thrust Latter-day Saints headlong into the larger modernist and fundamentalist battles occurring in most American denominations. The use of higher biblical criticism—scientific methods in the study of the Bible—was making waves in almost all realms of American religion, and the Chicago school was an epicenter of the controversy. The fundamental issues encompassed the whole scope of how religion should be approached. Modernists favored a fusion of scientific and religious thought, while fundamentalists saw this approach as a Faustian bargain that could ultimately rob religion of its mystique and beauty. The Chicago Divinity School was a stronghold of the modernist camp. The dean, Shailer Matthews, authored a book in 1924, *The Faith of Modernism*, that best encapsulated the modernist mantra.²⁷ The most famous conflict between the fundamentalists and the modernists was the 1925 Scopes Trial, which was heavily influenced by the Chicago scholars. When Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan argued in a Tennessee courtroom over evolution and the inerrancy of the Bible, Darrow, a Chicago attorney, used ammunition supplied by the Chicago scholars.²⁸ Among the Chicago scholars, Goodspeed was somewhat moderate, but extreme views of the modernist persuasion still abounded on the campus.

Sperry, in selecting the Chicago school, and Merrill, in following his lead, were probably well aware of its liberal leanings. Indeed, an irony of the situation was that only a very liberal school would accept Latter-day Saints as students in the religious climate of the time.²⁹ Nor was the “Chicago experiment” the Church’s first encounter with higher biblical criticism or with the University of Chicago. William H.

Chamberlin, a Latter-day Saint scholar who had studied ancient languages and biblical criticism, sparked a controversy at BYU in 1911 that eventually led to the dismissal of several professors. Chamberlin stayed on at the university but with a reduced teaching load. The incident led to several strongly worded statements from Church President Joseph F. Smith on the dangers of “false educational ideas.”³⁰

With a knowledge of all these things, why take the chance on the Chicago school? When George Tanner was asked why Merrill took the risk of sending the men to such a liberal climate, he replied, “Sperry had been back there and apparently this hadn’t hurt him at all.” He and Daryl Chase had concluded, “Joseph F. Merrill had so much faith in the gospel that he thought if we went there we’d be able to find the material so that we could just positively lay out the proof for all of our claims.” Chase particularly believed that “Joseph F. Merrill was naive enough to believe that [our studies] would lead us into proof positive of the various positions we had taken.”³¹ While the men may have believed Merrill was being naive, there is ample evidence to show that he also was aware of the risk he was taking. Each of the men was informed that if they changed their views, they might not have a position when they returned.³² Overall, Merrill’s attitude indicated a cautious optimism about the venture. Shortly after their arrival at the school, he wrote to Swensen, “We are glad to find that the religious atmosphere there is full of sympathy and is not wholly critical and scholastic. . . . After all, religion is based upon faith. And religious faith, of course, does not rest wholly on demonstrable facts.”³³

Life at the University

The university was a completely different environment from anything the men had experienced before. They studied in Swift Hall, under ceilings decorated with wooden carvings of watchful angels and ornate architecture filled with biblical scenes.³⁴ The student body was diverse, containing middle-aged ministers, former missionaries in the Far East, army chaplains, and, despite the segregationist attitudes of the time, several African American students. One of the African American

students, Benjamin Mays, later became the teacher of Martin Luther King Jr. and delivered the eulogy at King's funeral.³⁵ Most of the men roomed together in student housing, enduring the humblest of conditions. George Tanner recalled taking his wife and three children with him and living on a budget of less than a hundred dollars a month.³⁶

The close quarters prompted many religious exchanges. Swensen wrote home that a young minister in the hall had invited him to speak at his church to correct some hurtful comments about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints made during a sermon there.³⁷ When an evangelical minister cornered Swensen in a student lounge and began attacking the Church, Swensen was surprised when several young Baptist and Presbyterian ministers rose up to defend the faith.³⁸ The men also invited some of the prominent Chicago professors to speak in the local Latter-day Saint branch.³⁹ However, the school community wasn't entirely welcoming. Sperry, who returned to Chicago to complete his PhD during this time, warned the men, "As a Mormon in Swift Hall I either made enthusiastic friends or enthusiastic enemies."⁴⁰

Relationships with the professors were for the most part warm and cordial. The men studied under some of the most prominent biblical scholars of the time, including William C. Graham, an Old Testament specialist; John T. McNeil, a medieval-church historian; and William C. Bower, a professor of religious education.⁴¹ The Latter-day Saint men felt an obligation to act as missionaries to influence the faculty toward more positive views of the Church. In large measure, they were successful. William Warren Sweet, a Chicago professor of American history, had written a book that was highly critical of the Latter-day Saint faith. He later remarked to Tanner that after meeting the young Latter-day Saints, he would rewrite the book if given the chance.⁴² Graham remarked privately to Chase and Swensen that he believed Joseph Smith was inspired of God.⁴³ In a gathering in which it was jokingly noted that Goodspeed had gone to Utah to "try to convert the Mormons," Goodspeed rose and offered praise for the Latter-day Saint religion's vitality and system of lay leadership.⁴⁴

Writing home from Chicago, Swensen was full of praise for his professors. He wrote to assuage his father's concerns, saying, "Before you

condemn the scholars and thinkers it would be worth the price to investigate their way of thinking. They have no diabolical scheme to undermine the truth, but the reverse, to discover it.”⁴⁵ Swensen gushed over the “stimulus in study when sitting at the feet of brilliant professors” and wrote, “The past year will be a bright spot in my life.”⁴⁶ George Tanner also found himself quite enamored with the school: “I learned more about the Bible and things there in a semester than in a lot of our Church institutions in five times that length of time.”⁴⁷ At the same time, the students perceived some tension among the Chicago faculty. In another letter Swensen noted, “The school has a strong group of skeptical, agnostic professors but our dean is a courageous defender of the faith as well as an expounder of the faith. He is often the butt of sharp attacks from conservative Christians but there is no abler teacher of religion in the light of modern science.”⁴⁸ Swensen came to nearly idolize Goodspeed, writing home of “the most delightful intimacy with this great scholar” and noting that Goodspeed was “as charming as he is famous for his learning.”⁴⁹

When T. Edgar Lyon arrived at the Divinity School in 1932, he was less enamored with its environment. He wrote a scathing assessment of the Chicago scholars’ methodology to his father, confiding, “The professors are from the Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregationalist, Unitarianist and Disciples (Campbellites) churches. Down in their hearts they are all Unitarians (that means infidels) or agnostics.” He continued, “I fail to see how a young man can come here to school, then go out after graduation and still preach what we call Christianity. The U. of Chicago is noted as being the most liberal (and that means modernism) school in America. All religion is taught as a product of social growth and development, and anything supernatural is looked upon as merely a betrayal of one’s own ignorance and primitive mind. They make no attempt to harmonize science and the Bible—they merely throw the Bible away and teach scientific ‘truths’ as the only thing to follow.”⁵⁰

Lyon felt that although the professors feigned enlightenment, they could be just as dogmatic in their views as the most ardent fundamentalist. He wrote to his family, “Their God, here at this University, is ‘the

cosmic force of the Universe,' 'the personality producing force of the cosmos,' the 'in all and all' and a few more phrases just as unintelligible and meaningless. I readily see why the modern preachers talk about psychology, sociology, astronomy, prison reform, etc., in their churches on Sunday—that is all there is left to talk about after they have finished robbing Jesus of His Divinity, and miracles, and resurrection." Lyon was also astounded by the arrogance of the school's teachers: "The more I see and hear of it, the more it makes me appreciate the simple truths and teachings of . . . 'Mormonism,' even though we are called primitive. . . . I think they are just as narrow minded in their interpretations as they claim we are in ours."⁵¹

Contemporary writings from the Chicago school indicate that Lyon was fairly accurate in describing its teachings. Shailer Matthews, the school's dean, was most famous for his writings on the evolution of the concept of God in human thought. In contrast to the anthropomorphic God of Latter-day Saint theology, Matthews taught, "God is not a being, nor a principle, not simply these activities; for the word 'God' is our conception and experience of such activities in human relations."⁵² Lyon comes close in the letter to an almost-verbatim quoting of Matthews, who defined God as the "personality-evolving activities of the Cosmos."⁵³

While Lyon felt that his emphasis in religious history, rather than theology, spared him the brunt of the "modernist" teachings, he was also deeply concerned about the attitudes of his fellow Latter-day Saint students, who he felt might be abandoning their beliefs to fit into the new environment. In the same letter to his father, he wrote, "We have several of them [Latter-day Saint students] here on campus who think that they are outgrowing our little narrow-mindedness about our doctrines, and try to go with the world by attempting to take all of the supernatural elements out of our religion." Divisions began to appear among the Latter-day Saint students at Chicago, with Lyon writing, "Brother Sperry, who receives his Doctor of Philosophy degree here next Friday, and I are the two 'Orthodox Mormons' around here, and many of the others laugh at us, for our simple trusting faith."⁵⁴

Aside from Lyon's letters, there is additional evidence that some of the teachers sent by Merrill began down a path leading away from their

theological foundations. George Tanner spoke of “a regular transformation, a liberation in clear thinking.”⁵⁵ Tension began to grow between the more orthodox Latter-day Saint students and their freewheeling counterparts. After Tanner completed his master’s degree and returned west to the Moscow, Idaho, Institute of Religion, Swensen noted some tension between Lyon and his wife, Hermana Lyon, and the original Latter-day Saint students: “It seems quite a while since we were indulging in some hilarious theological observations. We haven’t had any from Lyon. . . . Last night Daryl [Chase] and I were down to his place for dinner. His wife asked us to explain some of the ‘new theology.’ . . . Like good priests we changed the subject.”⁵⁶ Other new students were drawn to the school’s teachings as they arrived. Upon Carl Furr’s arrival, Swensen noted, “Furr is taking the ‘cure’ quite easily and nicely. His background in literature leaves him more open minded to the historical scientific way of thinking.”⁵⁷

During a trip back to Utah, Swenson and Chase discovered that some Church leaders were skeptical about the venture as well. While in Utah, they had the opportunity to visit with eminent historian B. H. Roberts in his office at Church headquarters. When Swensen informed Roberts that his professors were urging him to write a thesis on a Latter-day Saint topic, Roberts wryly replied with a puckish smile and mock hyperbole, “Young man, don’t ever write a thesis on a Mormon subject. If you do, you’ll be cut off from the Church. Half the people in the Church would apostatize if they knew the true history of the Church.”⁵⁸ After hearing this from Roberts, Chase chose as the subject of his master’s thesis “The Early Shakers,” while Swensen chose “The Rise of Sects as an Aspect of Religious Experience.”⁵⁹ Tanner’s thesis, “The Religious Environment in Which Mormonism Arose,” indeed generated a fair degree of controversy. He reflected, “I was a little amazed when I got into find some things. For instance, I’d always been taught that the Word of Wisdom, the section of the Doctrine and Covenants on the Word of Wisdom, was just like lightning out of a clear sky. I got there and started digging and found the genesis of that thing and the roots.”⁶⁰ After Tanner secured his master’s degree and returned home, Merrill asked him to publish some of his findings in the Church

section of the *Deseret News*. Tanner recalled, “I got nasty letters from all over but I had the evidence.”⁶¹

Weathering the Great Depression

Merrill’s work to fund the Chicago scholars is a testament to how important he felt their work might become in the Church. The Great Depression severely affected Church funding for education. Fortunately for the Church, the process of removing itself from the field of secular education had already begun, freeing up some resources. However, in 1929 the transfer of most schools was still several years away, so budget cuts were demanded from all sectors of the educational system. As tithing funds dwindled, it became clear that drastic measures might be called for.

In 1932 the Church Board of Education announced a ten-percent salary cut for all administrators and teachers in the Church Department of Education. Franklin S. Harris, the president of BYU, wrote to Merrill expressing the willingness of BYU employees to submit to the cuts. Merrill assured Harris that all Church employees were enduring similar cuts, not just those from the Department of Education. He reassured him that “a restoration will be made at the earliest feasible time” but added, “No one wants to cut your budget, at all, but the income of the Church is going rapidly from bad to worse, resulting in the First Presidency looking with very grave concern upon every item of expenditure.”⁶²

While Merrill attributed the plan to the First Presidency, the “reduce and retain” method likely originated with him. A year earlier, in 1931, Merrill wrote a letter published in the *Salt Lake Tribune* that suggested the same plan be followed by governmental leaders to reduce expenditures. His letter read in part, “Instead of reducing expenses by dismissing employees, thus adding to the depression flame, let public and private administrations keep their employees and divide the money available for services among them. This means during the period of depression a reduction in salaries, but it means more property owners will be able to pay taxes this fall and it means to keep dire want from the

door of many a home.”⁶³ Merrill’s solution represents his basic strategy for keeping Church education intact during the depression. As a result, few lost their positions, though everyone was asked to make sacrifices.

Merrill’s plan was better than unemployment, but the effect of the plan on some educators was still grave. Salaries for seminary teachers went into a steep decline during the early years of the depression. In 1935 salaries dropped to a low of just under \$1,600 from an average of nearly \$2,100 dollars a year in 1932, representing a loss of almost a quarter of the total salary.⁶⁴

Amid such hard times, Merrill called for all Church educators to become full-tithe payers. Writing to the presidents of Church schools in 1931, he said, “According to reports, there is all too great a number of teachers who pay only a part, if any, tithing. Since all the schools are maintained out of the tithing to the Church, and primarily as agencies in teaching religion to the students, it is felt that the teachers ought to be sincere Latter-day Saints—and the payment of tithing is one test of sincerity.”⁶⁵

At Merrill’s request, faculty meetings were called at all Church schools to stress the importance of paying tithing. As Merrill suspected, a surprisingly low number of Church educators were full-tithe payers. For example, at BYU only 49 out of 102 members of the faculty and staff were full-tithe payers, 33 were part-tithe payers, and 7 paid no tithing. There were no records for 13 of the faculty, and 1 was not classified.⁶⁶ During the rest of his service, Merrill continued to urge BYU and the other Church schools to employ only full-tithe payers and active Latter-day Saints.

Merrill’s plans for expanding the seminary system were severely limited by the economic crisis. Only five new seminaries were established during his time as commissioner, and after 1931, Church funds were so restricted that no other seminaries were established for several years. With an air of melancholy, Merrill wrote to T. Edgar Lyon, “How long are present conditions going to last? Last year and the coming one we are permitted no increase in the number of seminaries, though twenty-five have been asked for. This year there is not opportunity, under the instructions we have, to bring in a single new teacher.”⁶⁷

Merrill was forced to be flexible with the way seminaries operated in order to keep them open. In 1932, when the enrollment of the seminary in Blanding, Utah, dipped below Church requirements, he allowed the seminary to continue if they could find proper teachers who would be willing to serve for half pay. Seminary continued under this arrangement in Blanding until 1954.

Growth of the seminary program had been exponential in the 1920s but was now greatly diminished due to the Great Depression. Of the five seminaries established during Merrill's service, three were specifically designed to offset the closing of LDS College in Salt Lake City. Such stagnant growth must have been discouraging for Merrill, yet the fact that the program did not shrink in the face of such economic hardships is remarkable. The only exception seems to be the divestiture of the Church junior colleges, which had been planned long before the Depression began. In light of such difficult times, the transfer of the Church schools turned out to be an incalculable benefit. Without the closure of the academies and the transfer of the junior colleges to the state, it is unlikely that the seminaries and institutes could have survived.

The End of the Chicago Experiment

During the early 1930s, Latter-day Saint teachers continued to attend the Chicago Divinity School in increasing numbers. In total, eleven men earned advanced degrees at Chicago during this period.⁶⁸ As the decade continued, fewer and fewer students attended the school, and the relationship between the Chicago scholars and the Church withered. When Joseph F. Merrill was called as an Apostle in 1931 and again when he was sent to preside over the European Mission in 1933, the program was dealt a serious blow from which it never fully recovered. Church leaders began to be skeptical of the liberal spirit of the Chicago school and worried that its approach to the scriptures could undermine the faith of the Latter-day Saint students. As evidence of this, after 1934 no additional efforts were made to bring Chicago scholars to BYU to teach and train Church educators. In the summer of

1934, Apostle John W. Widtsoe served as the instructor of the summer trainings for Church teachers.⁶⁹ As the depression wore on, a lack of funding was certainly a factor in the decision to sever this tie as well. In addition, when Sidney Sperry and Russel Swensen arrived home and began teaching in the BYU Religion Department, the increasing pool of Latter-day Saint scholars with advanced training may have no longer necessitated the hiring of outside scholars.⁷⁰

Chicago Influence in the Church Educational System

When the Chicago teachers began arriving back in Utah, the results were mixed. Those who seemed most contented were Sidney B. Sperry and Russel Swensen, who landed in the Religion Department. The worst grumbling came from the men who returned to the seminary classroom. Daryl Chase, assigned to teach at a high school, wrote to Swensen, “It is next to impossible to keep from slipping backwards intellectually in such an environment. . . . It is not that I am overworked, but the monotony is killing. Six classes of the O.T. daily to little children who have to be told the meaning of half of the words in their text. God of my fathers, why am I so cursed!”⁷¹ In a similar vein, Chase wrote to T. Edgar Lyon, “I used to think I knew how to teach the Old Testament to high school students but after my work at the University of Chicago, I discovered what an impossible task it was to teach the Old Testament as it actually is, and at the same time feed the religious life of young boys and girls. For that reason I persuaded my associate teachers to relieve me of all Old Testament duties.”⁷²

Chase also cast a critical eye on the higher leadership of the Church. He wrote to Swensen, “Am I completely nuts, or do the facts show that we are facing intellectual bankruptcy in the leadership of our people? . . . The mass of the people have stopped playing the old game of follow the leader. . . . Yea, verily, authoritarianism has played its chief role unless it can be backed up with a more vigorous intellectualism.”⁷³

Shortly after his return from Chicago, Heber C. Snell caused an uproar at a January 1937 meeting of Church institute directors. In an address entitled “Criteria for Interpreting the Old Testament to College

Youth,” Snell publicly questioned the historicity of the book of Jonah and traditional authorship of the later chapters of the book of Isaiah. Snell remarked, “We ought to be governed in our judgments in internal evidence of the books themselves, and by such external evidence as may exist, rather than by mere tradition.” Snell continued on, stating that evolution proved “not a blind arrangement for continuing species in the world, but a method used by and worthy of a God whose chief glory is intelligence.”⁷⁴ Apostle Joseph Fielding Smith was so alarmed by Snell’s declarations that he wrote to Franklin L. West, the Church commissioner of education at the time, saying, “If the views of these men become dominant in the Church, then we may just as well close up shop and say to the world that Mormonism is a failure.”⁷⁵

Church Leaders Speak Out

Merrill was serving as president of the European Mission when many of these controversies took place, but other General Authorities began to publicly respond to some of the more heretical attitudes appearing among religion teachers in the Church. J. Reuben Clark Jr., the First Counselor in the First Presidency, gave a stern rebuke during the summer meetings of the religion teachers in 1938. Certain passages of the address almost read as if they were being delivered to those teachers sent to Chicago: “On more than one occasion our Church members have gone to other places for special training in particular lines; they have had the training which was supposedly the last word, the most modern view, the ne plus ultra of up-to-dateness; then they have brought it back and dosed it upon us without any thought as to whether we needed it or not.” Clark told the teachers, “Before trying on the newest fangled ideas in any line of thought, education, activity, or what not, experts should just stop and consider that however backward they think we are, and however backward we may actually be in some things, in other things we are far out in the lead, and therefore these new methods may be old, if not worn out, with us.”⁷⁶ Clark also warned that if unorthodox teaching continued, “[they would] face the abandonment of the seminaries and institutes and the return of Church colleges and

academies.”⁷⁷ Clark’s address later became required reading for Church religious educators,⁷⁸ but at the time it was received as a severe rebuke. One teacher offered up his resignation that night, while another called the address⁷⁹ “an expression of medieval theology.”⁸⁰

Legacy of the Chicago Experiment

As the years progressed, the teachers who were sent to Chicago eventually came to move on the spectrum from full orthodoxy to near heterodoxy, with most standing somewhere in between. Sidney B. Sperry was on the orthodox end of the spectrum and used his training to write scores of books defending the traditional beliefs of the Church. While many of those trained at the Chicago school questioned the authorship of Isaiah, Sperry chose as his master’s thesis “The Text of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon.” Sperry left his divinity school training with a keen desire to use its methodologies to focus not only on the Bible but also on the other standard works.⁸¹ When the first men after him arrived in Chicago, Sperry wrote enthusiastically to Swensen, “The two of us are going to have a lot of pleasure doing Book of Mormon and Pearl of Great Price problems.” In the same letter, he indicated that he had already found linguistic evidence tying the book of Abraham to the book of Genesis.⁸²

T. Edgar Lyon remained a firm advocate of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout his career. Even while in Chicago, Lyon showed a strong devotion to the unique scriptures of the faith. Discussing his thesis with several of the professors, William W. Sweet insisted that Lyon refer to the Doctrine and Covenants as “purported” revelations. Lyon refused, insisting that they *were* revelations. After further discussion, Professor Shirley Jackson Case intervened, much to Sweet’s consternation. Lyon was allowed to retain his statements because Joseph Smith referred to the writings as revelations, and his followers believed them to be such.⁸³ Lyon enjoyed a long career teaching at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion and authoring several key Church texts focusing on Church history and the Doctrine and Covenants.

Russel Swensen had a long and distinguished career at BYU, teaching in both the Religion and History Departments. He stayed close to his Chicago roots but seems to have also followed the Chicago school's admonition to avoid confrontation. Reflecting on his career, Swensen offered his own assessment of his teaching: "I was aware of our Church traditions. I made it a purpose in teaching to be honest in what I taught, to believe everything I said. Things that I knew might be too disturbing to an unprepared mind, I would not even bring up. I'd teach them the principles of research, of historical method."⁸⁴ In his writings on scripture, particularly the New Testament, Swensen quoted extensively from Goodspeed, even supporting some of Goodspeed's more controversial explanations of authorship. But where Goodspeed often made absolute statements about his theories, Swensen was always careful to include a lengthy discussion of all the sides involved, then offer his opinion.⁸⁵ In 1947 Swensen left the Religion Department for the History Department. He served as chairman there from 1949 to 1954. He eventually wrote three manuals for the Sunday School on the New Testament and more than thirty articles for the Church magazines.⁸⁶

As mentioned earlier, among the teachers who went to Chicago, Heber C. Snell had the most controversial career. After returning from his divinity training, Snell taught at the Pocatello Institute of Religion, then later at the Logan institute. His correspondence indicates that he had little patience for those he characterized as "fundamentalists." His letters to Sterling S. McMurrin, also a close correspondent of Chase, provide a window into the thinking of some of the more liberal teachers of the period. He wrote to McMurrin, somewhat jokingly, "What would you think of forming a combination—and getting the power from somewhere—either to make the fundamentalists in the Church repent or put them out? You observe that I have a great zeal for the truth, and knowing how sadly they are short of this precious thing I think something should be done about it—something drastic, like calling down fire on them or have them eaten up by the bears."⁸⁷ Snell held serious misgivings about the nature of the institute program, including Church leaders' emphasis on holding social activities within the institutes. He wrote to McMurrin, "We substitute socials for salvation, we must 'draw

our students' by catering to their pagan desires all the way instead of teaching them Christian truth. I am beginning to be 'fed up.'"⁸⁸

Snell and Sperry, the two polar ends of the spectrum, dueled more than once over the issues of scriptural interpretation. Their final encounter in the late 1960s offers a circular symmetry to the Chicago movement. The two teachers who first sparked interest in divinity school training at Aspen Grove would, near the end of their lives, pick up the discussion once more. The two old partisans wrote opposing essays in the spring 1967 volume of *Dialogue*. Snell was frank in his disapproval of the Bible's status in the Church, writing, "My work as a teacher of the Bible in the LDS collegiate institutions over a period of a quarter of a century has failed to convince me that our people have made much advancement in biblical knowledge."⁸⁹ Sperry responded, "Here's the rub—the Mormon people, including your reviewer, don't happen to believe that either Snell or his 'interpreters' have proved their point. There is too much supposition, and guess work in their exegesis, not enough real proof. If one has to depend upon authority, we would rather depend on the authority of a great prophet like Joseph Smith, than upon commentators who, sincere and useful in their way, can make no great claims to heavenly wisdom."⁹⁰

Legacy of the Chicago Experiment

What was the outcome of the Chicago experiment? The full impact of those brief years in the 1930s may be immeasurable, except to say that they significantly influenced the development of the philosophy of religious education in the Church. The experiment certainly had an impact on the relationship Latter-day Saints had with divinity schools in general. No religious educators in the Church system attended a divinity school for nearly thirty years after the Chicago experiment. When several did begin attending again, they did so of their own volition and without Church sanction.⁹¹ Russel Swensen wrote that of those involved in the Chicago experience, all except for Sperry, Tanner, Lyon, and Snell eventually left religious education for other pursuits. When Swensen collected statements for an article he wrote about his expe-

riences in Chicago published in 1972, he contacted all of the remaining men who traveled to Chicago and learned that most held positive feelings about their experience.⁹² These reflections, written nearly forty years after their experience at the divinity school, also highlight the importance of the experiment in the minds of its participants. George S. Tanner wrote that the Chicago experiment “resulted in *mutual* benefit, that is, benefit to the scholars who came and the students they met. The net gain to the LDS department was considerable; we learned that non-Mormon scholars were honest, sincere, and interested in our welfare. We got acquainted with a number of their scholarly books and liked them.”⁹³

T. Edgar Lyon complimented the Chicago movement at the time, calling it “a landmark in an educational outreach which the Church had never known before, and which has profoundly influenced the teaching in the seminaries and institutes since that day.” He wrote, “It was a time of an intellectual and spiritual awakening which was the entering wedge that put the Church educational system in contact with the ongoing mainstream of Christian scriptural and historical research. This outlook has aided in the metamorphosis of the LDS Church from a sectionally oriented to a worldwide Church in less than forty years.”⁹⁴ Heber C. Snell was more negative in his assessment of the overall effect of the Chicago venture: “Regrettable as it may be, the effect of the visiting scholars on the Church as an institution appears to have been negative. Their work at the Church University seems not to have been appreciated by our Church leaders.”⁹⁵

Lyon best captured the far-reaching impact of the experiment and of Merrill’s decision to send the teachers to Chicago. Though there was no lack of enthusiastic amateurs within the faith, the creation of the seminary program gave rise to the first group of professional religionists, and the BYU Religion Department launched the first scholarly inquiries into the faith. Within a few years, such notable luminaries as Hugh Nibley, Glen Pearson, and Ellis Rasmussen joined Sidney B. Sperry at BYU and began producing the kind of scholarly examinations and apologetic works that Merrill intended the experiment to produce.⁹⁶

Sperry and his colleagues fell on the conservative end of the spectrum, but the Chicago experiment was just as important in founding the liberal branch of the academic study of Latter-day Saint culture, history, and theology. Heber C. Snell, Sperry's ideological opposite, is an important founding father of this manner of Latter-day Saint scholarship. Toward the end of his life, Snell admitted, "I just can't believe that we are the one true church. I have to say that. I think we have a good church in many respects and a good people, very good people, better than the church is."⁹⁷

Another key figure was George Tanner, who remained a fixture at the Moscow, Idaho, institute for decades after his return from Chicago. According to Tanner, his "liberal views" caused some alarm among Church leaders, but he was left alone because of his work with the students.⁹⁸ Tanner wore the badge of "Mormon liberal" with honor. Tanner defined a liberal as "a person who is not afraid of change" and decried his ideological opposites, saying, "Conservative people don't give up on old ideas easily. *Religious* conservatives hardest of all!"⁹⁹ Tanner felt that fundamentalist Latter-day Saints had practically "apotheosized" the Bible and other scriptures and felt that "we should take the Bible for what it is."¹⁰⁰ Tanner felt that Christian service was more important than a claim to absolute truth. He once remarked, "Instead of my saying, 'I know this is the true Church,' I'll say, 'for my money this is the best Church.' For many folks the divinity of the Mormon Church is the important thing. To me how well it is doing its job is the important thing."¹⁰¹ Tanner didn't hesitate to share his views with his students. Leonard Arrington, the famous Latter-day Saint historian, recalled learning from Tanner as a young institute student. Tanner, he wrote, "taught me to be Christian first and a Mormon second. That is, to put first emphasis on Christian virtues, and second emphasis to the more unique aspects of Mormonism."¹⁰² Arrington was also influenced by Tanner's divinity school training: "I most appreciated his introducing me to the latest biblical and historical scholarship. . . . I was happy to be introduced to the Moffat, Goodspeed and J. Powis Smith translations—versions that I enjoyed reading, not just for proof-text on doctrine, but for exciting narrative discourse."¹⁰³ Arrington's Smith-Goodspeed

Bible went with him through his collegiate experiences and his service in World War II and remained on his desk—battered, annotated, and underlined—until near the time of his death.¹⁰⁴

Joseph F. Merrill seems to have never harbored any regrets in having launched the Chicago venture. Russel Swensen recorded a poignant moment with Merrill, years after the episode: “I saw Brother Merrill just before he died and thanked him for what he’d done for me in opening my eyes. I think the Chicago experience really was one of the greatest things of my life. At that time, he said, ‘I still believe I was right. Unfortunately, I’m the only one of the authorities who could see that way.’”¹⁰⁵

Joseph F. Merrill and Church Education

In the summer of 1933, Joseph F. Merrill was released as Church commissioner of education. Most of the initiatives that began under Merrill’s watch remained in their formative stages. Some of his most important works were completed during his tenure in office. Only a few months before Merrill’s departure, the governor of Utah signed into law the bill transferring Weber and Dixie Colleges over to state control.¹⁰⁶ Of the six junior colleges under Church control when Merrill assumed office, five survived. Weber, Snow, and Dixie Colleges all successfully came under control of the state of Utah, laying the foundation for the junior-college system in Utah. Weber and Dixie later became full universities.¹⁰⁷ Gila College in Thatcher, Arizona, became Eastern Arizona College in 1933.¹⁰⁸ The Idaho state legislature rejected several attempts to transfer Ricks College in Idaho, but Merrill and his successors kept the school on life support until economic conditions improved.¹⁰⁹ The only outright closure was Latter-day Saints’ University (LDSU) in Salt Lake City, and that school was never likely to receive acceptance as a transfer given its close proximity to the University of Utah. Even after LDSU closed, its School of Business remained open and eventually grew into LDS Business College.¹¹⁰

At times, Merrill’s pragmatic, cost-cutting approach to education made him a controversial figure. Managing the system often meant

long hours of travel followed by hostile reception. During his visits to Rexburg, Merrill found himself in the midst of an emotionally charged community and became an unpopular figure among some of the college's supporters. William Berrett, a close associate of Merrill's during this time, recalled a trip to Rexburg, where he asked Merrill, "Shall I take you to the President's home? I'm sure he would like you to stay with him." "No," he said, "I'll have to stay at the hotel. I'm sure while he might let me in he wouldn't appreciate my coming!"¹¹¹ When a local resident attended a meeting to discuss the possible closure of the college, Berrett recalled, "The attitude was almost one of defiance, with a threat to secede from the Church and use the tithing paid by Idahoans in Idaho, and not for the BYU. I feel, however, that these local people are barking up the wrong tree. The stake presidents did not mince words, either, when they criticized Dr. Merrill."¹¹² Merrill endured the criticism, trusting that this difficult transformation was ensuring the future of Latter-day Saint education. By the end of his tenure as commissioner, it was clear his efforts were beginning to succeed, with his creations taking on a life of their own.

For instance, the institutes of religion became a major success, providing religious training to thousands of young Latter-day Saints in a number of diverse locations. As a cost-saving measure, the institutes exceeded Merrill's expectations, though he was less pleased about the rigor of the studies conducted in the institute program. While Merrill sought to staff the institutes with the most adept intellectuals available, the institutes took on a greater social dimension. This was perhaps inevitable, given the need to attract young people in any era and of any religious persuasion. But Merrill remained a firm believer in the intellectual mission of the institute. Two years before his death, Merrill visited the institute constructed at his old home, the University of Utah. T. Edgar Lyon, one of Merrill's Chicago educators and now a venerable scholar in Church history, remembers walking by Merrill's side when he came to a hall in the building connecting the classroom and a student banquet hall, lounge, and dance hall. According to Lyon, Merrill looked at the classrooms, then glanced at the social hall and told him, "You know, I'm not so sure we might not have been better off if

the building had stopped here. I'm not so sure that the social part that [is] out here is one of the things we should provide for students." Lyon later reflected, "He was thinking in terms of an intelligent, enlightened approach to the gospel in the classroom."¹¹³

Merrill's work as commissioner demonstrated his faith in his convictions. He was fearless in the face of critics outside the faith, fearless to his critics within the faith, and fearless in the face of intellectual inquiry. In carrying out his work, Merrill not only kept the Church system financially solvent, but he also created an approach for religious training that was flexible enough to meet the needs of his people as they spread beyond the Intermountain West and throughout the world.

Notes

1. Major sources for this chapter were drawn from the papers of the Church teachers who attended the University of Chicago's School of Divinity at the request of the Church in the 1930s. Valuable collections included the papers of Russel B. Swensen, located in L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. The papers of Sidney Sperry, also located in L. Tom Perry Special Collections, were also an invaluable resource. Extensive use was also made of the papers of J. Reuben Clark, also located in L. Tom Perry Special Collections. The extensive collection of T. Edgar Lyon, which also provides a valuable window into this period, are located in L. Tom Perry Special Collections and in the Church History Library in Salt Lake City. The massive collection of Sterling McMurrin, located in Special Collections in the J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah, also provided a wealth of correspondence and documentation for the struggles recorded in this study. In addition, the Everett L. Cooley oral history project, also in the University of Utah Special Collections, contains several interviews with Church teachers from this period, most notably Heber C. Snell. The papers of George S. Tanner, housed in the University of Utah Special Collections, were also helpful. The massive papers of Heber C. Snell, located in the Special Collections of the Merrill-Cazier Library at Utah State University, contain copious documentation of the battles fought over orthodoxy in the Church Educational System during this time. Also contained at the Utah State University Special Collections are the papers of Daryl Chase, which provided valuable context.
2. William E. Berrett, interview by Merrill Briggs, 10 August 1970, in Merrill Briggs, *A History of the Development of the Curriculum of the Seminaries*

- of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.
3. Joseph F. Merrill to All Seminary Teachers, 1 October 1928, UA 1092, box 32, folder 2, George A. Brimhall Papers, BYU.
 4. Gary James Bergera and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1985), 53.
 5. Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 2:286.
 6. Philip K. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 129–34. Ironically, Joseph Peterson, one of the teachers dismissed during the controversy, went to the U, where he became embroiled in the 1915 controversy described earlier in this volume.
 7. Heber J. Grant Journal, 11 February 1911, Church History Library, 10.
 8. See Gary James Bergera, “The 1911 Evolution Controversy at Brigham Young University,” in *The Search for Harmony*, ed. Gene A. Sessions and Craig J. Oberg, <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/the-1911-evolution-controversy-at-brigham-young-university/>.
 9. T. Edgar Lyon oral history, interview by Davis Bitton, 18 and 25 November, 2, 9, 16, 30 December 1974, 6, 13, and 20 January 1975, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU, 161.
 10. David H. Yarn, “Sidney Sperry Reminiscence,” in *They Gladly Taught: Ten BYU Professors*, ed. Jean Anne Waterstradt, 3 vols. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University and the Emeritus Club, 1986–88), 1:160.
 11. *Brigham Young University Quarterly* 24, no. 3, 43, UA 1102, box 3, folder 2, BYU Quarterlies Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.
 12. *Brigham Young University Quarterly* 25, no. 3, 43, BYU Quarterlies Collection, BYU.
 13. Russel B. Swensen, “Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School,” *Dialogue* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1972): 40.
 14. T. Edgar Lyon Jr., *T. Edgar Lyon: A Teacher in Zion* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 115.
 15. Swensen, “Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School,” 40.
 16. T. Edgar Lyon oral history, interview by Davis Bitton, 1974–75, BYU, 93.
 17. T. Edgar Lyon, interview by Frederick S. Buchanan and Marshal B. Poulson, 7 February 1973, 11–15, 28, MSS 2372, box 2, folder 11, Thomas Edgar Lyon Jr. Research Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.
 18. Russel B. Swensen oral history, interview by Mark K. Allen, 13 September 1978, UA OH 32, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU, 9.
 19. Joseph F. Merrill to E. J. Call, G. L. Luke, and W. V. Halverson, 18 April 1931, UA 618, box 1, folder 2, Sydney B. Sperry Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.

20. Joseph F. Merrill to Russel B. Swensen, 10 March 1930, MS 1842, box 2, folder 12, Russel B. Swensen Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.
21. Swenson oral history, 11.
22. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Goodspeed Parallel New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 443, 480, 534.
23. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Story of the Bible* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), 24.
24. Charles Harvey Arnold, *Near the Edge of Battle: A Short History of the Divinity School and the "Chicago School of Theology," 1866–1966* (Chicago: Divinity School Association, 1966), 34.
25. Arnold, *Near the Edge of Battle*, 59.
26. Swenson oral history, 11.
27. See Shailer Mathews, *The Faith of Modernism* (New York: AMS Press, 1924, 1969).
28. William Hynes, *Shirley Jackson Case and the Chicago School: The Socio-Historical Method* (Chico, CA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1981), ix.
29. T. Edgar Lyon Jr. *T. Edgar Lyon: A Teacher in Zion* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 132.
30. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1919), 312–13. Philip K. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 129–34, see also Boyd K. Packer, "The Snow-White Birds" (Brigham Young University Conference address, 29 August 1995), and Bergera, "The 1911 Evolution Controversy at Brigham Young University."
31. George S. Tanner oral history, interview by Davis Bitton, 24 August 1972, OH 9, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, 11.
32. Swenson oral history, 10; Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 40.
33. Joseph F. Merrill to Russel B. Swensen, 21 July 1930, box 2, folder 12, Swensen Collection, BYU.
34. Jay Pridmore, *The University of Chicago: An Architectural Tour* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), 54.
35. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 41.
36. Tanner oral history, 10.
37. Russel B. Swensen to Swen L. Swensen, 19 December 1932, Swensen Collection, BYU.
38. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 41.
39. Swensen to Swensen, 2 March 1931, Swensen Collection, BYU.
40. Sidney B. Sperry to Russel B. Swensen, 20 November 1930, Swensen Collection, BYU.
41. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 40.
42. Tanner oral history, 12–13.

43. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 40.
44. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 42.
45. Swensen to Swensen, 21 September 1931, Swensen Collection, BYU.
46. Swensen to Swensen, 21 September 1931, Swensen Collection, BYU.
47. Tanner oral history, 11–12.
48. Swensen to Swensen, 10 December 1931, Swensen Collection, BYU. The "dean" Swensen is referring to is most likely Shailer Matthews, the dean of the Divinity School.
49. Swensen to Swensen, 28 January 1933, Swensen Collection, BYU.
50. T. Edgar Lyon to parents, 21 August 1931, T. Edgar Lyon Collection, Church History Library, cited in Lyon, *Teacher in Zion*, 131.
51. T. Edgar Lyon to parents, 21 August 1931, cited in T. Edgar Lyon Jr., *Teacher in Zion*, 131.
52. Shailer Matthews, *The Growth of the Idea of God* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 213–14.
53. Matthews, *Growth of the Idea of God*, 219.
54. T. Edgar Lyon to parents, 21 August 1931, cited in Lyon, *A Teacher in Zion*, 132. Lyon probably has reference here to Ralph Chamberlin, Joseph Peterson, and Henry Peterson, three BYU professors dismissed by the Church in 1911 after publicly teaching controversial concepts at BYU. William H. Chamberlin, also censured during this time, had received training in ancient languages and biblical studies at the University of Chicago. See Ernest L. Wilkinson, *The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols., (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975–76), 1:412–32; and Phillip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 129–34.
55. Tanner Oral History, 12.
56. Russel B. Swensen to George S. Tanner, 31 December 1931, Swensen Collection, BYU.
57. Swensen to Tanner, 31 December 1931, Swensen Collection, BYU.
58. Swensen Oral History, 12; Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 44.
59. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 44.
60. Tanner oral history, 13.
61. Tanner oral history, 13.
62. Joseph F. Merrill to Franklin S. Harris, 2 May 1932, Harris Presidential Papers, cited in Wilkinson, *First Hundred Years*, 2:226.
63. Joseph F. Merrill to *Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 June 1931, MSS 1540, box 11, folder 1, Joseph F. Merrill Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU. In this letter, Merrill attributes the plan's creation to the Bennett Glass and Paint Company.
64. Milton Lynn Bennion, *Mormonism and Education* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Department of Education, 1939), 223.

65. Joseph F. Merrill to presidents of LDS Church schools, 4 December 1931, Harris Presidential Papers, cited in Wilkinson, *First Hundred Years*, 2:217.
66. Wilkinson, *First Hundred Years*, 2:217.
67. Joseph F. Merrill to T. Edgar Lyon, 21 April 1931, MSS 2341, box 17, folder 15, reel 10, T. Edgar Lyon Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, BYU.
68. Lyon Jr., *A Teacher in Zion*, 136. Those who earned degrees included Anthony S. Cannon, Daryl Chase, Carl J. Furr, Therald N. Jensen, Vernon Larsen, Wesley P. Lloyd, T. Edgar Lyon, Heber C. Snell, Sidney B. Sperry, Russel B. Swensen, and George S. Tanner; see Lyon, *Teacher in Zion*, 143.
69. Records of 1934 Summer School for Teachers, copies in author's possession, courtesy of Alan Parrish.
70. Wilkinson, *First Hundred Years*, 2:288.
71. Daryl Chase to Russel B. Swensen, undated letter (ca. 1933), Swensen Collection, BYU.
72. Chase to Lyon, 18 February 1933, T. Edgar Lyon Collection, BYU.
73. Chase to Swensen, undated letter (ca. 1933), Swensen Collection, BYU.
74. Heber C. Snell, "Criteria for Interpreting the Old Testament to College Youth," in *Through the Years: Occasional Writings of Heber C. Snell* (Logan, UT: Merrill Library, 1969), 95–97.
75. Joseph Fielding Smith to Franklin L. West, 11 March 1937, cited in Richard Sherlock, "Faith and History: The Snell Controversy," *Dialogue* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 27–41.
76. J. Reuben Clark, "The Charted Course of the Church in Education," in *J. Reuben Clark: Selected Papers*, ed. David H. Yarn Jr. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1984), 251–52.
77. Clark, "Charted Course," 254.
78. See Scott C. Esplin, "Charting the Course: President Clark's Charge to Religious Educators," *Religious Educator* 7, no. 1 (2006): 103–19.
79. Sterling M. McMurrin and L. Jackson Newell, *Matters of Conscience: Conversations with Sterling M. McMurrin on Philosophy, Education, and Religion* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 115.
80. N. L. Nelson to J. Reuben Clark Jr., 2 September 1938, MSS 303, box 215, folder 8, J. Reuben Clark Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.
81. See Noel B. Reynolds, "The Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon in the Twentieth Century," *BYU Studies* 38, no. 3 (1999): 18, 25.
82. Sidney B. Sperry to Russel B. Swensen, 20 November 1930, Swensen Collection, BYU.
83. Dale C. LeCheminant, "T. Edgar Lyon: I Have Never Been Bored!" in *Teachers Who Touch Lives*, ed. Philip L. Barlow (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers, 1988), 178.
84. Swensen oral history, 19.

85. See Russel B. Swensen, *The New Testament: The Acts and the Epistles* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1955). Swensen states in his acknowledgments that he had obtained permission to quote two of Goodspeed's works in his text, *An Introduction to the New Testament* and *New Testament, An American Translation*. In many places he agrees with Goodspeed's theories of authorship (Hebrews, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude), and in many places he doesn't (Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus), remaining neutral on the traditional authorship of others (Revelation); see 220, 226, 255, 263–65, 279–281, 292. When Swensen does agree with Goodspeed, he closely follows the latter's logic. Compare with Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Goodspeed Parallel New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 502, 534, 562.
86. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 46.
87. Heber C. Snell to Sterling S. McMurrin, 5 January 1941, box 218, folder 6, McMurrin Papers, Special Collections, University of Utah (U of U), Salt Lake City.
88. Snell to McMurrin, 16 May 1943, McMurrin Papers, U of U.
89. Snell to McMurrin, 16 May 1943, McMurrin Papers, U of U.
90. Snell to McMurrin, 16 May 1943, McMurrin Papers, U of U.
91. Scott Kenney, "Saints in Divinity Schools," *Sunstone* (May–June 1978): 22–24.
92. Russel B. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School: A Personal Reminiscence," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1972): 37–47.
93. Russel B. Swensen, comp., *Collected Statements of Former Students at the University of Chicago* (unpublished, 1971), MS 206, Church History Library, Salt Lake City (emphasis in original).
94. Swensen, *Collected Statements*.
95. Swensen, *Collected Statements*.
96. For a brief history of the religion department at BYU, see Richard O. Cowan, *Teaching the Word: Religious Education at Brigham Young University* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2008). For an assessment by a high-ranking member of the Church hierarchy, see Boyd K. Packer, "Seek Learning Even by Study and Also by Faith," in *That All May Be Edified* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 41–55.
97. Heber C. Snell interview with Frederick Buchanan, Hay Rogers, and Dale LeCheminant, June 13, 1973, access number 0814, box 56, folder 7, Cooley Oral History Project, Special Collections, U of U, 70.
98. George S. Tanner interview, interview by John Fowles, 5 June 1989, in John L. Fowles, "A Study Concerning the Mission of the Week-Day Religious Educational Program of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1890–1990 (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 1990), 106–7.
99. Tanner oral history, 40 (emphasis in original).

100. Tanner oral history, 43–44.
101. Tanner oral history, 43–44.
102. Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 23–24.
103. Leonard J. Arrington, “George S. Tanner: A Teaching Pioneer,” in *Teachers Who Touch Lives*, comp. Philip K. Barlow (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers, 1988), 89. See also Leonard J. Arrington, “Why I Am a Believer,” in *A Thoughtful Faith: Essays on Belief by Mormon Scholars*, ed. Philip K. Barlow (Centerville, UT: Canon Press, 1986), 228–29.
104. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian*, 23.
105. Swensen oral history, 10.
106. “Gov. Blood Also Signs Weber, Tax Payment Measures,” *Deseret News*, 21 March 1933.
107. Dixie became a university in 2013. Weber achieved this status in 1991. See Linda Whitehurst, “Dixie State University: Utah Lawmakers Approve New Status, Old Name,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/news/55824648-78/dixie-utah-state-bill.html.csp>; “From Weber Stake Academy to Weber State University,” https://1533221.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/0_9fu2wtu8.
108. Thomas Alexander Scott, “Eastern Arizona College: A Comprehensive History of the Early Years” (EdD diss., 1985, Brigham Young University), 640–41.
109. Jerry C. Roundy, *Ricks College: A Struggle for Survival* (Rexburg, ID: Ricks College Press, 1976), 118.
110. Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 163.
111. William E. Berrett, interview by Thomas E. Cheney, 27 January 1982, UA OH 69, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, BYU.
112. T. Edgar Lyon to David and Marie Cairns Lyon, 15 February 1933, Lyon Collection, BYU.
113. T. Edgar Lyon, interview with David Bitton, Church History Library, 161.