father had buried the other plates, thus equating this New York hill with the Book of Mormon Cumorah. Because the New York site does not readily fit the Book of Mormon description of BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY, some Latter-day Saints have looked for other possible explanations and locations, including Mesoamerica. Although some have identified possible sites that may seem to fit better (Palmer), there are no conclusive connections between the Book of Mormon text and any specific site that has been suggested.

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DAVID A. PALMER

CUMORAH PAGEANT

America’s Witness for Christ has been presented at the hill CUMORAH in upstate New York nearly every summer since 1937. Recognized as one of America’s largest and most spectacular outdoor theatrical events, it attracts an annual audience of almost 100,000 visitors to its seven performances.

This tradition dates back to 1917, when B. H. Roberts and a group of missionaries went to the Joseph Smith farm outside Palmyra, New York, to celebrate PIONEER DAY. Commencing in 1922, the “Palmyra Celebration” became an annual missionary conference for the Eastern States Mission. In July 1935, as part of the dedicatory exercises for the Angel Moroni Monument, trumpeters at the crest of the hill heralded the commencement of the first production at Cumorah. The next year a pageant, “Truth from the Earth,” was presented, and plans were announced to make a pageant at the hill Cumorah an annual event.

Two pageants were presented in 1937: a play about the Mormon pioneer handcart companies, The Builders by Oliver R. Smith, on July 24, and America’s Witness For Christ by H. Wayne Driggs on July 23 and 25. The latter script, with occasional revisions, was then presented annually for fifty years (excluding 1943–47). Harold L. Hansen, a missionary with theatrical training, was named codirector and thereafter continued as director for forty years, overseeing the installation of a sound system built by stereophonic sound pioneer Harvey Fletcher, the expansion of the all-volunteer cast and crew to almost six hundred participants, and the run extended to seven performances. In 1957 the pageant was recorded with original music by Crawford Gates.

On July 22, 1988, a new America’s Witness for Christ, written by Orson Scott Card with music again by Crawford Gates, premiered. Its major theme—the reality of Christ’s atonement, resurrection, and ministry to the Nephites—is boldly portrayed through events recorded in the Book of Mormon. The visual aspects of the pageant were also updated, with new stages, seating, properties, costumes, and special effects, and a recontoured and landscaped hill.

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GERALD S. ARGENTSINGER

CURRICULUM

The Church provides a standard set of curricular materials to all of its units throughout the world. Some matters of basic curriculum had been formatted and distributed to the Church membership since the early days of the Church, but as the AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS were formed, such as the Sunday School, Primary, Relief Society, and the Young Men and Young Women, each developed its own curriculum to help teach members. Eventually it became desirable to coordinate curriculum materials among these auxiliary organizations to avoid undesirable duplication and to ensure the coverage of important topics at all age levels.

At present, over 200 topics are considered annually in the lesson manuals prepared for the courses included in the Church curriculum. These topics are in the general areas of gospel principles
and doctrines, home and family relationships, priesthood and Church government, historical study of the scriptures and the Church, development of individual talents and abilities, community relations, development of leadership abilities, teaching skills and talents, recreational and social activities, and fellowshipping and service activities (Table 1).

TABLE 1

1. HOME AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
   1.1 Maintaining a spiritual atmosphere in the home
      1.1.1 Having regular family and individual prayers
      1.1.2 Keeping the Sabbath Day holy
      1.1.3 Establishing the home as the center for gospel study
      1.1.4 Seeking the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in all family affairs
   1.2 Building right relationships with other family members
   1.3 Building confidence and trust in the lives of members of the family
   1.4 Developing and fostering individual talents and abilities within the family circle
   1.5 Settling family problems harmoniously
   1.6 Managing family finances according to gospel principles
   1.7 Developing self-discipline and proper conduct in the home
   1.8 Promoting respect for the property of other family members
   1.9 Learning about human maturation and the process of procreation in the family circle
   1.10 Conducting an eternal courtship
   1.11 Honoring the priesthood and the patriarchal order in the home
   1.12 Honoring womanhood and the distinctive role of girls and women
   1.13 Honoring manhood and the distinctive role of men and boys
   1.14 Developing modesty and virtue in the home
   1.15 Playing together and having fun as a family
   1.16 Sharing in the family work schedule
   1.17 Appreciating and loving relatives
   1.18 Developing parental skills
   1.19 Learning to use time wisely
   1.20 Being responsible for the temporal well-being of family members

2. GOSPEL PRINCIPLES AND DOCTRINES
   2.1 Developing an understanding of and a love for the members of the Godhead
      2.1.1 The Father
   2.1.2 The Son
   2.1.3 The Holy Ghost

2.2 Learning the true nature of man and his relationship to the Godhead
   2.2.1 As an intelligence
   2.2.2 As a spirit child of Heavenly Father
   2.2.3 As spirit brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ
   2.2.4 The potential to become like Heavenly Father
      2.2.4.1 Understanding oneself and developing self-esteem

2.3 Gaining an understanding and testimony of the Plan of Salvation
   2.3.1 The premortal existence of man
      2.3.1.1 The grand council in heaven
      2.3.1.2 The principle of agency in the pre-existence
      2.3.1.3 Lucifer
      2.3.1.4 Jehovah and his followers
      2.3.1.5 The doctrine of foreordination
   2.3.2 The nature and purpose of mortal life
      2.3.2.1 The earth, its creation and destiny
      2.3.2.2 The need for a body of flesh and bone
      2.3.2.3 The fall of Adam and Eve and all mankind (the spiritual and physical deaths)
      2.3.2.4 Probation of man: personal accountability and free agency
      2.3.2.5 Universal faith
      2.3.2.6 Faith in the Godhead
         2.3.2.6.1 Faith in God the Father
         2.3.2.6.2 Faith in Jesus Christ
      2.3.2.7 Repentance
      2.3.2.8 Baptism
      2.3.2.9 Obedience: enduring to the end
      2.3.2.10 The mission and atonement of Jesus Christ
      2.3.2.11 Forgiveness
      2.3.2.12 Gift of the Holy Ghost
      2.3.2.13 Obtaining and building a testimony
         2.3.2.14 Covenants
         2.3.2.15 Light of Christ
         2.3.2.16 Need for opposition
         2.3.2.17 Birth of the spirit
         2.3.2.18 Revelation
         2.3.2.19 Continuing study of the gospel and the scriptures
      2.3.2.20 Prayer and meditation
      2.3.2.21 Fasting
      2.3.2.22 Word of Wisdom
3. PRIESTHOOD AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT

3.1 Gaining an understanding of the priesthood
3.1.1 The oath and covenant of the priesthood

3.1.2 The keys of the priesthood
3.1.3 The authority and power of the priesthood

3.2 Priesthood ordinances
3.2.1 What the priesthood ordinances are and their purpose
3.2.2 How the priesthood ordinances are performed

3.3 Understanding general priesthood responsibilities
3.3.1 Home teaching
3.3.2 Welfare
3.3.3 Genealogy
3.3.4 Missionary work
3.3.5 Family home evenings
3.3.6 Fellowshipping and service

3.4 Understanding priesthood organization
3.4.1 The family
3.4.2 Priesthood quorums
3.4.3 Wards and branches
3.4.4 Stakes and mission membership districts
3.4.5 Missions
3.4.6 Regions
3.4.7 General offices
3.4.8 Priesthood departments and programs
3.4.9 Auxiliaries
3.4.10 Church Education System
3.4.11 Calling and sustaining of Church officers
3.4.12 Record keeping

3.5 Knowing the priesthood offices and their duties

3.6 Gaining an understanding of the distinctive role of women in the priesthood structure of the Church
3.6.1 How women share in priesthood blessings and opportunities

3.7 Financial contributions and how they are used
3.8 Church meetings and their purpose
3.9 The Church judicial system

4. HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES AND THE CHURCH

4.1 Learning of God’s commandments and his dealings with men through a historical study of the scriptures
4.2 Obtaining an overview of the scriptures, how we received them, and what they contain
4.3 An overview of the Old Testament and Pearl of Great Price
4.3.1 A study of the creation of the earth and man’s beginnings upon the earth (Genesis, Abraham, Moses)
4.3.2 Ancient Israel and the prophets (Old Testament)
4.4 An overview of the New Testament
  4.4.1 The life and mission of Jesus Christ (The four Gospels)
  4.4.2 The Early Church (Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation)
4.5 The Apostasy
  4.5.1 The Reformation period
4.6 An overview of the Book of Mormon
  4.6.1 God establishes a covenant people in the New World (1 Nephi through Omni)
  4.6.2 God’s dealings with the ancient Americans before Christ (Words of Mormon through Helaman)
  4.6.3 The Church of Jesus Christ in ancient America (3 Nephi through Moroni)
4.7 The Restoration, an overview of early modern Church history and the Doctrine and Covenants
  4.7.1 Organization and establishment of the Latter-day Church (Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith, Documentary History of the Church)
4.8 Modern prophets and Church growth
  4.8.1 A study of later modern Church history and Church expansion (Conference Reports and other official documents)

5. DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUAL TALENTS AND ABILITIES
  5.1 Understanding and applying the simple social graces
  5.2 Appreciating and participating in things of cultural value
    5.2.1 Drama
    5.2.2 Music
    5.2.3 Literature
    5.2.4 Dance
    5.2.5 Art and handcraft
    5.2.6 Speech
  5.3 Continuing with formal or informal education in secular and religious fields
  5.4 Improving employment and career planning skills
  5.5 Improving homemaking and household maintenance skills
  5.6 Keeping physically fit and active
  5.7 Gaining an appreciation for nature and the creations of God
  5.8 Knowing the skills of outdoor living and survival
  5.9 Knowing the values of good health care
  5.10 Knowing the values of work and of being self-sustaining
  5.11 Knowing how to handle health emergencies

6. COMMUNITY RELATIONS
  6.1 Fulfilling our responsibilities in civil government and community affairs

6.2 Maintaining high community standards
6.3 Making appropriate use of community facilities and institutions
6.4 Taking appropriate part in community social and service organizations
6.5 Building a positive community image for the Church and Church members
6.6 Balancing involvement in community and Church activity
6.7 Being obedient to civil laws
6.8 Being a good friend and neighbor

7. DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP ABILITIES
  7.1 Developing effective communication skills
  7.2 Delegating responsibility
  7.3 Following up on delegated responsibility
  7.4 Learning the duties of our callings
  7.5 Utilizing problem-solving techniques
  7.6 Using inspiration in decision making
  7.7 Conducting effective meetings
  7.8 Setting and achieving goals
  7.9 Keeping and using adequate minutes and records
  7.10 Following line and staff organizational patterns
  7.11 Recognizing and developing the leadership potential in others
  7.12 Sustaining and using the help and counsel of those who preside over us
  7.13 Working with committees and groups
  7.14 Keeping an eye single to the glory of God
  7.15 Observing the stewardship principle
  7.16 Motivating ourselves and others
  7.17 Evaluating progress and recovering from temporary setbacks
  7.18 Accepting responsibility and being personally accountable
  7.19 Using Church organizations and programs to accomplish objectives
  7.20 Effective planning

8. DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING SKILLS AND TALENTS
  8.1 Identifying student needs and interests
  8.2 Teaching for understanding of ideas and concepts
  8.3 Teaching for reinforcement of or change in behavior
  8.4 Reaching individual needs of class members
  8.5 Making proper preparation to teach
  8.6 Seeking qualified help to improve teaching skills
  8.7 Practicing in a teaching situation
  8.8 Teaching with testimony and with the power and influence of the Holy Spirit
  8.9 Using a variety of methods and techniques
  8.10 Maintaining order and reverence in the classroom
8.11 Setting a proper example for those whom we teach
8.12 Evaluating the progress of students
8.13 Establishing effective communication with and among students

9. RECREATION AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
9.1 Participating in sports and competitive athletics on ward, stake, region, and multi-region levels
9.2 Participating in camping and nature study activities
9.3 Participating in dancing, parties, outings, and other social activities

10. FELLOWSHIPPING AND SERVICE ACTIVITIES
10.1 Orienting new members to Church programs and activities
10.2 Using Church programs, resources, and activities to fellowship members and nonmembers
10.3 Fellowshipping those from varying racial, national, cultural, and language backgrounds
10.4 Participating in service activities and projects
   10.4.1 In families
   10.4.2 In priesthood quorums
   10.4.3 In girls’ and women’s groups
   10.4.4 In ward, stake, and regional groups
10.5 Sharing individual resources with those in need
   10.5.1 Material goods
   10.5.2 Skills and talents
10.6 Brotherhood and sisterhood

The GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST, as expounded in the scriptures and supplemented and interpreted by living prophets, forms the basis of LDS curriculum. The purpose of the curriculum was defined by the Prophet Joseph Smith: “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it” (TPJS, p. 121). In support of this purpose, . . . LDS curriculum centers on the scriptures, and focuses on the nature of the Godhead, the nature and purpose of mortal life, the commandments God has given to his children, and the virtues they should develop. A master plan provides the necessary coordination to assure that all members are taught these principles several times throughout their lives at different levels of understanding and experience.

Although the curriculum is highly coordinated, there are still variations in content and its application. Local units and teachers adapt the materials sent from Church headquarters to meet the local needs and fit the local culture. In areas where literacy is limited or members have had little prior instruction in gospel principles, a simplified curriculum may be used at the discretion of local leaders. Materials for the use of members with disabilities are also provided.

In addition to the lesson materials, the Church has supportive materials to aid both teachers and members. Libraries in most meetinghouses contain illustrations, audio recordings, video presentations, motion pictures, maps, and other aids for both teacher and member use. Satellite broadcasts are also periodically available. The Church also produces three monthly magazines for English-speaking children, youth, and adults, and an International Magazine in several different languages to supplement the curriculum of the Church for teachers and to support scripture study by members.

In 1961, Elder Harold B. Lee, then of the Quorum of the Twelve, described the objective of the Church curriculum as “building up a knowledge of the gospel, a power to promulgate the same, a promotion of the growth, faith, and stronger testimony of the principles of the gospel” (Lee, p. 79). He also announced a new emphasis on correlation, citing a need for better coordination among the courses of study and for a reduction in new courses of study each year. The outcome of this charge was an all-Church coordinating council, three coordinating committees (one each for children, youth, and adults), and an extensive curricular planning guide.

In 1972, the Church formed the Internal Communications Department and gave it the responsibility for curriculum planning and writing. All the curricular materials were examined, and from that assessment developed Curriculum Planning Charts. The purposes of the charts were twofold: to measure existing materials, and from the measurement to plan a well-balanced future offering. The actions resulted in the formation of an Instructional Development Department and the establishment of numerous writing committees, whose responsibility is to plan lesson content and methodology for courses in all age groups within the priesthood and auxiliary organizations. Once again, the primary curricular resources are the scriptures, supplemented by quotations from modern prophets. Computer technology discloses the
extent of the distribution of the topics throughout the curriculum. The planning charts track not only the number of times a topic is considered, but where the topic has a primary or secondary focus. Instrumental in the development of the present overall curricular plan, the planning charts continue to guide instructional decision making and to produce a unified, balanced, and standardized curriculum, marked by stability and expansiveness.

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WAYNE B. LYNN

CURSINGS

Cursings are the opposite of blessings and may be expressed as (1) the use of vulgar or profane language by people; (2) words or actions by God or his representatives expressing divine displeasure with or warning against wickedness; or (3) God’s chastisement of mankind.

Cursing in the form of profane language employing names of deity literally “in vain” has been present in most societies. Since thought is expressed in language, vulgar and blasphemous language corrupts its user by establishing vulgar or profane thought patterns. The statement “Among the wicked, men shall lift up their voices and curse God and die” (D&C 45:32) illustrates both a cause and a consequence regarding profane language, with its effect on and relationship to spiritual life. Cursing that invokes the name of deity is a form of blasphemy and, in biblical times, was punishable by stoning (Lev. 24:16). Cursing of parents was also cause for offenders to be put to death in ancient Israel (Ex. 21:17; Matt. 15:4).

Cursing may be the expression of divine displeasure, warning, or exclusion from God’s blessing. Just as blessings are obtained by righteousness, cursings result from breaking God’s law and failing to keep his commandments (Deut. 11:26–28; D&C 104:1–8; 124:48). Intelligent human beings are largely responsible for their own circumstances, and President Brigham Young said the most severe cursings come upon “those who know their Master’s will, and do it not” (JD 1:248). Sinning against light and knowledge has more serious consequences than sinning in ignorance (see Mosiah 2:36–37; cf. Alma 32:19–20; 39:6). Alma 2 gives an example wherein the same land was simultaneously blessed for those who acted rightly and cursed for those who did not (Alma 45:16).

Curses may be pronounced by God, or they may be invoked by his authorized servants, as was the case with Moses (Deut. 27:10–30); Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:1; 21:20–24); Peter (Acts 5:1–10); Paul (Acts 13:9–12); and Joseph Smith (D&C 103:25; cf. 124:93). However, the Lord’s earthly agents are sent forth primarily to bless and not to curse (Matt. 5:44; Rom. 12:14).

Not all curses have totally negative consequences. As God only does good, his cursings are for “the sake” of improving the person cursed (Gen. 3:17; Deut. 23:5), even though the immediate consequence may be extremely unpleasant. When there is need for correction, the Lord has instructed his servants to reprove “with sharpness,” but afterward to show forth an “increase of love” (D&C 121:43).

Some cursings are given first as warnings rather than a more severe immediate chastisement (2 Ne. 1:21, 22); and, like blessings, they sometimes require a long time for their full consequences to be realized. After being invoked, cursings may often be lessened or lifted entirely by subsequent righteousness. Mormon describes an experience of the Lamanites: “And they began to be a very industrious people; yea, and they were friendly with the Nephites; therefore, they did open a correspondence with them, and the curse of God did no more follow them” (Alma 23:18).

Cursings may affect all temporal and spiritual aspects of our lives because all things are governed by law. Lands, crops, handiwork, employment, children, missionary endeavor, interpersonal relationships, and relationships with God are all subject to both cursing and blessing—depending upon individual and collective righteousness or lack of it.

SHERWIN W. HOWARD