

*The Basic Constitution of Church Education:
Excerpts from Doctrine and Covenants
88, 90, and 93, 1832–1833*

President Dallin H. Oaks called Doctrine and Covenants 88 “the first and greatest revelation of this dispensation on the subject of education” and “the basic constitution of Church education. It defines Brigham Young University’s role in the kingdom” (“A House of Faith,” BYU annual university conference address, 31 August 1977). As BYU’s basic constitution, Doctrine and Covenants 88—which Joseph Smith named the Olive Leaf—reminds us that the university’s spiritual origins predate the founding of Brigham Young Academy in pioneer Utah.

The Olive Leaf links BYU to the Prophet Joseph, with his extravagant thirst for knowledge, and to similar revelations he received affirming that “the glory of God is intelligence” and admonishing the Saints to “become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people”; with “history,” “countries,” and the “laws of God and man” (Doctrine and Covenants 90:15; 93:36, 53). The Olive Leaf links BYU to the School of the

Prophets, which placed learning among Latter-day Saints on spiritual foundations, and to the University of the City of Nauvoo, with its ambitious Olive Leaf-inspired curriculum and with the high hopes Joseph had to found a university that would become “one of the great lights of the world” (Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Hyrum Smith, “A Proclamation to the Saints Scattered Abroad,” *Times and Seasons* 2, no. 6 [15 January 1841]: 274). These and many other educational currents flow from the Church in Joseph’s day to BYU today.

But above all, the Olive Leaf links BYU to the Church’s first temple and to Latter-day Saint temples generally. Verses from this revelation, including the oft-repeated injunction to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:118), were quoted in the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple (see Doctrine and Covenants 109:7). The overlap between Doctrine and Covenants 88 and 109 bespeaks deep

continuities and homologies between school and temple in Latter-day Saint history and doctrine. Church schools were originally housed in temples. Today they often stand beside temples. And they share with temples a mandate to become houses of faith, learning, and the Spirit (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:119, 137).

The following excerpts from the Olive Leaf and from Doctrine and Covenants 90 and 93 illustrate foundational principles of Church education regarding truth, learning, and schools:

- Truth: God is the source of truth and light; His light quickens the understanding; He gives law to all things; His creations reveal His majesty.
- Learning: To comprehend light, learners must be clean and sanctify themselves, having eyes and minds single to God; they are to seek learning diligently, both by study and by faith; they are to teach one another not only doctrine but broadly of things in heaven and in earth so as to be prepared in all things.
- Schools: Church schools are to be temple-like houses of learning and faith; in them, teachers and students are to learn from each other such that all are edified of all; in them, all gather as brothers and sisters in the bonds of love, remembering their covenants and determined to walk in the commandments.

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Verses 6–7

He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth;

Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made.

Verses 11–13

And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;

Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—

The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

Verses 36–37

All kingdoms have a law given;

And there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or a lesser kingdom.

Verses 40–47

For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy and claimeth her own; justice continueth its course and claimeth its own; judgment goeth before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne and governeth and executeth all things.

He comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, forever and ever.

And again, verily I say unto you, he hath given a law unto all things, by which they move in their times and their seasons;

And their courses are fixed, even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets.

And they give light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years—all these are one year with God, but not with man.

The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God.

Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand?

Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power.

Verses 63–69

Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you;

And if ye ask anything that is not expedient for you, it shall turn unto your condemnation.

Behold, that which you hear is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—in the wilderness, because you cannot see him—my voice, because my voice is Spirit; my Spirit is truth; truth abideth and hath no end; and if it be in you it shall abound.

And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.

Remember the great and last promise which I have made unto you; cast away your idle thoughts and your excess of laughter far from you.

Verses 77–80

And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly 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—

That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you.

Verses 118–138

And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.

Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God;

That your incomings may be in the name of the Lord; that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord; that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High.

Therefore, cease from all your light speeches, from all laughter, from all your lustful desires, from all your pride and light-mindedness, and from all your wicked doings.

Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all, and that every man may have an equal privilege.

See that ye love one another; cease to be covetous; learn to impart one to another as the gospel requires.

Cease to be idle; cease to be unclean; cease to find fault one with another; cease to sleep longer than is needful; retire to thy bed early, that ye may not be weary; arise early, that your bodies and your minds may be invigorated.

And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.

Pray always, that ye may not faint, until I come. Behold, and lo, I will come quickly, and receive you unto myself. Amen.

And again, the order of the house prepared for the presidency of the school of the prophets, established for their instruction in all things that are expedient for them, even for all the officers of the church, or in other words, those who are called to

the ministry in the church, beginning at the high priests, even down to the deacons—

And this shall be the order of the house of the presidency of the school: He that is appointed to be president, or teacher, shall be found standing in his place, in the house which shall be prepared for him.

Therefore, he shall be first in the house of God, in a place that the congregation in the house may hear his words carefully and distinctly, not with loud speech.

And when he cometh into the house of God, for he should be first in the house—behold, this is beautiful, that he may be an example—

Let him offer himself in prayer upon his knees before God, in token or remembrance of the everlasting covenant.

And when any shall come in after him, let the teacher arise, and, with uplifted hands to heaven, yea, even directly, salute his brother or brethren with these words:

Art thou a brother or brethren? I salute you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in token or remembrance of the everlasting covenant, in which covenant I receive you to fellowship, in a determination that is fixed, immovable, and unchangeable, to be your friend and brother through the grace of God in the bonds of love, to walk in all the commandments of God blameless, in thanksgiving, forever and ever. Amen.

And he that is found unworthy of this salutation shall not have place among you; for ye shall not suffer that mine house shall be polluted by him.

And he that cometh in and is faithful before me, and is a brother, or if they be brethren, they shall salute the president or teacher with uplifted hands to heaven, with this same prayer and covenant, or by saying Amen, in token of the same.

Behold, verily, I say unto you, this is an ensample unto you for a salutation to one another in the house of God, in the school of the prophets.

And ye are called to do this by prayer and thanksgiving, as the Spirit shall give utterance in all your doings in the house of the Lord, in the school of the prophets, that it may become a sanctuary, a tabernacle of the Holy Spirit to your edification.

And ye shall not receive any among you into this school save he is clean from the blood of this generation.

Doctrine and Covenants 90

Verse 15

And set in order the churches, and study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, and with languages, tongues, and people.

Doctrine and Covenants 93

Verses 36, 53

The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

And, verily I say unto you, that it is my will that you should hasten to translate my scriptures, and to obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion. Amen.