YOUNG, BRIGHAM

[This entry consists of two articles:
  Brigham Young
  Teachings of Brigham Young]

Brigham Young is a biography of the famed pioneer leader and second President of the Church; Teachings of Brigham Young provides a glimpse of the variety and significance of his teachings as preserved in his discourses. The overview History of the Church: c. 1831–1844 and c. 1844–1877 review LDS history during Brigham Young's lifetime and the period of his presidency. He was a central figure in the subjects dealt with in Westward Migration; Pioneers; Immigration and Emigration; and Colonization.]

BRIGHAM YOUNG
Colonizer, territorial governor, and President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham Young (1801–1877) was born in Whitingham, Vermont, on June 1, 1801, the ninth of eleven children born to John Young and Abigail (Nabby) Howe. Following service in the Revolutionary Army of George Washington, John Young settled on a farm in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. After sixteen years in Hopkinton, John and Nabby moved to southern Vermont, where Brigham was born. When Brigham was three the family moved to central New York state, and when he was ten, to Sherburne, in south-central New York. Brigham helped clear land for farming, trapped for fur animals, fished, built sheds and dug cellars, and helped with planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops. He also cared for his mother, who was seriously ill with tuberculosis.

Brigham's mother died in 1815, when he was fourteen. Not long after, in search for someone to look after his younger children, John Young married a widow, Hannah Brown, who brought her own children into the family. Brigham decided to leave home. Living for a period with a sister, he became an apprentice carpenter, painter, and glazier in nearby Auburn. Over the next five years he assisted in building in Auburn the first marketplace, the prison, the theological seminary, and the home of "Squire" William Brown (later occupied by William H. Seward, who served as governor of New York and Lincoln's secretary of state). As a master carpenter, Brigham built door fittings and louvered attic windows, and carved ornate mantelpieces for many homes. Many old homes in the region to this day have chairs, desks, staircases, doorways, and mantelpieces made by Brigham Young.

Brigham left Auburn in the spring of 1823 to work in Port Byron, New York, where he repaired furniture and painted canal boats. He developed a device for mixing paints, and turned out many chairs, tables, settees, cupboards, and doors. He also helped organize the local forensic and oratori-
meals, dressed the children, cleaned the house, and carried Miriam to a rocking chair in front of the fireplace in the morning and back to bed in the evening. In Mendon he built a shop and mill, made and repaired furniture, and put in windowpanes, doorways, staircases, and fireplace mantels.

In the spring of 1830 Samuel Smith, brother of Joseph Smith, passed through Mendon on a trip to distribute the Book of Mormon. He left a copy with Brigham’s oldest brother, Phineas, an itinerant preacher. Phineas was favorably impressed with the book and lent it to his father, then to his sister Fanny, who gave it to Brigham. Though impressed, Brigham nevertheless counseled caution: “Wait a little while . . . I [want] to see whether good common sense [is] manifest” (JD 3:91; cf. 8:38). After nearly two years of investigation, Brigham, moved by the testimony of a Mormon elder, was baptized in the spring of 1832. All of Brigham’s immediate family were also baptized, and they all remained loyal Latter-day Saints throughout their lives. Miriam, who also joined, lived only until September 1832.

One week after his baptism, Brigham gave his first sermon. He declared “[After I was baptized] I wanted to thunder and roar out the Gospel to the nations. It burned in my bones like fire pent up, so I [commenced] to preach. . . . Nothing would satisfy me but to cry abroad in the world, what the Lord was doing in the latter days” (JD 1:313). Brigham felt the impulse to “cry abroad” so strongly that he enlisted the assistance of Vilate and Heber C. Kimball to care for his daughters and abandoned his trade to devote himself wholeheartedly to building the “kingdom of god.” That fall, after Miriam’s death, he, Heber Kimball, and several relatives traveled to Kirtland, Ohio, where he first met the twenty-six-year-old Prophet Joseph Smith. Invited to evening prayer in the Smith home, Brigham was moved by the Spirit and spoke in tongues, the first speaking in tongues witnessed by the Prophet.

Brigham’s subsequent missionary tours carried him north, east, west, and south of Mendon. He and his brother Joseph Young made several preaching trips into the New York and Ontario, Canada, countryside. In the summer of 1833 he traveled to Kirtland with several of his Canadian converts, where he heard Joseph Smith teach about the GATHERING, emphasizing that building the kingdom of God required more than just preaching. Thus instructed, Brigham returned to
New York and, with the Kimballs, moved his household to Kirtland so he could participate in building a new society.

Among those whom Brigham met in Kirtland was Mary Ann Angell, a native of Seneca, Ontario County, New York, who had worked in a factory in Providence, Rhode Island, until her conversion to the Church and move to Kirtland. Brigham married her on February 18, 1834. She looked after Brigham’s two daughters by Miriam and subsequently had six children of her own.

In 1834 Brigham and his brother Joseph served with Zion’s Camp, a small army that walked from Ohio to Missouri in the summer of 1834 to assist those driven from their homes by hostile mobs. Brigham regarded the difficult trek, which was led by Joseph Smith, as superb education and later called it “the starting point of my knowing how to lead Israel” (Arrington, pp. 45–46).

Dedication and potential, more than accomplishments, qualified Brigham Young to be selected in February 1835 as a member of the Church’s original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Twelve were a “traveling high council” charged to take the gospel “to all the nations, kindreds, tongues, and people.” They presided not “at home” but “abroad,” where no local stakes were established. This group later became the leading quorum in the Church after the First Presidency.

Each summer Brigham undertook proselytizing missions in the East; each winter he cared for his family and helped build up Kirtland. He helped construct the Kirtland Temple, attended the school of the prophets, participated in the Pentecostal outpouring that accompanied the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in the spring of 1836, and engaged in Church-related business activities assigned to him by Joseph Smith. When the Kirtland community became divided over Joseph Smith’s leadership, Brigham Young’s strong defense of the Prophet so enraged the critics that Brigham had to flee Kirtland for his safety.

By the summer of 1838 most of the Kirtland faithful, including Brigham and his family, had moved to Caldwell County, in northern Missouri. Growing numbers of Latter-day Saint arrivals rekindled hostilities with old settlers, and violence erupted (see Missouri Conflict). Disarmed, violated, and robbed of most of their holdings, the Latter-day Saints were driven from the state. With Joseph Smith, his brother Hyrum, Sidney Rigdon, and other Church leaders imprisoned, Brigham Young, senior member of the Quorum of the Twelve, directed the evacuation of the Saints to Quincy and other Illinois communities. To en-
sure that members without teams and wagons would not be left behind, he drew up the Missouri Covenant. All who signed it agreed to make their resources available to remove every person to safety.

In the spring of 1839 Joseph Smith designated Commerce (renamed Nauvoo), Illinois, the new central gathering place of the Saints. Brigham's family were hardly settled in the area when he and other members of the Twelve left to fulfill their calls to Great Britain as missionaries. Despite poverty and poor health all around, Brigham left his wife and children in September, determined to go to England or to die trying. He and his companions finally docked at Liverpool in April 1840 (see Missions of the Twelve to the British Isles).

As quorum president, Brigham directed the work of his quorum in Britain during an astonishing year in which they baptized between 7,000 and 8,000 converts; printed and distributed 5,000 copies of the Book of Mormon, 3,000 hymn books, 1,500 volumes of the Millennial Star, and 50,000 tracts; and established a shipping agency and assisted nearly 1,000 to emigrate to Nauvoo. Brigham traveled to the principal cities in England and took time to visit Buckingham Palace, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, the Lake district, factory towns, the Potteries, museums, art galleries, and, of course, the homes of converts, both rich and poor. In later years he often commented on what he had seen and learned in England.

Such striking success, the first such experience of a united quorum, prepared the Twelve for additional responsibilities. Back in Nauvoo, Brigham was given the assignment of directing the Twelve in their supervision of missionary work, the purchase of lands and settling of immigrants, and various construction projects. Along with others, Brigham was also taught the principle ofplural marriage; he accepted it after much reluctance and considerable thought and prayer. With Mary Ann's consent, he married Lucy Ann Decker Seeley in June 1842, and later other plural wives. He was among the first to receive the full temple endowment in 1842 and, later, with Mary Ann, participated with others who had received temple ordinances in sessions during which Joseph Smith gave additional instructions on gospel principles.

Because Brigham Young was now the president of the quorum, which came second only to the First Presidency in authority and responsibility, he was highly prominent and influential in Nauvoo. Nonetheless, though he helped direct everything from the construction of the Nauvoo Temple to missionary work abroad, he also continued the pattern established in Kirtland of personally undertaking preaching missions each summer. In February Joseph Smith further instructed Brigham Young and others of his quorum about a future move to the Rocky Mountains. In March 1844 Brigham participated in the creation of the Council of Fifty—an organization suggesting a pattern of government for a future theocratic society and the last such organizational pattern left by Joseph Smith. Soon after, as if in foreboding of his impending death, Joseph Smith gave Brigham and other members of the Twelve a dramatic charge to "bear off this kingdom," telling them that they now had all the keys and instruction needed to do so successfully (CR [Apr. 1898]:89; MS 5 [Mar. 1845]:151).

In May 1844, Brigham and other apostles left on summer missions. While they were gone, events in Nauvoo deteriorated. Joseph Smith was arrested and, on June 27, was killed with his brother Hyrum when a mob stormed the jail where they were being held (see Carthage Jail; Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith). Brigham was in the Boston area and did not hear definite word of the assassination until July 16. He and his companions immediately rushed back to Nauvoo, arriving August 6. After a dramatic confrontation with Sidney Rigdon on August 8, Brigham and the Twelve were sustained to lead the Church (see Succession in the Presidency). Brigham remained the leader until his death in 1877.

Although privately committed to leaving Nauvoo, Brigham and his associates were determined to complete the Nauvoo Temple so that the Saints could receive their temple ordinances. Even as they labored to defend themselves and finish the temple, they held meetings to decide on when and where to move farther west. Soon after violence erupted in September 1845, they publicly announced their intention to leave by the following spring. By December the temple was ready for ordinance work, and by February nearly 6,000 members had received temple blessings therein. The Saints had also spent the fall and winter preparing for the exodus. Committees were appointed, and a Nauvoo Covenant was signed, helping to ensure that those with property would assist those without.
Partly because of concerns about governmental intervention, Brigham Young began the migration in the cold and snow of February 1846 rather than await spring. By hundreds, then by thousands, people, animals, and wagons crossed the Mississippi River and trudged across Iowa mud to a WINTER QUARTERS (now Florence, Nebraska) on the Missouri River. In late spring nearly 16,000 Saints were on the road.

Brigham personally directed this massive odyssey, which involved the allocation of foodstuffs, wagons, oxen, and Church property to organized companies setting out on the trail. The preparation and the move through Iowa took so long that none of the companies could reach the Rocky Mountains that year, as was hoped. This demanding Iowa experience taught Brigham Young valuable lessons about men and organization that he used throughout his years of leadership. He also learned anew that when human resources prove inadequate, one must turn in faith to God. That winter Brigham announced "The Word and Will of the Lord" (D&C 136) to help organize the Saints and prepare them for the westward trek.

Brigham Young set out with an advance group of 143 men, 3 women, and 2 children on April 5, 1847. Delayed by illness, he arrived in the SALT LAKE VALLEY on July 24, a few days behind the advance party. Once he saw the valley with his own eyes, he announced it as the right place for a new headquarters city and confirmed that the region would be the new gathering place. He also identified the exact spot for a temple. He directed the exploration of the region; helped survey and apportion the land for homes, gardens, and farming; named the new settlement "Great Salt Lake City, Great Basin, North America"; held meetings where he appointed John Smith religious leader of the new colony and agreed on basic policies of cooperative work and sharing. On August 26, Brigham joined the return party to Winter Quarters.

In Winter Quarters, in December 1847, Brigham and other members of the Twelve reorganized the First Presidency of the Church, with Brigham as president. The following April he, his family, and approximately 3,500 other Saints headed for the Salt Lake Valley. Brigham's activities in organizing companies, building bridges, repairing equipment, and training oxen developed abilities that would be in evidence the rest of his life.

A series of problems confronted Brigham, now forty-seven, as he established his permanent home in the Salt Lake Valley. The first problem was to provide housing for his family. On a lot adjoining City Creek in what is now the center of SALT LAKE CITY, he built a row of log houses for his wives and children that, collectively, were called Harmony House. To the south of this he later built the White House, a sun-dried adobe structure covered with white plaster. Still later, he built a large, two-story adobe house faced with cement that fronted on what came to be known as Brigham Street (now South Temple Street). Sporting a tower surmounted by a gilded beehive, this building was known as the Beehive House and was Brigham's official residence as governor and President of the Church. In 1856, Brigham added an impressive three-story adobe structure, which came to be called the Lion House from the statue of a crouching lion on the portico. Several of his families lived in this building, just west of the Beehive House. He later built homes in south Salt Lake City, Provo, and St. George. Brigham's homes were all well constructed and finely appointed.

A central public problem was finding places to accommodate the incoming Saints. Salt Lake City was divided into ten-acre blocks, and each family head was allotted by community drawing a one- and-one-fourth-acre lot on one of the blocks in the city. There people would keep their livestock, gar-

Brigham Young's home, the Lion House, in 1858. Known as the "Lion of the Lord," Brigham Young laid out the city of Salt Lake, commenced the construction of the Salt Lake Temple, and oversaw the building of the Salt Lake Tabernacle, other temples, schools, roads, hospitals, theatres, canals, and mills. Photograph by surveyor D. A. Burr.
Brigham Young with pictures of 21 of his wives. Permission from the first wife was sought and approval from the appropriate priesthood leader was required to practice plural marriage. Many had only one or two wives; it was unusual to have more than four. The Manifesto of 1890 officially ended the Church practice of plural marriages. Photograph created 1901, Johnson Co.
dens, and other “home” properties (see City Planning). A ten-acre block just west of Brigham’s was designated the Temple Block (see Temple Square), and on this were located the Bowery, a temporary shelter built of tree boughs, where the Saints first held religious services; the Tabernacle; and various shops used in constructing public buildings. Construction of the Salt Lake Temple was begun in 1853.

Outside the city, five-acre and ten-acre plots were apportioned to those who wanted to farm. Under Brigham Young’s direction, cooperative teams were assigned to dig ditches and canals to irrigate crops and to furnish water to homes. Other brigades fenced residential areas, built roads, cut timber, and set up shops. Other groups selected new locations for settlements and helped place people in the best areas. Still others were called on missions to proselytize in the United States, Europe, or the Pacific.

In the spring of 1849 Brigham Young organized Salt Lake City into nineteen wards; organized wards in other settlements; set up the state of Deseret with himself as governor; and established the Perpetual Emigrating Fund as a device for assisting with the emigration of Saints from Great Britain, Scandinavia, and continental Europe.

With thousands of Saints arriving from the eastern United States and Europe, Colonization demanded Brigham Young’s attention. Under his direction, four kinds of colonies were established: first, settlements intended to be temporary places of gathering and recruitment, such as Carson Valley in Nevada; second, colonies to serve as centers for production, such as iron at Cedar City, cotton at St. George, cattle in Cache Valley, and sheep in Spanish Fork, all in Utah; third, colonies to serve as centers for proselytizing and assisting Indians, as at Harmony in southern Utah, Las Vegas in southern Nevada, Lemhi in northern Idaho, and present-day Moab in eastern Utah; fourth, permanent colonies in Utah and nearby states and territories to provide homes and farms for the hundreds of new immigrants arriving each summer. Within ten years, nearly 100 colonies had been planted; by 1867, more than 200; and by the time of his death in 1877, nearly 400 colonies. Clearly, he was one of America’s greatest colonizers.

As President of the Church, Brigham conducted regular Sunday services in Salt Lake City and each year visited as many outlying communities as possible. He appointed Bishops for each ward and settlement and encouraged each ward to provide cultural opportunities for its members, such as dances, theater, music recitals, and, above all, schools. He listened to people with complaints, responded to myriad questions about personal and family affairs as well as religion, and dictated thousands of letters with instruction, counsel, friendly advice, and casual comment about Church and national affairs. He was a firm Latter-day Saint and a wise counselor.

Brigham gave some 500 sermons in pioneer Utah that were recorded word for word by a stenographer. These, all delivered without a prepared text, may have seemed rambling in organization, but they were well thought out and suggest remarkable mental power. They were well adapted to his audiences. His discourses were like “fireside chats,” an informal “talking things over” with his audiences. Interweaving subjects as diverse as women’s fashions, the atonement of Christ, recollections of Joseph Smith, and how to make good bread, Brigham kept his audiences enthralled,

President George Albert Smith greets guests at the unveiling of Brigham Young’s statue by Mahonri M. Young in the National Statuary Hall in Capitol Building, Washington, D.C. (1950). Brigham Young is recognized as one of the great Americans of the nineteenth century.
amused, and in tears, sometimes for hours. He inspired, motivated, taught, and encouraged.

The Latter-day Saints had settled among various tribes of NATIVE AMERICANS. Intent upon helping them, converting them, and avoiding bloodshed, Brigham established Indian farms, took Indians into his own home, advocated a policy of "feeding them is cheaper than fighting them," and held periodic meetings with chiefs. His policies were not always successful, but he consistently sought peaceful solutions and firmly opposed the all-too-common frontier practice of shooting Indians for petty causes.

In 1851, Brigham was appointed governor and superintendent of Indian Affairs of UTAH TERRITORY by U.S. President Millard Fillmore. His principal problem as governor was dealing with the "outside" federal appointees, many of whom were, from any point of view, both unsympathetic to the Church and inexcusably incompetent. There were problems over the small federal expenditures, the failure of Saints to use federal judges in cases of civil disputes, the lack of tact of the federally appointed officials in discussing the Church, their opposition to the union of church and state, and their assumption that Latter-day Saints were immoral because of their tolerance of plural marriage. [For other events that occupied Brigham Young's attention in 1856 see HANDCART COMPANIES; REFORMATION (LDS) OF 1856–1857.]

This continuing controversy eventually led to the decision of U.S. President James Buchanan in 1857 to replace Brigham Young with an "outside" governor, Alfred Cumming of Georgia. At the same time, President Buchanan, who had been (wrongly) informed that the Mormons were "in a state of substantial rebellion against the laws and authority of the United States," sent a major portion of the U.S. Army to Utah to install the new governor and to ensure the execution of U.S. laws (see UTAH EXPEDITION). Though Governor Young was not notified of this action, armed forces were observed secretly heading for Utah. Fearful of a repetition of the "mobocracy" of Missouri and Illinois, he called people home from outlying colonies and mobilized the Saints to defend their homes. Eventually, with the assistance of Thomas L. KANE, he arranged a peaceful settlement whereby the Army occupied Camp Floyd, a post some forty miles from Salt Lake City. The U.S. Army was an irritant, but not a hindrance, to continued Church expansion and development. President Young remained, as his colleagues boasted, governor of the people, while his replacements merely governed the territory. The Army left Utah in 1861 with the start of the Civil War.

A believer in adapting the newest technology to the advantage of LDS society, Brigham Young contracted in 1861 to build the transcontinental telegraph line from Nebraska to California, and then proceeded to erect the 1,200-mile Deseret Telegraph line from Franklin, Idaho, to northern Arizona. This connected nearly all Mormon villages with Salt Lake City and, through that connection, with the world. While the transcontinental railroad was under construction, he negotiated for contracts with Union Pacific and Central Pacific for LDS contractors to build the roadbeds east of Salt Lake City into part of Wyoming and west well into Nevada. He then organized the Utah Central, Utah Southern, and Utah Northern railroads to extend the line south from Ogden to Frisco in southern Utah and north to Franklin, Idaho, and eventually to Montana.

Aware that the completion of the railroad would imperil the independent social economy of his people, President Young inaugurated a protective movement that sought to preserve, as much as possible, their unique way of life. He organized cooperatives to handle local merchandising and manufacturing; initiated several new enterprises to develop local resources; promoted RELIEF SOCIETIES in each ward in order to provide opportunities for self-development, socialization, and COMPASSIONATE SERVICE for women; opened the doors of the UNIVERSITY OF DESERET (later the University of Utah) for both young men and women; encouraged women to become professionally trained, especially in medicine; and gave women the vote. In 1875 he established Brigham Young Academy (later BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY), in 1877 Brigham Young College (Logan, Utah) and the Latter-day Saints College (see LDS BUSINESS COLLEGE). In 1874 he also promoted the UNITED ORDER movement in an effort to encourage cooperation and home production and consumption (see ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE CHURCH).

Brigham Young remained vigorous until his death in August 1877. Just before his death, he dedicated the St. George Temple and launched there the full scope of LDS temple ordinances, something he had anticipated since Nauvoo; and he overhauled Church organization at every level,
formalizing for the first time practices that would characterize the Church for nearly a century.

Brigham was a well-built, stout (in later years, portly) man of five feet, ten inches, somewhat taller than average for his day. His light brown hair, often described as “sandy,” had very little gray. Visitors noticed his penetrating blue-gray eyes lined by thin eyebrows. Though he later wore a full beard, Brigham was clean-shaven until the 1850s, when he first sported chin whiskers. His mouth and chin were firm, bespeaking, visitors thought, his iron will. He was generally composed and quiet in manner, but he could thunder at the pulpit. Sometimes called the “Lion of the Lord,” he could also roar when aroused.

Brigham Young’s manner was pleasant and courteous. His dress, generally neat and plain, was often homespun. He combined vibrant energy and self-certainty with deference to the feelings of others and a complete lack of pretension. By the time of his death, Brigham Young had married twenty women, sixteen of whom bore him fifty-seven children. He died on August 29, 1877, of peritonitis, the result of a ruptured appendix.

Brigham’s most obvious achievements were the product of his lifelong talent for practical decision making. He instituted patterns of Church government that persist to this day. In leading the Saints across Iowa, he issued detailed instructions that were followed by the hundreds of companies that crossed the plains to the Salt Lake Valley in succeeding years. In the Great Basin he directed the organization of several hundred LDS settlements; set up several hundred cooperative retail, wholesale, and manufacturing enterprises; and initiated the construction of meetinghouses, tabernacles, and temples. While doing all this, he carried on a running battle with the United States government to preserve the unique LDS way of life.

But for Brigham Young these were means, not ends. His overriding concern was to build on the foundation begun by Joseph Smith to establish a commonwealth in the desert where his people could live the gospel of Jesus Christ in peace, thereby improving their prospects in this life and in the next. He loved the Great Basin because its harshness and isolation made it an ideal place to “make Saints.”

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TEACHINGS OF BRIGHAM YOUNG
In leading the Latter-day Saints for over thirty years, Brigham Young wrote comparatively little, except for his letters, but he spoke frequently and on numerous subjects. He was constantly obliged to speak ex cathedra on many topics relative to life in this world and the next. His discourses were vigorous and forthright, filled with candid realism and common sense, and many of his speeches were recorded in shorthand by scribes. Along with his practical attainments and mechanical skills, he was one of the most discursive and lucid of men. Here was a man tested by fire (e.g., he was actually driven from his home five times) and who knew all the trials of life, from the corridors of power to the roughest frontiers. He sometimes made statements that surprised or even offended those who tended to accept his every utterance as doctrine, but with a New Englander’s passion for teaching and learning, he plunged ahead.

All the commentators concede that Brigham Young was one of the ablest and most dynamic leaders in American history. He was one of the supremely practical men of his age, a hardheaded, even-keeled, no-nonsense realist who got things done. But, for him, all of that was incidental. The important thing was that the people should know what they were doing and why. His orders and recommendations came with full and persuasive explanations.

His teachings begin with faith in Jesus Christ: “My faith is placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and my knowledge I have received from him” (JD 3:155). “Jesus is our captain and leader; Jesus, the Savior of the world—the Christ we believe in” (JD 14:118). “Our faith is placed upon the son of God, and through him in the Father, and the Holy Ghost is their minister to bring truths to our remembrance” (JD 6:98).

Brigham Young gained much of his knowledge of Jesus Christ through his constant association with the Prophet Joseph SMITH: “What I have re-
Brigham Young was a popular and forceful speaker on many practical and inspiring subjects. This nontransferable ecclesiastical ticket admitted the holder to one of Brigham Young’s lectures in the School of the Prophets, Salt Lake City, 1868. Courtesy Rare Books and Manuscripts, Brigham Young University.

ceived from the Lord, I have received by Joseph Smith” (JD 6:279). To the end of his life, Young testified of the mission of Joseph Smith in restoring knowledge of Christ to earth. “I love his doctrine,” he said. “I feel like shouting Hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I have ever known Joseph Smith, the Prophet whom the Lord raised up and ordained” (JD 13:216; 3:51). His dying words were “Joseph, Joseph, Joseph.”

On this foundation, Brigham Young emphatically taught the law of eternal progression. This life is a part of eternity. Eternal knowledge and glory are to be obtained and promoted on this earth. Improvement, learning, training, building, and expanding are the joy of life: “We do not expect to cease learning while we live on earth; and when we pass through the veil, we expect still to continue to learn” (JD 6:286). And eternal progression leads to godhood: “The faithful will become gods, even the sons of God” (JD 6:275).

Brigham Young recognized that many people were not prepared to understand the mysteries of God and godhood. “I could tell you much more about this,” he said, speaking of the role of Adam, but checked himself, recognizing that the world would probably misinterpret his teaching (JD 1:51).

All of the descendants of Adam (men, women, and children) must work. “What is this work?” Brigham asks. “The improvement of the condition of the human family. This work must continue until the people who live on this earth are prepared to receive our coming Lord” (JD 19:46).

For Brigham, improvement meant “to build in strength and stability, to beautify, to adorn, to embellish, to delight, and to cast fragrance over the House of the Lord; with sweet instruments of music and melody” (MS 10:86). More specifically, the one way man can leave his mark on the face of nature without damage is to plant. President Young ceaselessly counseled his people to do as Adam was commanded to do in the Garden of Eden when he dressed and tended the garden: Our work is “to beautify the face of the earth, until it shall become like the Garden of Eden” (JD 1:345).

In caring for the world, “every accomplishment, every polished grace, every useful attainment in mathematics, music, and in all science and art belongs to the Saints, and they should avail themselves as expeditiously as possible of the wealth of knowledge the sciences offer to every diligent and persevering scholar, and that’s our duty. . . . It is the duty of the Latter-day Saints, according to the revelation, to give their children the best education that can be procured, both from the books of the world and the revelations of the Lord” (JD 10:224). “If an elder shall give a lecture on astronomy, chemistry, or geology, our religion embraces it all. It matters not what the subject be if it tends to improve the mind, exalt the feelings, and enlarge the capacity. The truth that is in all the arts and sciences forms part of our religion” (JD 2:93–94).

President Young’s fascination with the things of the mind extended to mundane experience. The enjoyment of the senses, he said, is one of our notable privileges upon the earth and a wonderful source of enjoyment.

Although Brigham Young’s destiny led him to the desert barrenness of the West, he sensed a spiritual beauty in that land. “You are here commencing anew,” he told the people. “The soil, the air, the water are all pure and healthy. Do not suffer them to become polluted with wickedness. Strive to preserve the elements from being contaminated by the filthy wicked conduct of those who pervert the intelligence God has bestowed upon the human family” (JD 8:79). For Brigham, moral and physical cleanliness and pollution are no more to be separated than mind and body: “Keep your valley pure, keep our towns as pure as you possibly can, keep your hearts pure, and labor
what you can consistently, but not so as to injure yourselves” (JD 8:80).

Brigham Young also had a Yankee passion for thrift, but it rested on a generous respect for the worth of material things, not on a mean desire simply to possess them. When he said, “I do not know that during thirty years past, I have worn a coat, hat, or garment of any kind, or owned a horse, carriage, &c, but what I have asked the Lord whether I deserved it or not—Shall I wear this? Is it mine to use or not?” (JD 8:343), he was expressing the highest degree of human concern and responsibility.

Brigham Young often spoke of Zion and of building up the kingdom of God. He used the name Zion to describe the intended state of affairs and constantly had Zion in his view: “There is not one thing wanting in all the works of God’s hands to make a Zion upon the earth when the people conclude to make it” (JD 9:283). He recognized that the ideal of Zion stood in the face of contemporary economic values: “It is thought by many that the possession of gold and silver will produce for them happiness; . . . in this they are mistaken” (JD 11:15). “If, by industrious habits and honorable dealings, you obtain thousands or millions of dollars, little or much, it is your duty to use all that is put in your possession, as judiciously as you have knowledge, to build up the Kingdom of God on the earth” (JD 4:29).

Zion was to be established on the basis of cooperation: “The doctrine of uniting together in our temporal labors, and all working for the good of all is from the beginning, from everlasting, and it will be for ever and ever” (JD 17:117). In this there was no room for debate or contention, least of all rancor: “Cast all bitterness out of your own hearts—all anger, wrath, strife, covetousness, and lust, and sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, that you may enjoy the Holy Ghost” (JD 8:33).

The contrast between light and darkness was vivid to President Young: “Whence comes evil? It comes when we make an evil of good. Speaking of the elements in the creation of God, their nature is as pure as the heavens, and we destroy it. I wish you to understand that sin is not an attribute in the nature of man, but is an inversion of the attributes God has placed in him” (JD 10:251). He recognizes a conscious, active agent in the spreading of evil: “Satan never owned the earth; he never made a particle of it; his labor is not to create, but to destroy” (JD 10:320).

The true stature of Brigham Young emerges if one seeks to compose a list of his peers. He led a ragged and impoverished band, stripped of virtually all their earthly goods, into an unknown territory. His critics and biographers note that the man was unique among the leaders of modern history, for he alone, without any political and financial backing, established from scratch in the desert an ordered and industrious society, having no other authority than the priesthood and the spiritual strength with which he delivered his teachings. By constant exhortations and instructions, he drew his people together and inspired them in carrying out the divine mandate to build up the kingdom of God on earth.

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The Journal of Discourses contains more than 350 of Brigham Young's speeches. For a selection of passages organized topically, see John A. Widtsoe, comp., Discourses of Brigham Young, Salt Lake City, 1954.


HUGH W. NIBLEY

YOUNG, ZINA D. H.

Zina Diantha Huntington Young (1821–1901), third general president of the Relief Society, possessed great faith and compassion. Sometimes called “the heart of the women’s work in Utah” (Susa Young Gates, History of the Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Association [Salt Lake City, 1911], p. 21), “Aunt Zina” led the Relief Society from 1888 to 1901.

Born January 31, 1821, in Watertown, New York, Zina Diantha was the eighth of William and Zina Baker Huntington’s ten children. Her father served in the War of 1812, and his father, William Huntington, Sr., in the Revolutionary War. Zina’s great-great-uncle, Samuel Huntington, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence.