

Article

Teaching and Learning Principles in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: A Thematic Analysis of the *Doctrine and Covenants*

Isaac Calvert *, Sabrina Bengtzen and Jessica Ashcraft

David O. McKay School of Education, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602, USA; brina.keri@gmail.com (S.B.); jessica_ashcraft@byu.edu (J.A.)

* Correspondence: isaac_calvert@byu.edu

Abstract: This article presents pedagogic principles prescribed in the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, a foundational book of scripture from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Following a qualitative, thematic analysis of the text, we organized the data into seven themes: character of God as a teacher, learning as the pursuit of truth, attributes of a teacher and learner, warnings in seeking light and truth, learning methods, teaching methods, and non-compulsory teaching and learning. Most noteworthy among these themes is the text's description of learning as the pursuit of embodied ontological truth and the fundamental questions it raises about the nature of compulsion in learning.

Keywords: religious education; teaching and learning; Mormon studies; sacred pedagogy

1. Introduction

“For...Latter-day Saints”, wrote Russell M. Nelson, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (2018–present), “gaining an education is not just a privilege, it is a religious responsibility” (Nelson 2010). Indeed, “the acquisition of knowledge” is such “a sacred activity” (Oaks 1996) that the Latter-day Saints’ “ability to achieve the full measure of [their] divine potential—is dependent on it” (Worthen 2012). “As intelligence is the great object of our holy religion”, wrote Sidney Rigdon (an early Church Apostle) in 1838, “it is of all things important, that we should place ourselves in the best situation possible to obtain it.” So significant is all learning—even secular learning (Eyring 2002)—to their concept of heaven and salvation, that Latter-day Saints “must come to this quest of truth—in all regions of human knowledge whatsoever, not only in reverence, but with a spirit of worship” (Clark 1946). Of the salvific and transformative power of learning, Joseph Smith, first Prophet and founder of what was to become The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter “The Church of Jesus Christ” or “the Church”) simply stated, “A man is saved no faster than he [gains] knowledge” (as cited by Uchtdorf 2009).

In short, “the necessity of learning is probably the most frequently-repeated theme of modern-day revelations” discussed by Church leaders from Joseph Smith to the present (Arrington 1967, p. 137). Yet, the practicable means by which Latter-day Saints (that is, members of The Church of Jesus Christ) realize this educative vision remains underexplored. For instance, President Spencer W. Kimball (Prophet from 1973 to 1985) suggested that such approaches informed by Latter-day Saint beliefs exist as a result of inviting faculty at the Church’s flagship higher education institution, Brigham Young University, to employ what he called “Gospel methodology” in their teaching and learning. However, Church education leaders as recent as Kevin J. Worthen (president of BYU from 2014 to 2023) have shared the sentiment he conveyed when he confessed, “I am not sure I fully understand what President Kimball meant by the term “gospel methodology” (Worthen 2022, p. 4). While some scholars of religious education have attempted to define such approaches by highlighting various aspects of Latter-day Saint teaching and learning approaches (see, for



Citation: Calvert, Isaac, Sabrina Bengtzen, and Jessica Ashcraft. 2024. Teaching and Learning Principles in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: A Thematic Analysis of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. *Religions* 15: 356. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030356>

Received: 3 February 2024

Revised: 2 March 2024

Accepted: 12 March 2024

Published: 18 March 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

example, [Hilton 2015](#) and [Morgan 2014](#)), none have conducted a systematic analysis of a text within the Latter-day Saint canon to do so. In this article, we propose to conduct just such an analysis of the educative principles within the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, one of the foundational books within The Church of Jesus Christ's scriptural canon. To this end, we ask the following question: "Does the *Doctrine and Covenants* outline specific principles or practices of teaching and learning in its text? If so, what are they?"

Importantly, the scope of our present inquiry is limited to the parameters set by these questions, namely, to elucidate principles and practices of teaching and learning described in the text of the current, 2013 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. It is not our purpose to outline a specific, unifying theory of education that pertains universally across all Latter-day Saint contexts, nor is it our intention to even speak to the possibility or appropriateness of such a monolithic theory. Furthermore, we neither seek to essentialize the broad beliefs of Latter-day Saints concerning education through our analysis, nor propose a systematic theology of education based on a single textual source, no matter its importance within this tradition. Instead, we offer the thematic results of our rigorous textual analysis as a contextually bounded but thoughtful contribution to the scholarly conversation surrounding Latter-day Saint beliefs concerning education as situated within the delimited but rich context of one of the primary texts that comprise their scriptural canon.

2. Literature

A fundamental tenet of The Church of Jesus Christ as presently constituted is a belief that God communicates with humanity collectively through two primary avenues: first, works of sacred scripture which constitute the Latter-day Saint canon, or "Standard Works" (namely, the *Bible*, the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*)¹; and second, the words of modern Prophets (that is, individuals who are believed to have been authorized to speak on God's behalf). Although the hierarchical organization of Church leadership has undergone structural changes since its founding in 1830, presently, fifteen male Church leaders (called modern Prophets, Seers, and Revelators by members of the Church) constitute the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ.

While defining and outlining criteria for official doctrine in the Church is a complex task beyond the scope of this paper (see [Ericson 2021](#); [Bradford and Dahl 1992](#); [Goodman 2021](#)), a common thread throughout the analyses of those seeking to define the fundamental tenets of this tradition is that members of the Church generally consider both the scriptural canon and the words of modern prophets to be authoritative in conveying "the mind and will of God to his people" ([Clark 1954](#)).² It is through a prophetic line of communication, President Dallin H. Oaks (a current Apostle of the Church) taught, that God spoke to His children in the past, resulting in scriptural texts such as the *Bible* and the *Book of Mormon*. "And it is this line through which He currently speaks through the teachings and counsel of living prophets" ([Oaks 2010](#)). In short, followers of this tradition consider teachings within the scriptural canon and from those Prophets authorized to speak on God's behalf to be official, generalizable teachings from God. In light of the complexity of official and colloquial uses of the term "doctrine", we propose instead to utilize the term "fundamental teachings" as we refer to ideas conveyed in the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

Within this framing, in the sections that follow, we begin by reviewing the academic literature regarding teaching and learning principles and practices of The Church of Jesus Christ. We note here, however, that this particular body of literature is remarkably limited. Our contribution seeks to augment, expand, and enliven scholarly conversation in this vein. We follow this discussion with a separate section reviewing statements from leaders and other lay members within The Church of Jesus Christ about education, its importance, and principles pertaining to its practice. Again, the purpose of the sections that follow is not to present a unified, cohesive theory of education espoused by either academic researchers or even Church leaders. They are instead intended to illustrate the rich variety of ideas that contribute to Latter-day Saint approaches to and ideas about teaching and learning. We

conclude our review of the literature with a statement orienting the reader to our decision to explore the pedagogic principles and prescriptions with the contemporary edition of the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants* specifically as a salient source of fundamental Latter-day Saint teachings.

2.1. Academic Literature

Despite the fundamental importance of teaching and learning within Latter-day Saint theology, relatively few researchers have undertaken to analyze Latter-day Saint educative theory and practice in an academic context. Those who have, however, have engaged in studies which fall under three general categories: scriptural studies, historical analyses, and contemporary field observation. This section outlines relevant academic research in each of these categories that elucidates varying facets of what might be termed a Latter-day Saint approach to teaching and learning.

Researchers across fields including education, religion, and business have conducted studies regarding the pedagogy prescribed by The Church of Jesus Christ as it appears in the Latter-day Saint scriptural canon as presently constituted. Several business management professors, for example, utilized Latter-day Saint scripture (primarily the New Testament) to examine the role of Jesus Christ as a teacher–leader (Fawcett et al. 2005). While they acknowledged scriptural examples of Jesus’ teachings, however, they did not utilize a rigorous method of textual analysis commensurate with their comprehensive claims. Furthermore, they often brought broad principles from scriptural passages unrelated to education to bear on specific contemporary pedagogic practices. For example, in order to advocate for providing pop quizzes at the start of undergraduate university classes, they cited Luke 12:40, a New Testament passage detailing the impending unexpectedness of Jesus’ Second Coming. Even more troublingly, their textual justification for the modern practice of rigorous assessments and grading was the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) in its entirety, with no specific passages cited therein. In the present inquiry, we seek to avoid such spurious connections by grounding our findings in rigorous, qualitative analysis in order to illustrate educative principles as described within the text itself, rather than calling upon select passages of that same text to justify contemporary pedagogic practices in present-day, university contexts unrelated to the body of scripture in question. Easton-Flake (2012) similarly appealed to New Testament records in her analysis of its pedagogic predilection for parables. She further considered this parabolic approach through the lens of contemporary religious education, specifically in Latter-day Saint contexts. In short, while both of these studies were grounded in the Standard Works of the Church, one of the primary means by which Latter-day Saints believe God communicates with humanity, neither consider the second source of communication—that is, modern Prophets. While Benson (1975), a religious education professor, did address this second source in his analysis of the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, his focus was specifically limited to an exploration of the method of oral communication as a means of instruction rather than considering Latter-day Saint approaches to teaching and learning more holistically.

A second category of research exploring educative principles espoused by The Church of Jesus Christ is centered on the historical documentation of schooling in the early stages of the Church’s history. One area within this broader category addresses the early education of Joseph Smith prior to the publication of the *Book of Mormon* and the *Doctrine and Covenants*. What little historical research that has been undertaken to specifically address the degree and manner of Joseph Smith’s early education seems to focus more on the content of his education as well as the acquisition of specific skills, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, rather than particular methods or educational philosophies to which he might have been exposed (Behrens 2006; Davis 2016). Behrens (2006) describes Joseph Smith’s brother Hyrum’s education at Dartmouth College and Moor’s Academy, suggesting that through these institutions and Hyrum’s tutelage, Joseph might have encountered revivalist preaching as a pedagogic device. While there is scant evidence that suggests the possibility of Joseph having received basic education in literacy and numeracy (Davis 2016), there is a

noteworthy lack of evidentiary support that Joseph had received any formal or informal training in the philosophy of education, apart from the circumstance that his father had been a school teacher for a brief portion of Joseph's formative years (Davis 2016, p. 3).

A second area within this category includes schooling within the Church more broadly conceived. The Church's first official school was the School of the Prophets, founded in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1833. Intended to prepare students to become missionaries for the Church, the School of the Prophets was "in many respects simply the functional equivalent of a seminary, theological academy, or school of divinity" (Darowski 2008, p. 3). This school was established according to a revelation given to Joseph Smith and recorded in *Doctrine and Covenants* 88. Its curriculum included both spiritual and secular topics, such as "history, current events, reading and writing, mathematics, language study, and doctrinal teaching" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints n.d.). Participants additionally experienced spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues and sanctifying rituals, which may have been considered prerequisites to teaching and learning (Minutes, 22–23 January 1833, Joseph Smith Papers Project).

Other educational institutions founded by the Church have similarly focused on both secular and religious instruction according to guidance from revelations. Buchanan (1986) described the history of Church-sponsored learning institutions in the Utah territory in response to increasing secularism in schools. Such institutions, including Parochial schools, Sunday schools, the Religion Class program, and various academies, ultimately culminated in the creation of a seminary program for teenage members of the Church. This program provides opportunities for these young members to study fundamental teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ in either release-time or early-morning courses.

Esplin and Randall (2014) similarly explored the history of Latter-day Saint schools in Utah, including the competition between Church of Jesus Christ-supported schools and Protestant mission schools in Utah's pre-statehood history and the transition to a general adoption of state-sponsored public schools. This historical study is one of several describing the school systems of Utah's history from 1850 to 1930 (see, for example, Lyon 1967; Buchanan 1982; Bennion 1939; Hough 1960). Differing slightly from these historians, Morgan's (2014) focus was the study of historical documents such as journal entries and newspaper articles which provided insight into Latter-day Saint approaches to education, and religious education in particular. It is noteworthy, however, that while several of these historians quoted modern Prophets as an authoritative source of information regarding the educational philosophies and theories of The Church of Jesus Christ, they did not cite references from the Standard Works of the Church as an equally authoritative voice on the subject.

Perhaps most significant among the early educators of the Church was Karl G. Maeser, who served as principal of Brigham Young Academy from 1876 to 1892. In his book, *School and Fireside*, Maeser (1898) outlined the purposes of education and his belief in the natural learning capacity of students, but the methods of teaching and learning he outlined were only broad concepts of establishing order in schools, building positive habits, and learning step by step according to one's ability and responsibilities. John Rockey Park, a contemporary of Karl Maeser, head of the University of Deseret, and equally respected educator, "rarely went into print on...any...subject, apparently preferring quiet personal instruction to the end of his days" (Peterson 1980). Similarly, Bennion, who was a supervisor of seminaries for the Church from 1935 to 1945 and a superintendent of the Salt Lake City School District, described the importance of both sacred and secular education for members of the church but did not outline methodologies for these kinds of learning and teaching (Bennion 1939). So, although there seems to have been a "specialized community of educators" in the early history of the Church, "with its own commitment to learning, its own social lines and traditions" (Peterson 1980), there has been little research investigating specific methodologies adopted and promoted by these prominent Latter-day Saint educators. Rather, the literature in this vein seems to largely focus on the relationship

between Church schools and educators as well as the schools, educators, and communities outside of the Church with which they interacted.

One such body of academic literature addresses efforts of the Church to expand its educational initiatives to Native American and international populations. [Boxer \(2010, 2015, 2019\)](#), [Garrett \(2016\)](#), and [King \(2016\)](#) explored the effects of the Church's Indian Student Placement Program on the identity and cultural conceptualizations of participating individuals and tribal groups. This program involved the placement of Native American children in Latter-day Saint homes as they attended schools operated by the Church.³ [Esplin et al. \(2014\)](#) investigated the development of an international Church-sponsored school in Mexico over the course of its operation since 1897. Their analysis of the isolationism, exceptionalism, and acculturation of this specific institution indicates both the difficulties of this endeavor as well as the potential for beneficial effects, such as developing relationships which promote empathy and dismantle incorrect cultural assumptions. [Esplin \(2011\)](#) similarly discussed the history of Church-run schools in New Zealand, exploring the effect of these programs on the relationship between members of the Church and the communities and government of New Zealand. While these historians provide a wider view of the Church's efforts to grow and extend its educational programs, the articles and books noted above focus more on the cultural impact of these initiatives than the educational practices and philosophies adopted and promoted by the Church.

Following a different approach from those who centered their research on either the Latter-day Saint scriptural canon or the voices of Latter-day Saint Prophets, a third category of researchers in fields including health science, anthropology, education, and religious education have looked to observational field studies to gain an understanding of prevalent pedagogic principles in the Church and the perspectives of its members on teaching and learning. [Merrill et al. \(2003\)](#) conducted a cross-sectional survey assessing the secularizing influence of education on both members of The Church of Jesus Christ and individuals not associated with the Church. Their findings, in alignment with [Knowlton's \(1998\)](#) autoethnographic study, suggest that education generally has a positive impact on Latter-day Saints' religiosity rather than a secularizing influence. [Wong et al. \(2017\)](#) compared the spiritual educative experiences of evangelical and Latter-day Saint high school students. They studied the affective, cognitive, and action-based outcomes of week-day religion courses on participants within these two traditions and the elements of curriculum and instructional methods which might contribute to these outcomes.

Focusing more specifically on the Latter-day Saint community, [Strader \(2009\)](#) conducted prolonged qualitative research on Latter-day Saint teaching practices in order to define what he termed the "ideal teacher" within the educational institutions and systems of The Church of Jesus Christ. [Hilton \(2015\)](#) explored the "core curriculum" of the Church, ostensibly outlining the principles and fundamental teachings in the religious education of its members. Importantly, however, his analysis was "based on [his own] understanding" of the words of Latter-day Saint Prophets. Indeed, his argument was supported by only four quotations from such Prophets that directly addressed the importance, principles, and practices of teaching and learning in a Latter-day Saint frame, and only three references of the same criteria from the Church's Standard Works.

A similar trend can be found in the other observational field studies outlined above. It seems that researchers seeking to understand conceptualizations of teaching and learning in the Church supported by foundational teachings tend to rely primarily upon sources other than those defined by the Church as authoritative communication from God. While [Strader \(2009\)](#) relied heavily on Church publications, manuals, and handbooks, of his 117 references, only 2 peripheral quotations constitute relevant references from the Standard Works or modern Prophets. [Wong et al. \(2017\)](#) similarly cited Church manuals, along with a handful of quotations from the Latter-day Saint scriptural canon, but these are in reference to concepts of grace and obedience rather than teaching and learning. [Knowlton \(1998\)](#) and [Merrill et al. \(2003\)](#) included no citations from either modern Prophets or the Standard Works. This troubling trend elucidates a gap in the academic literature on this subject. It

seems that the extant bodies of research in this area look primarily to only one of the two authoritative sources of fundamental Latter-day Saint teachings or entirely different sources altogether in pursuit of an understanding of the foundational importance and application of teaching and learning principles in The Church of Jesus Christ. We seek to fill this gap in this paper with a comprehensive analysis of a text which constitutes both the scriptural canon of the Church and the voice of modern Prophets.

2.2. Latter-Day Saint Literature

From the establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ in 1830 to the present day, its leaders have provided numerous ecclesiastical imperatives that stress the importance of teaching and learning. Because of the belief in an open scriptural canon in which the words of these leaders are often treated as sources of fundamental teachings comparably legitimate to those derived from ancient scripture, the following contemporary messages about the importance of education are given special consideration by Latter-day Saints. However, we do not claim that such teachings constitute a monolithic theory or theology of education as such. In the following section, we review literature from The Church of Jesus Christ through both the words of Church leaders as well as official Church publications. We will first outline statements from Church leaders which define education and learning generally. Then, we will highlight Church literature which describes the religious and pragmatic framings through which Church leaders have expressed the purpose of teaching and learning.

Finally, we will explore Church literature which characterizes teaching and learning as a divine imperative. In doing so, we will refer to Church leaders by the titles commonly used by members of this tradition as presently constituted, namely that of “President” or “Elder”. It is important to clarify here, however, that while the teachings of modern Prophets given in an official capacity are seen by members of The Church of Jesus Christ as the word of God and often categorized as fundamental teachings, those found within Church publications generally are not necessarily given this same consideration. Although such publications are approved by Church leaders and intended to represent the Church’s stance on educational issues, they do not explicitly reference authoritative sources of Divine communication in a Latter-day Saint frame, but are rather contemporarily presented as well-informed interpretations of Church principles extrapolated from said sources.

Church leaders have presented several definitions of education broadly conceived. President Brigham Young’s definition, for instance, includes “the power to think clearly. . . act well in the world’s work, and. . . appreciate life” (Young, as cited by [Brimhall 1920](#), p. 831). Other Church leaders have stressed the importance of application as a defining characteristic of teaching and learning. “All the knowledge in the world,” said President Heber J. Grant, “will not amount to anything unless we put that knowledge into actual practice” ([Grant 1939](#), p. 18). President Joseph F. Smith gave a more expansive definition of education when he said the following:

The knowledge of truth combined with proper regard for it and its faithful observance constitutes true education. The mere stuffing of the mind with a knowledge of facts is not education. The mind must not only possess a knowledge of truth but the soul must revere it, cherish it, love it as a priceless gem, and this human life must be guided and shaped by it in order to fulfill its destiny (Smith, as cited by [Derrick 1984](#)).

President George Albert Smith taught further that “eternal,” or lasting, intelligence is “the truth which [Church members] learn here and apply in [their] lives” (Smith 1908, as cited by [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2011a](#)). In short, while Church leaders maintain a relatively pragmatic approach in defining education itself, they also see a more spiritually situated purpose behind teaching and learning.

Furthermore, Church leaders often share an additional emphasis regarding the sacred nature of teaching and learning. “There is an essence of the divine in the improvement of the mind”, stated President Gordon B. [Hinckley \(1989](#), p. 96). Indeed, several identified

learning as the overarching purpose “of Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness” (Bednar 2008; see also Young 1862, as cited by [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1997](#)). In light of President Russell M. Nelson’s (2010) teaching that, “the education of one’s mind is. . .sacred”, many Latter-day Saints believe that they “cannot waste time” merely “entertaining” themselves (Eyring 2002) rather than engaging in “the great work to learn. . .all the principles of exaltation” (Smith 1844, as cited by [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2011b](#)). In other words, not only do Latter-day Saints believe that knowledge “does away with darkness, suspense, and doubt” (Smith 1843, as cited by [Lloyd 2012](#)), but that education itself possesses a salvific power that can enable Latter-day Saint learners to “gain eternal life” (Osguthorpe 2009).

Alongside these enumerations of the spiritual dimensions of teaching and learning within a Latter-day Saint frame, Church leaders including President Gordon B. Hinckley have also emphasized its practical capacity to “unlock the door of opportunity” for brighter socioeconomic prospects (Hinckley 2007; see also [Cardon 2013](#); [Monson 2007](#); Snow 1888, as cited by [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2012](#); [Hales 2015](#)). Along this same practical line of thinking, other Church leaders have additionally taught that education is intended simply to build honest and virtuous people ([McKay 1967](#)) who are able to “distinguish between sense and nonsense” ([Kimball 1980](#)). President Russell M. Nelson (2013) defined this more pragmatic dimension of a Latter-day Saint framing of education as “the difference between wishing you could help other people and being able to help them” (see also [Monson 2007](#); [Perry 1998](#); [Hinckley 2001](#)). Elder John A. Widtsoe simply stated that without education, Church members “cannot get very far” ([Widtsoe 1949](#)). Accordingly, President Thomas S. Monson invited learners to “choose the hard way and tax your talents” ([Monson 1979](#)), while President Henry B. Eyring assured Church members that “you can learn whatever God would have you learn” ([Eyring 1989](#)). An overarching theme of these statements reaffirms the importance of education on both a societal and devotional level from a Latter-day Saint perspective. While Church leaders describe education in pragmatic terms as a means by which an individual might develop a moral character and gain the skills and knowledge necessary to make a positive contribution in their community, they situate this pragmatic utility within their conceptualization of education’s broader purpose, that is, the spiritual, even salvific development of those who teach and learn.

Church leaders focus further on the “religious responsibility” of Latter-day Saints to engage in the learning process ([Nelson 2010](#)). Of teaching, said President David O. McKay, “No greater responsibility can rest upon any man” (1916, as cited by [Ballard 1983](#), p. 69). President Gordon B. Hinckley further stated, “The Lord has said very plainly that His people are to gain knowledge” ([Hinckley 1999](#)). President Dieter F. Uchtdorf further emphasized this idea in maintaining that “education is not merely a good idea—it’s a commandment ([Uchtdorf 2009](#); see also Taylor 1878, as cited by [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2011c](#); see also [Lee 1974](#); [Benson 1988](#)). President Russell T. Osguthorpe (2009) declared that “learning and teaching are not optional activities in the kingdom of God”, while Elder Vai [Sikahema \(2020\)](#) extended the theologically sanctioned obligation of learning to include “Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and anyone who is a believer.” In light of this imperative to teach and learn, President Ezra Taft [Benson \(1988\)](#) assured Church members and others that the fundamental Latter-day Saint teaching that “the Lord never gives a commandment without providing the means to accomplish it” also applies in the specific case of the commandment to teach and learn.

William W. Oswald, member of the Church’s Sunday School General Presidency, extrapolated on this imperative when he said that Church members were additionally required to understand sound teaching principles so as to improve their teaching practice. “Since every member is a teacher and ‘teaching is the center of all that we do,’” he said, “we all have a sacred responsibility to learn some basic principles of teaching” ([Oswald 2008](#)). Connecting the quality of Latter-day Saint teaching to the growth of the Church itself, another Church leader, A. Theodore Tuttle, stated, “If each of us improves instruction the whole church will grow” ([Tuttle 1959](#)). President Thorpe B. Isaacson spoke of the

superlative influence of education on the Church when he said, “The teacher and the school will play a bigger part in the welfare...and the future of a boy than perhaps the home or the church” (Isaacson 1963). Within the scope of such influence, however, David M. McConkie, First Counselor in the Church’s General Sunday School Presidency, maintained that “What matters most is the attitude or spirit by which the teacher teaches” (McConkie 2010).

The Church has additionally outlined Latter-day Saint approaches to teaching and learning in works such as *Teaching: No Greater Call*, *Teaching in the Savior’s Way*, *Preach My Gospel*, and Brigham Young University’s emerging literature on “Gospel methodology.” Yet, while the principles and practices outlined in such works may orient Latter-day Saints to various interpretations of how to teach and learn in ways informed by scriptural or prophetic teachings unique to a Latter-day Saint tradition, they themselves do not represent either of the two primary sources of official Divine communication in a Latter-day Saint frame. As such, Church members do not necessarily ascribe the same level of importance to these works as they would to the words of Church leaders (i.e., modern Prophets) or the Latter-day Saint canon of sacred scripture.

In conclusion, the academic literature on principles and practices of teaching and learning in Latter-day Saint tradition tends to make an insufficient appeal to authoritative sources of fundamental Church teachings. As such, this literature has little grounds whereon it might claim to have elucidated educative principles that Latter-day Saints themselves might consider to be of Divinely sanctioned origin. The literature within the Church, on the other hand, often encompasses a sweeping array of scattered statements from Church leaders across its nearly 200 years of history. Though seen within the Latter-day Saint tradition as Divinely inspired, there has been little effort within the Church to gather and organize such ideas in a way that would be more easily accessible to Latter-day Saints themselves, let alone those outside the tradition. It is for this reason that, as we will explain in Section 3 that follows, we have sought to fill this gap by analyzing a Latter-day Saint text that represents the confluence of two salient, authoritative sources of Divine communication as presently defined within the tradition, that is, authorized words of Church leaders as well as text from Latter-day Saint canonized scripture. In doing so, we hope to provide a clearer picture of Latter-day Saint educative thought and practice that is drawn from a text whose teachings are contemporarily authorized and accepted as fundamental teachings in order to be representative of the emic perspectives of this tradition’s adherents as well as grounded in rigorous, qualitative textual analysis methodology so as to be trustworthy within the broader academic community.

3. Methods

In order to add to the aforementioned literature in this way, we chose to conduct an exhaustive reading and thematic coding of the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Before outlining our methodological approach, we provide here an explanation of this text in order to give context to the reader as well as explain in greater detail our rationale for choosing this particular text within the Latter-day Saint scriptural canon as an appropriate source through which to begin a study of The Church of Jesus Christ’s fundamental teachings concerning education. Following this contextualizing explanation, we will provide a detailed description of our methodological approach to analyzing this text.

3.1. A Brief Note on the History of the *Doctrine and Covenants*

Unlike *The Book of Mormon*, another of the Church’s Standard Works, the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants* is neither chronological nor does it proceed as a narrative account. Each section constitutes an independent treatise on a topic of particular interest within a specific time and context of the early years of the Church in the 19th century. Unlike each of the other books in the Latter-day Saint corpus of canonized scripture, the Church maintains that “the *Doctrine and Covenants* is unique because it is not a translation of an ancient document, but is of modern origin” (D&C Introduction).

For this reason, the *Doctrine and Covenants* fills a distinctive role in defining the fundamental teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ. Because of its position within the Latter-day Saint corpus of holy scripture, members of the Church consider this text to contain the authoritative words of God. It also, however, comprises teachings, writings, and declarations of modern Prophets which have been composed or delivered in an official capacity and accepted “by competent assemblies or conferences of the Church” (D&C Introduction). As such, the *Doctrine and Covenants* presents an authoritative record of fundamental Latter-day Saint teachings informed by two salient sources of official Divine communication, that is, text of canonized scripture as well as the words of authorized Church leaders. Because of its unique positionality within the framework of fundamental Latter-day Saint teachings, we chose to analyze this text as an authoritative and reliable source of principles and practices related to teaching and learning grounded in the core tenets of The Church of Jesus Christ.

In the Introduction to the 2013 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, the Church describes the text as “a collection of divine revelations and inspired declarations” given mostly by the founding Prophet of the Church, Joseph Smith, from 1823 to 1843. Members of the Church considered these revelations to be “living, dynamic, and subject to refinement with additional revelation” (Introduction). Various scribes recorded the revelations, which Joseph Smith adjusted and corrected within the living and dynamic framework outlined in the Introduction to the text. This included an iterative editing process intended to further hone the initial ideas he claimed to have received and clarifying the text to more accurately incorporate further revelations which informed and enriched these initial, refinable ideas. The *Doctrine and Covenants* has been printed in several editions across its rich history. In 1831, leaders of the Church determined to publish the revelations so that they might be more available to members of the Church. The first official edition of the text was published in 1833 in Missouri and known as the *Book of Commandments*. As mobs destroyed a portion of the revelations during the printing process, a new edition followed shortly in 1835. This second edition was entitled *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints: Carefully Selected from the Revelations of God*. It contained the Lectures on Faith, which were delivered in the School of the Prophets, and 103 sections.

The third edition of the text was published in 1844, a few months following the death of Joseph Smith. This version contained seven additional revelations and a tribute to Joseph and Hyrum Smith. The next edition, published in 1876 under the direction of Church historian Orson Pratt, added 26 new sections. In 1921, a committee of five Apostles reviewed the text again. The resulting edition included President Wilford Woodruff’s Manifesto on plural marriage as an official declaration and removed the Lectures on Faith. In 1981, another official declaration was added along with two more sections. The most recent edition, published in 2013, included edits to the section headings and historical context as well as adjustments to footnotes and spelling errors. This edition comprises 138 sections and 2 official declarations. The text of each section is subsequently divided into verses in a style comparable to the versification of the *King James Bible*.

Several denominations that share historical and theological foundations with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also use their own editions of the text, though these are built upon the early editions written and published by Joseph Smith. The Community of Christ, for example, has made additions to the 1844 edition of the text upon the approval of the Church’s Prophet-President and World Conference. Other publications, such as Marquardt’s (1999) critical edition of the text, Petersen’s (1955) thesis, and Woodford’s (1974) doctoral dissertation have explored and analyzed differences across various editions of the text. While these explorations and perspectives are valuable in that they provide a more historically holistic view of the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, we determined to focus our analysis in this paper on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ 2013 edition of the text (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2013) rather than the textual variances across editions. While we compared our findings with the original transcriptions of the revelations, available through the Joseph Smith Papers database, and note substantive differences either in the body of the paper or footnotes to

add further context, this was not our primary purpose. Inasmuch as our principal purpose was to identify and elucidate salient themes regarding teaching and learning in this text as read through the lens of contemporary Church membership, we primarily focus on the 2013 edition.

As we compared the themes of our findings with historical records and editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, we sorted the differences into three categories. The first category included changes to spelling, wording peripheral to the primary purpose of our analysis (such as “that” to “which”), or edits made within original transcriptions that are reflected in printed editions of the text. One significant example of this kind of change is found in Section 130. The transcription of the language which coincides with the 2013 edition’s verse 18 reads, “whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life,” with obtain crossed out and “attain unto” written above it (History Draft [1 March–31 December 1843], Joseph Smith Papers Project). We determined that this and similar changes not only do not substantively bear on our analysis of the text, but also more likely reflect corrections of scribal errors than changes to the text itself. As the changes in this first category do not significantly influence our analysis or findings, we did not note them in this paper.

Criteria for the second category included more significant changes in word choice, historical context, additions, or removals of significant words or full clauses within the text. Additionally, changes in this second category, while more notable than those in the first category, likewise do not weigh heavily on our findings either because the changes occur in portions of the text peripheral to our findings or constitute changes which lay members of the Church might consider divinely inspired. We note changes in this second category in footnotes throughout the paper in order to add relevant historical and textual context without distracting from the central purpose of the paper. The third category of differences between the 2013 edition, the earlier editions, and the original transcriptions of the text includes changes similar to those in the second category, but which might directly and substantively inform our analysis. Importantly, as none of the differences we identified matched these criteria for category three, we make no note of such changes in the body of our paper. Again, our consideration of these differences across historical records and various editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants* is to provide valuable context and acknowledge the complexity of its history without detracting from current Church teachings and the emic perspectives of this tradition’s contemporary lay members which we wish to explore and honor in our analysis.

3.2. Textual Analysis

In light of previous research in this area having been limited to particular passages of Latter-day Saint scripture in isolation, one major priority of our research design from the outset was to approach the most contemporary edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* in its entirety. In doing so, we hoped to gain a more holistically situated and richly informed perspective of the educative principles and prescriptions offered by the text. Following established methods of qualitative textual and content analysis (Krippendorff 2013; Neuendorf 2017), two of the authors began by reading and analyzing a single section together in an effort to create a clear coding protocol that would guide the remaining textual analyses that followed. To further establish trustworthiness and inter-rater reliability, these same authors then independently applied the aforementioned coding protocol to five sections of the text (consisting of approximately 3600 words).

Following these independent analyses, these same authors compared the thematic codes they encountered in their respective readings of these sections and discussed the analytical processes whereby they arrived at these themes as informed by the coding protocol designed earlier. Upon arriving at a methodological consensus as to how to proceed, we began an exhaustive coding of the text. We utilized NVivo qualitative analysis software to organize codes and group them into broader themes. As we read through the text, we sought to identify passages that were relevant to teaching, learning, education, truth, and other terms related to education. Additionally, we took a more holistic approach

and identified any passages related to our primary research question, whether or not specific vocabulary terms appeared in them.

It is significant to note that we did not decide upon a list of vocabulary related to educational topics only to then include the results of a keyword search in our findings. From our initial, orienting analyses, it became clear that the text consistently presented passages related to education without using many of the common terms one might expect in such an analytical approach. Our initial analyses also led us to the conclusion that the frequency with which a particular theme appeared in the text was not necessarily reliably indicative of the salient importance of the thematic content such text might convey. Thirdly, a keyword search might have allowed us to access certain relevant passages based on the presence of particular keywords without having familiarized ourselves with the rich context in which they were situated. It is primarily for these reasons that we chose a more immersive, qualitative analytical method rather than a quantitative approach for our textual analysis.

Importantly, we did not conduct this analysis with an a priori set of themes or a pre-determined theoretical framework in mind. Rather, we allowed the text to generate themes holistically following established qualitative research guidelines (Bryant 2019). As such, our thematic coding process was both iterative and inductive. Following our initial, exploratory analyses, four general codes emerged and, as new themes arose, we added additional themes to the coding list. Key indicators in theme creation included vocabulary terms (i.e., truth, power, seeking, teaching, instruction, revelation, light, intelligence, understanding, wisdom, knowledge, mysteries of God, my word/word of God, etc.), attributes (i.e., extant adjectives that describe a learner or are related to knowledge, learning, seeking, or teaching), invitation–promise dyads (i.e., if/then statements involving invitations to act attached to promises made contingent upon the performance of the prescribed action), and demonstrations of deity (i.e., evidence of God’s teaching, references directly to God or first-person grammar such as “I the Lord. . .”). Similar to the inductive approach to coding described earlier, these themes were not fixed but comprised flexible, iterative, and evolving lists as new words, attributes, invitations, and demonstrations became clear throughout the analysis.

Following this initial round of comprehensive coding, we conducted a secondary round of analysis in which we identified prominent thematic threads across codes and combined them appropriately. In a round of tertiary analysis, we further concretized these themes through a process of axial coding in which we oriented salient themes more closely to the primary research question, further combining and re-naming themes throughout. Following these three stages of textual analysis, we arrived at a final set of seven major themes with one layer of subthemes. We then composed explanatory prose for each of these themes as situated in the context of the textual citations upon which they were based.

4. Findings

In the sections that follow, we describe each of the seven major themes we found in our textual analysis of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. These themes included the character of God as a teacher, learning as the pursuit of truth, attributes of a teacher and learner, warnings in seeking light and truth, methods of learning and teaching, and non-compulsory teaching and learning. We situate each of these themes within the context of the passages from which they came. Taken together, these themes represent fundamental principles and practices of teaching and learning gleaned from the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants*.

4.1. Character of God as a Teacher

Inasmuch as a foundational imperative of Church teachings is to become like God by imitating His ways (D&C 88:107; 67:13; 76:53–58), Latter-day Saints are correlatively commanded to teach as God teaches by imitating His character as the ideal teacher. In other words, teaching within a Latter-day Saint frame constitutes a divinely sanctioned process of imitatio dei. Passages of the *Doctrine and Covenants* outline several specific characteristics

of God in His role as an archetypal teacher, including His consistency (D&C 20:12), mercy to those who “seek diligently to learn” (D&C 97:1–2), knowledge of “all things” (D&C 88:6), plainness in teaching (D&C 133:57), and willingness to impart all knowledge to anyone in pursuit of it (D&C 46:7). The paragraphs that follow describe each of these character traits in detail as well as their relationship to God’s role as a teacher and the ways in which Latter-day Saints emulate them.

Scriptural descriptions of God as unchanging “from eternity to eternity” (D&C 76:4) focus on two dimensions of a Latter-day Saint conceptualization of God’s character as a teacher. First, the idea that He does “not walk in crooked paths” (D&C 3:2) suggests that His ontology in this frame is commensurate with His philosophy. In other words, He is seen to live in accordance with the principles He teaches to others. With regard to humanity, imitating this dimension of God’s character as a teacher might be described as avoiding pedagogic hypocrisy, that is, living in accordance with the notional verities one espouses or prescribes in the exposition of the content of their teaching. A second dimension of this Latter-day Saint interpretation of God’s unchanging character as a teacher describes His commitment to the principles of truth which He has already taught. In much the same way as He is believed to not deviate from His teachings ontologically, the text states that He will not “vary from that which He hath said” in a propositional sense, as well (D&C 3:2). While this may appear problematic in light of the historical development of Latter-day Saint ideas, this dimension of God’s personhood is less a description of the immutability of fundamental Church teachings than it is an illustration of a belief in God’s character as being committed to upholding revealed truth. Within a Latter-day Saint framing of open canonicity wherein further revealed truth is seen as adding to rather than substantively altering extant religious principles, the text illustrates God as an archetype of a teacher committed to upholding the principles he teaches and fulfilling the promises he has made. Importantly, imitating this dimension of God’s unchanging commitment to previously revealed propositional truth does not necessarily constitute a prohibition of Latter-day Saint teachers from improving what they teach as their knowledge increases. Rather, it might be more accurately described as an invitation to remain consistently committed to teaching true principles in the course of their natural development as teachers.

Seeing God as a perfect “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”⁴ (D&C 33:1, see also D&C 67:1, 6:16), Latter-day Saints believe that God is merciful to His students in their attempts to fulfill His invitation to educative imitatio dei (D&C 3:10; 64:2; 38:14). This mercy, however, does not represent an unfettered tolerance for any and all behavior in either teaching or learning. Rather, its purpose is to build Latter-day Saints’ capacities as they continually try, fail, and try again to live up to His divine vision of their potential (D&C 39:7). His promise to those who diligently seek to fulfill this vision is not only that they will have their weakness made strong (D&C 50:16), but that He will “reveal” to them “all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come”⁵ (D&C 76:5–10, see also D&C 124:41–42).

As part of this divinely orchestrated process, Latter-day Saints consider God to be actively involved in the direct instruction of those who choose to participate in it. Not only is He seen to promise to “declare” (D&C 5:12)⁶ and even “show” (D&C 45:11) His students His wisdom, but to “show it plainly” with the same clarity and directness with which He taught His followers anciently (D&C 45:16). Importantly, as “no respecter of persons” (D&C 38:16, D&C 1:35), the text describes God as willing to give “liberally” (D&C 46:7) “unto all flesh” (D&C 1:34, see also D&C 1:2), that is, willing to teach anyone who is, in turn, reciprocally willing to be taught. Furthermore, He is illustrated as willing to “reveal all things” (D&C 101:32), even those “things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world” (D&C 124:41). So committed is He described in His role as teacher that He declares it would be nearly impossible for anyone to stop Him from teaching one who desires to learn. “As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it upstream”, the text declares, “as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day

Saints" (D&C 121:33).⁷ It is significant that the language of these passages does not explicitly delimit the content area in and through which God is willing to teach His children.

4.2. Learning as the Pursuit of Truth

Latter-day Saint teachers and learners are commanded to seek "diligently to learn wisdom and find truth" (D&C 97:1), thereby characterizing the process of learning as linked to and perhaps even synonymous with a pursuit of truth. As part of this framing, the text primarily describes two broad dimensions of the meaning of truth: first, truth in a propositional sense, and second, truth in an embodied, ontological sense. Based on our analysis, we propose that the text describes truth in the first sense (i.e., propositional truth) as a necessary prerequisite to the attainment of truth in the second sense (i.e., embodied, ontological truth), which shares a noteworthy congruence with what the text often calls "intelligence". While the *Doctrine and Covenants* describes truth in the propositional sense as an essential dimension of learning, it is truth in the embodied, ontological sense in which much of the transformative power and potentially eternal durability of learning are said to lie. It is this temporally endless and ontologically transformative power of truth in the second sense that is among the primary, overarching purposes of learning as illustrated in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. The sections that follow describe both of these dimensions of truth, their relationship to one another, and how that relationship situates the *Doctrine and Covenants'* approach to teaching and learning.

To begin, the content contained in Latter-day Saint scripture (i.e., its statements, utterances, propositions, and claims) is seen to constitute a standard of divine truth often called a fulness of the gospel by Latter-day Saints (D&C 42:12, 56–57; 3:19–20). Such truth statements are not confined to a particular content area (D&C 88:11–13). In other words, the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants* does not paint the Deity into an intellectual corner as some sort of siloed scholar, omniscient in theological matters but either unable or unwilling to speak on others. Instead, it goes to great lengths to explain that truth from God can and must include all areas of knowledge (D&C 93:26; 121:31–32). For example, some of these divinely described areas of content outside scripture include "things both in heaven and in the earth" (D&C 88:79), "knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms" (D&C 93:53), and "all good books. . . languages, tongues, and people" (D&C 90:15–16). Furthermore, the *Doctrine and Covenants* presents truth as not only ubiquitously available across these content areas, but unreservedly accessible to anyone throughout the world (D&C 84:46; 58:9) who "earnestly seeks" it (D&C 46:5–6).

In short, truth in this first sense is propositional. It parallels in large degree the philosophical conception of the correspondence theory of truth, that is, that the truthfulness of a given statement is contingent upon the accuracy to which it corresponds to reality. In the language of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, this dimension of truth is described as "knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (D&C 93:24). While the passage immediately following starkly condemns anything "more or less than this" as falsehood (D&C 93:25), the text continues with a divine declaration that is particularly instructive in the present context in that it illustrates the relationship between such propositional truth and its more ontological dimension. "I am the Spirit of truth," God is described as saying, "and John [of the New Testament] bore record of me, saying: He received a fulness of truth, yea, even of all truth" (D&C 93:26).

According to this passage, God describes that He is the truth because He received a fulness of truth. In other words, He became the embodiment of the propositional truths He had intellectually apprehended through the lived application of those propositions until He came to realize them in their fullness. The following passage continues with a promise that extends the possibility of such embodied, ontological truth to any who is willing. "He that keepeth his commandments," the text promises, "receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things" (D&C 93:28). In this sense, while the *Doctrine and Covenants'* depiction of truth begins propositionally "as a knowledge of things" (D&C 93:24), the intellectual apprehension of such truth seems but truth in embryo. From

this preparatory potentiality can arise a fulness of truth, or what the text of the *Doctrine and Covenants* calls “intelligence.” The purpose of beginning with propositional knowledge is so that the lived application of such truth will result in ontological truths worth embodying. If truth were only propositional, it might be pursued by propositional means alone. But if truth extends into an embodied, ontological frame, these passages suggest that there might be concomitantly ontological ways of attaining it. Such ontological ways of teaching and learning invite those who endeavor to enact them to change their natures, thereby becoming more like God, who represents the perfect ideal of fully embodied, lived and living truth in a Latter-day Saint frame.

These principles of truth when fully realized by both action and ontology concord with what the *Doctrine and Covenants* refers to as principles of intelligence (D&C 93:29–30, 36). These are primarily illustrated as being attained through obedience and diligence (D&C 130:18–19). It is noteworthy that the text describes the pursuit of this second facet of truth as “attaining unto” truth, rather than obtaining, possessing, or acquiring truth. Such language suggests that the telos of learning is not the acquisition of information intellectually apprehended, but that such understanding acts as a necessary though insufficient prerequisite to the embodied attainment of truth through its lived realization. In this sense, while embryonic truth (that is, knowledge of things as they are) can be understood by anyone, truth fully realized (that is, ontological truth) “surpasses all understanding” in that it cannot be understood theoretically, only experientially (D&C 76:114). The *Doctrine and Covenants* further characterizes this kind of learning as a process of receiving light. “And he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). In this sense, the text illustrates that the combination of a propositional understanding of truth together with an experiential actualization of that truth has the potential to “rise with [them] in the resurrection” (D&C 130:18) and so remain an eternal part of their ontological personhood. As such, insofar as embodied principles of intelligence (synonymized with “light and truth” in the text) become part of who they are, truth appears to have the potential to become eternal for Latter-day Saints. Simply stated, while truth in the first, propositional sense is eternal in that it, in and of itself, “hath no end” (D&C 88:66) and “abideth forever” (D&C 1:39), truth in the second sense can be eternal inasmuch as individuals, seen as eternal beings within a Latter-day Saint frame, can come to embody truth and thereby enable it to be made eternal in and through its concomitance with their personhood.

4.3. Attributes of Teachers and Learners

The phrase “truth embraceth truth” (D&C 88:40) suggests that one of the key purposes of learning for Latter-day Saints goes beyond familiarizing oneself with notional verities to include becoming truth, that is, to live in accordance with the principles of truth one encounters. The text provides a series of instructions to accomplish this, including processes in which to engage, characteristics to embody, and temporal preconditions that must be met in order to do so. The first of two processes mentioned is waiting, that is, accepting what is believed to be a divine, or eternal timetable for the process of learning rather than viewing it from a temporally limited perspective in order to “be taught more perfectly and have experience” (D&C 105:9–11). The second is presiding with wisdom over those one teaches (D&C 78:22; 70:3). The prescribed characteristics of an effective teacher and learner include soberness (D&C 18:21), mildness (D&C 38:41), meekness (D&C 100:7), faith (D&C 52:4), obedience (D&C 58:6), humility (D&C 112:10), and diligence (D&C 88:63–64; 97:1). However, the text also illustrates the characteristics of a poor learner, which inhibit individuals from achieving the salvific state of becoming truth. These characteristics are corruption (D&C 10:21), distraction in worldly matters (D&C 45:29; 121:34–35; 3:6), fear (D&C 3:7; 40:2–3), unbelief (D&C 5:7), idleness or greediness (D&C 68:31), blindness (D&C 58:15; 76:75), unworthiness (D&C 41:6; 97:17), and pride (D&C 3:13; 3:4; 1:16; 58:39, 41).

The text counsels teachers and learners to be worthy in order to teach and be taught “more perfectly” (D&C 105:10) and thereby “receive a fulness” of learning (D&C 93:27–28).

Such worthiness is said to include ceasing from “light speeches. . .lustful desires. . .pride and light-mindedness. . .and all wicked doings” (D&C 88:121). One prerequisite of this “fulness” is believed to be God’s active participation in the teaching and learning process. Without such participation, the *Doctrine and Covenants* stipulates that this “fulness” cannot be attained by human action alone, no matter the skill or aptitude of the teacher or learner involved. In other words, the text maintains that any teaching or learning that hopes to be empowered by this “fulness” must be a joint effort shared between Deity and humanity, the first extending prerequisites for His involvement and the other fulfilling those prerequisites and thereby inviting Him to join them. The text extends this promise of divine didactic assistance in the form of heightened teaching ability and learning capacity (D&C 84:19–22, 37–38).

4.4. Warnings in Seeking Truth

As mentioned previously, Latter-day Saints consider the call to learn a commandment of divine origin. The learning journey, however, is also believed to be fraught with dangers and distractions. As such, the commandment to pursue truth through teaching and learning is accompanied in the text by warnings about the potential negative consequences of engaging in that process (D&C 63:58). These dangers include ignorance, fear, pride, deception, and the perishability of truth, each of which will be detailed in the section that follows. Latter-day Saint learners are warned to actively prepare for those dangers “which [are] to come” (D&C 1:12), without which preparation they may fail in their charge to seek truth (D&C 50:46). The first of these dangers outlined in the text is fear, that is, the fear to engage in the learning process in the first place (D&C 67:3). This fear is seen as especially dangerous because it can lead to a second danger: the ignorance that results from either not entering the process itself or disengaging from it once begun. Said differently, Latter-day Saints believe that “it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance” (D&C 131:6).

Another warning in the *Doctrine and Covenants* concerns pride, which the text describes as having the capacity to desecrate one’s learning efforts and lead learners “into temptation” (D&C 23:1). The text further stipulates that such pride can lead one to treat knowledge and truth lightly or, in other words, “trifle. . .with sacred things” (D&C 6:12). Such trifling can include adding one’s own unauthorized ideas to those fundamental teachings contained in Latter-day Saint canonized scripture and presenting them as though they were foundational tenets of the Church (D&C 10:67–68; see also D&C 22:4). Such additions have the potential to become “a snare upon. . .souls” (D&C 90:17). There is, again, no indication in the text that the avoidance of pride is only to be observed when dealing with religious content, but it seems to be applicable in secular contexts, as well.

Another danger the text describes as inherent to the learning process is the potential for deception, in other words, receiving and living in obedience to incorrect ideas masquerading as principles of truth (D&C 49:23). This is particularly perilous because in Latter-day Saint theology Satan is depicted as an able, adept teacher, whose purpose is to go “forth deceiving” (D&C 52:14) and overthrowing those who are seeking truth (D&C 50:2–4, 6–7). The implication, then, is that while God actively seeks to teach principles of divine truth, another being, nearly as powerful and skillful in teaching, is believed to actively attempt to teach false principles. One important facet of this particular warning is the implied injunction to learn to discern between such falsehood and the truth it seeks to imitate. In order to do so, the text maintains, one must “continue in steadfastness” (D&C 49:23) and “seek...the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given” (D&C 46:8).

Lastly, the text warns that attaining truth is not the end of the pursuit of truth, but the beginning of a process of actively living and maintaining that truth. Importantly, this description principally applies to the embodied, ontological dimension of truth outlined earlier. “Attaining unto” ontological truth in this sense constitutes entering into a relationship with a lived truth that is inherently perishable absent the consistent, effortful involvement of the learner in its lived perpetuation. The warning inherent in this declaration is that if learners do not perpetually nourish the principles of ontological truth they

encounter through consistent, effortful involvement in realizing such truth by virtue of their actions, while the notional verities upon which these are based remain, one's embodied, ontological truth "shall be taken away" (D&C 60:3, see also D&C 1:33; 133:71; 63:55–56; 3:9; 5:5; 10:1; 42:10; 95:11–12; 38:30). Again, this neither signifies the inherent perishability nor necessary periodic renovation of propositional truth itself, but instead that the continuation of embodied, ontological truth is contingent on the pursuit of further truth as well as consistently living in accordance with those truths theretofore apprehended.

Perhaps most noteworthy of all these is a warning in Section 50 specifically regarding how one teaches and learns. This section specifically stipulates that if one teaches what it calls "the word of truth" by "some other way" than that which God has prescribed, the resultant learning will not be "of God"—in other words, it will be desecrated (D&C 50:17–18). Immediately thereafter, it outlines a similar warning that if one seeks to learn the "word of truth," but does so in a way not established or approved by God, that truth will be fundamentally altered in that it will lose its connection to God and, so bereft of its connection to the source of its sanctity, will become desecrated (D&C 50:19–20). In short, this section outlines the idea that the way in which one goes about teaching and learning can fundamentally alter the sanctity of the content in question by virtue of either connecting or disconnecting it from God. In other words, the methods by which one teaches and learns in a Latter-day Saint frame are essential to the sanctity of the educative endeavor itself.

4.5. *Methods of Learning*

The text of the *Doctrine and Covenants* describes learning as an inherently personal responsibility. Students are counseled not to be commanded in all things, but to be "anxiously engaged in a good cause and do many things of their own free will. . . for the power is in them" (D&C 58:26–28). Vital to that truth is trust or belief in promised, divine reciprocation for seeking divine learning. In other words, the text describes it as essential that learners believe that when they ask they will receive (D&C 88:63–63; 42:68) and if they knock, truth and knowledge will be opened to them (D&C 75:27; see also D&C 66:9; 6:5; 7:1; 11:5; 12:5; 14:5; 50:1).

While the *Doctrine and Covenants* repeatedly stipulates that it is imperative for learners to believe that their inquiries can be answered, it additionally states that belief alone is insufficient in this seeking process. In addition to belief, the orthopractic element of action is essential. Learners must do more than simply "ask," the text maintains, "but. . . must study it out" in their minds (D&C 9:6–9) in addition to relying upon divine pedagogic intervention. This combination of belief in divine assistance and acceptance of the individual responsibility to act and study leads to progress in learning. Apart from identifying learning as a personal responsibility, the text describes learning as continuous, that is, it builds upon an individual's previous experience and intelligence, requiring Latter-day Saints to "grow in grace and in a knowledge of the truth" (D&C 50:40–42 see also D&C 42:61–62). Additionally, learning can be both intricate and chaotic, or not always characterized by organized, careful curation. Indeed, within the text's description of the learning process, errors and weaknesses are expected (D&C 1:24–28). Yet, the text also stipulates that such errors, even among God's "servants," will be "made known" and corrected thereafter (D&C 1:24–25). Finally, the text explains that learning requires an investment in time. It counsels learners to not "idle away" (D&C 60:13) their time but to "seek. . . early" (D&C 88:83) to learn.

Engaging in the process of learning outlined by the *Doctrine and Covenants* requires learners to favor God's ways over man's ways by laying "aside the things of this world" and seeking for things of a better nature (D&C 25:10, see also D&C 91:3–6; 46:30; 50:21–22). The text also advises Latter-day Saints to approach learning with both mind and heart, body and soul (D&C 93:33–34; 64:33–34), and willingly receive instruction (D&C 1:11; 38:4–5; 57:3; 71:5–6; 88:32). The *Doctrine and Covenants* additionally invites learners to recognize and accept the value of adversity in learning, for without it, the text stipulates, learners "could not be agents unto themselves" (D&C 29:39). Specific methods of learning outlined in the text include pondering (D&C 138:2, 11, 29; 43:34–35), writing (D&C 76:28, 49, 80, 113,

115) reading (D&C 18:35–36; 57:9; 91:4), and gathering together “to be equal” (D&C 82:17) with the purpose of attaining intelligence collectively and individually (D&C 105:1; 88:122; 84:109–110; 42:3). The text emphasizes the importance of a consecrated, physical location as advantageous to the learning process as a “place of instruction” (D&C 97:12–16), organized and established (D&C 109:8): “that it may be a sanctuary. . .for...edification” (D&C 88:137)⁸.

4.6. *Methods of Teaching*

The text presents Latter-day Saint teaching methods in two ways: first by illustrating those seen to be modeled by God, and second, through direct pedagogic prescriptions within the text itself. As indicated by repeated injunctions throughout the text to engage in teaching as well as the Church’s purposive approach to imitatio dei, Latter-day Saints seek to imitate the specific teaching methodologies the text illustrates as having been modeled by God. As such, they believe that He delegates teaching responsibilities or “the keys of the kingdom of God” (D&C 65:2)⁹ to them as opportunities to practice these divinely modeled pedagogies (D&C 84:88; 1:38; 1:4; 84:2). In an educative context, God is seen to provide Latter-day Saints with “directions how [they] may act before [Him], that it may turn to [them] for [their] salvation” (D&C 82:8–9).

While God is believed to use several specific methods in teaching throughout this text, including building upon students’ previous knowledge (D&C 10:52), the use of parables (D&C 88:51–62), the spoken word (D&C 84:81–85; 68:3–6; 100:5–6; 33:8–10; 52:16; 88:137; 30:11; 24:5–6; 14:8), and asking non-rhetorical questions (D&C 50:16; 6:22–24; 50:13), through it all, He is described as imminently adaptive in his pedagogy. In other words, He only uses these specific approaches inasmuch as they are suited to those whom He teaches (D&C 1:24; 88:46–47; 89:1–4). In imitating this approach, while the text encourages Latter-day Saints to give special consideration to the specific methods God is seen as having used in this text, were these methods ill-suited for a given student, adapting one’s pedagogy to more closely suit that student’s needs or circumstances is considered more appropriate than a rigidly orthodox adherence to these practices (D&C 12:8).

The text illustrates how God further models principles that characterize His teaching across specific methodological applications. God is believed to begin to model this broader approach to teaching through active pedagogic interventions; that is to say, He becomes actively involved on a personal level with each of His students (D&C 18:1–4; 25:1–5; 30:9–10; 32:1–3). This active involvement includes teaching in ways suited especially to and perceived by one’s “mind” and “heart” (D&C 8:2; see also D&C 78:2; 31:7; 124:9; 76:11–12; 110:1). Rather than being one-sided, this teaching is reciprocal—God is said to speak with humanity as they speak with Him. The text calls this process reasoning with God “even as man reasoneth one with another face to face” (D&C 50:11–12; see also D&C 61:13; 45:10; 50:10; 45:15).¹⁰ This reasoning process is intentionally stepwise. Prior to each new step in increasing knowledge, God requires something of Latter-day Saint learners (see D&C 52:1–2; 53:6, 45:60–62; 104:58; 77:1; 73:5; 113:1–2). Through these stepwise prerequisites, God builds upon previous knowledge and invites learners to grow into further light and knowledge, promising that although they “cannot bear all things now,” He “will lead [them] along” (D&C 78:18). Importantly, the text illustrates this incremental increase in knowledge via stepwise instruction as an aggregation of symbolically similar substance. “That which is of God is light,” the text explains, “and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day” (D&C 50:24). In other words, the text’s usage of a light metaphor seems to portray God’s tutelage as a process of careful guidance wherein fundamentally similar principles of knowledge are added to one another until the described arrival of an eschatological fulfillment to such a process.

Apart from those teaching methods modeled by God, the text also prescribes specific approaches to teaching. These include the injunction to “teach one another” (D&C 88:77; see also D&C 43:8–10; 88:122; 49:4; 84:106; 88:81–82; 88:118) and that those who are teaching “may be instructed more perfectly” (D&C 88:78–79). While no limit is expressly placed

on whom or what can be taught, God does indicate that content of a certain sanctity is to be shared only when appropriate. Guidelines for such appropriateness include timing, worthiness, or simply a student's position within the stepwise prerequisites previously outlined (D&C 105:23–24; 84:61; 76:115). Amidst all these pedagogic prescriptions for teaching, the *Doctrine and Covenants* also maintains that there are some truths that no one can teach and are only to be learned by the power of the Holy Ghost, that is, God's personal pedagogic influence (D&C 76:116). Additionally, the text contains numerous warnings against the inappropriate application of the teaching methods it outlines (D&C 82:4–6; 76:28–29; 93:39; 46:7; 78:10).

4.7. Non-Compulsory Teaching, Uncoerced Learning

The text describes teaching as the extension of non-compulsory invitations to learn coupled with commensurate promises for engaging in that process (see D&C 29:34–35; 84:23–25; 58:26; 61:22; 82:10; 5:34). Through these invitation–promise dyads, God is seen to invite Latter-day Saints to act and thereby attain knowledge whose impetus and origin arise independent of any manipulative force on the part of God as an archetypal teacher. In this Latter-day Saint frame, in following this pattern, teachers are to continually invite their students to choose to learn rather than coerce them into doing so. The text states that, “he that is compelled in all things” not only becomes “a slothful and not a wise servant,” but “receiveth no reward,” as well (D&C 58:26). Said differently, learning exclusively by compulsory means not only has deleterious effects upon the ontological personhood of the learner (that is, they become slothful and unwise), but whatever learning or becoming that may result does not constitute a “reward,” for through such methodology, the text maintains, there can be none.

However, when one engages in a learning journey in response to an invitation rather than in acquiescence to a demand, the self-initiated knowledge that results becomes fertile soil in which ontological truth can grow. It is perhaps for this reason that the text goes on to prescribe that, “it is not meet that [God] should command in all things,” but that men and women “should be anxiously engaged in a good cause and do many things [learning not least among them] of their own free will” (D&C 58:26–27). Seen in this way, the power to learn is not located in any source external to the learner, but, as the text clearly states, “the power is in them wherein they are agents unto themselves” (D&C 58:28, emphasis added). One implication of this agentic power is that the very notion of controlling the learning of another person is not only illusory but, worse, ultimately damaging to the character and knowledge of a learner so coerced.

5. Conclusions

The *Doctrine and Covenants*, in keeping with Latter-day Saint tradition more generally, describes teaching and learning as a religious imperative both cross-disciplinary in scope and salvific in purpose. Framing the superlative sanctity of the educative endeavor, the text presents the following principles: the character of God as a teacher, properties of divine truth, God's role in the existence of light and truth, attributes of a teacher and learner, warnings in seeking light and truth, specific approaches to teaching and learning, and non-compulsory teaching and learning. Perhaps most noteworthy among these principles is the *Doctrine and Covenants'* illustration of learning as a pursuit of truth. This characterization of learning stands apart from both an acquisition metaphor as well as a participation metaphor of learning, and instead describes the pursuit of truth as a process of preliminary acquaintance with notional verities preparatory to a lived and living realization of ontological truth through a process of perpetual change and becoming. In other words, it describes how one could come to embody a principle of truth rather than memorize, write down, or otherwise propositionally encode that truth.

Importantly, the text further maintains that the type of lasting change that constitutes this type of learning cannot occur if that learning is forced upon the learner. Coercion or manipulation in either the initiation or perpetuation of the learning process is seen

to fundamentally alter the nature of that learning such that the character of its enactors diminishes and the outcomes of their learning come to naught. While the educative principles of this text flow out of a specific religious tradition, the *Doctrine and Covenants* itself places no artificial delimitation on the types of content to which these principles might apply. In other words, though this may be a religious text, the teaching and learning principles it contains are intended to extend beyond the exclusive study of religious texts into a multitude of extra-scriptural content areas for both Latter-day Saints and others. With this assertion as a backdrop, we hope that our analysis of the *Doctrine and Covenants* provides both a rich description of Latter-day Saint approaches to teaching and learning grounded in the fundamental teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as a broader understanding of religiously influenced approaches to teaching and learning to researchers in religious studies and religious education.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, I.C. and S.B.; methodology, I.C., S.B. and J.A.; validation, J.A.; formal analysis, S.B. and J.A.; investigation, I.C., S.B. and J.A.; resources, S.B.; data curation, S.B. and J.A.; writing—original draft preparation, I.C., S.B. and J.A.; writing—review and editing, I.C., S.B. and J.A.; supervision, I.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ For a thorough presentation of a Latter-day Saint conceptualization of canonicity and its applicability within a Latter-day Saint context, see [Morrison \(2001\)](#), pp. 1–16).
- ² Academics and scholars within and outside of the Church have wrestled with the difficulty of defining both the concept and contents of doctrine in this particular tradition. [Christofferson \(2012\)](#) put forth a relatively simple definition, yet one that leaves room for complex clarification. [Bradford and Dahl \(1992\)](#) outline two different concepts of doctrine, namely the foundational belief in Jesus Christ and teachings that He declared to be His doctrine and, more complexly, any authoritative teaching in the Church. [Harrell \(2011\)](#) also discusses the development of core doctrines throughout Church history. [Goodman \(2021\)](#) analyzed statements regarding doctrine from prophets over the last three decades, while [Ptaszek \(2020\)](#) considered Church doctrine through a lens of Roman Catholic theology and philosophy. [Ericson \(2021\)](#) critically reviewed various models for understanding the Church's doctrinal criteria, like that of [Millet \(2007\)](#), [Oman \(2006\)](#), and [Sweat et al. \(2016\)](#). For a fuller treatment of the nuance surrounding the conceptualization of doctrine in the Church, see citations from [Goodman \(2021\)](#), pp. 16–17 footnote 52).
- ³ For a more complete treatment of this topic, see [Boxer \(2010\)](#); [Boxer \(2019\)](#); [Brooks \(2018\)](#); [Metcalf \(2019\)](#); and [Stanton \(2019\)](#).
- ⁴ Original transcriptions of this verse from 1830 include a description of this statement as a commandment to Ezra Thayre and Northrop Sweet, then begin the verse with "Saying I say unto you" (Revelation, October 1830-B, Joseph Smith Papers Project) or "Saying behold I say unto you" (Revelation, October 1830-B, Extract, Edward Partridge Copy, Joseph Smith Papers Project). In the 1835 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants*, however, the introductory word "saying" had been removed from the verse, the context moved to the section's heading, and the appellation "my servants" added to describe Ezra and Northrop. The 1835 edition of this verse matches the 2013 edition, except that the 2013 edition has broken the first verse into four verses and removed the word "for" in the 1835 statement "and it is the eleventh hour, and for the last time that I shall call laborers into my vineyard" ([The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1835](#), p. 184).
- ⁵ This verse continues "will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things" (Vision, 16 February 1832, as recorded in Gilbert Notebook, Joseph Smith Papers Project). Here, the 2013 edition includes a clarifying note that this is in reference to, "all things pertaining to my kingdom" (D&C 76:7). This phrase, though not included in the original transcription, appears in the 1835 edition. Inasmuch as this change is in agreement with the portion of the text cited here, and in light of further instructions in the text which refer to the mysteries of the kingdom as the knowledge of God (D&C 84:19) which touches upon all subjects (D&C 101:32–34), we did not find this change to significantly impact or further inform the themes identified in our analysis of the 2013 text.
- ⁶ While the original transcription of this section matches surrounding verses and includes the first clause of this particular verse found in the 2013 edition, "Yea, they shall know of a surety that these things are true," it did not include the final clause, "for from heaven will I declare it unto them" (Revelation, March 1829 [D&C 5], Joseph Smith Papers Project). This clause was included in the 1835 edition, however ([The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1835](#), p. 159). Members of the Church portray this

edition as a divinely inspired edit within the contemporarily articulated framework of open canonicity under the auspices of current prophetic authority outlined earlier.

- ⁷ This section of the *Doctrine and Covenants* was taken from a letter written by Joseph Smith while he was imprisoned in Liberty Jail. Portions of the letter were included in D&C 121, 122, and 123, beginning with the 1876 edition of the text ([The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 2020](#)).
- ⁸ The original transcription of this section refers to “the house of the Lord” as such a sanctuary (Revelation Book 1, p. 167, Joseph Smith Papers Project), but the 1835 edition of the text included the school of the prophets as an additional example ([The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1835](#), p. 108).
- ⁹ From these keys, the verse describes, the gospel will “roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth.” The original transcription, as well as the version printed in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, uses the term “hewn from” instead of “cut out of” to describe the stone (Revelations printed in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, June 1832–June 1833; Revelation, 30 October 1831 [D&C 65], Joseph Smith Papers Project).
- ¹⁰ Where the 2013 edition of the *Doctrine and Covenants* states that such reasoning enables one to be “understood of man” (D&C 50:12), early transcriptions of this verse state that “when a man reasoneth he understandeth of man” (Revelation Book 1, p. 82). This minor change does not represent a substantive difference in our thematic analysis, but we include it here for reference.

References

- Arrington, Leonard. 1967. The Founding of the L.D.S. Institutes of Religion. *Dialogue* 2: 137–47. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Ballard, Melvin Russell. 1983. Teaching—No Greater Call. *Ensign* 13: 68–70. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1983/04/teaching-no-greater-call?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Bednar, David Allan. 2008. Learning to Love Learning. BYU Speeches. Available online: <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/david-a-bednar/learning-love-learning/> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Behrens, Richard. 2006. Dartmouth Arminianism and its Impact on Hyrum Smith and the Smith Family. *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26: 166–84.
- Bennion, Milton Lynn. 1939. *Mormonism and Education*. Salt Lake City: Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.
- Benson, Ezra Taft. 1988. To the single adult brethren of the church. *Ensign* 18: 51–53. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1988/05/to-the-single-adult-brethren-of-the-church?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Benson, Reed Amussen. 1975. Basic Principles of Orally Communicating the Gospel as Found in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. *BYU Theses and Dissertations* 4521. Available online: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/4521/> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Boxer, Elise. 2010. “To Become White and Delightsome:” American Indians and Mormon Identity (Publication No. AAI3391973). Ph.D. dissertation, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA.
- Boxer, Elise. 2015. “The Lamanites Shall Blossom as the Rose”: The Indian Student Placement Program, Mormon Whiteness, and Indigenous Identity. *Journal of Mormon History* 41: 132–76. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Boxer, Elise. 2019. The Book of Mormon as Mormon Settler Colonialism. In *Essays on American Indian and Mormon History*. Edited by Jane Hafen and Brenden Rensink. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Bradford, M. Gerald, and Larry E. Dahl. 1992. Meaning, Source, and History of Doctrine. In *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. Edited by Daniel Ludlow. New York: Macmillan.
- Brimhall, George Henry. 1920. The Brigham Young University. *Improvement Era* 23: 831–33.
- Brooks, Joanna. 2018. Mormonism as Colonialism, Mormonism as Anti-Colonialism, Mormonism as Minor Transnationalism: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. In *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion*. Edited by Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, pp. 163–85.
- Bryant, Anthony. 2019. *The SAGE Handbook of Current Developments in Grounded Theory*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Sage.
- Buchanan, Frederick. 1982. Education among the Mormons: Brigham Young and the schools of Utah. *History of Education Quarterly* 22: 435–59. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Buchanan, Frederick. 1986. Mormon response to secular education. *Religious Education* 81: 643–54. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Cardon, Craig. 2013. For the Strength of Youth Education. *New Era* 43: 18–19. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/2013/01/education?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Christofferson, David Todd. 2012. The Doctrine of Christ. *Ensign* 42: 86–90.
- Clark, Reuben. 1946. Charge to President Howard S. McDonald. *Improvement Era* 49: 14–15, 60–63.
- Clark, Reuben. 1954. When are the writings or sermons of Church leaders entitled to the claim of scripture? *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 12: 68–81. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Darowski, Joseph. 2008. Schools of the Prophets: An Early American Tradition. *Mormon Historical Studies* 9: 1–14.
- Davis, William. 2016. Reassessing Joseph Smith Jr.’s Formal Education. *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 49: 1–58. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Derrick, Royden. 1984. By their fruits ye shall know them. *Ensign* 14: 61–63. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1984/11/by-their-fruits-ye-shall-know-them?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Easton-Flake, Amy. 2012. Revealing parables: A call to action within the *Doctrine and Covenants*. *Faculty Publications*. 3392. Available online: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/3392> (accessed on 1 February 2024).

- Ericson, Loyd. 2021. The challenge of defining LDS doctrine. In *Continuing Revelation: Essays on Doctrine*. Edited by Bryan Buchanan. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- Esplin, Scott. 2011. Closing the church college of New Zealand: A case study in church education policy. *Journal of Mormon History* 37: 86–114. [CrossRef]
- Esplin, Scott, and Vance Randall. 2014. Living in two worlds: The development and transition of Mormon education in American society. *History of Education* 43: 3–30. [CrossRef]
- Esplin, Scott, Vance Randall, Casey Griffiths, and Barbara Morgan. 2014. Isolationism, exceptionalism, and acculturation: The internationalisation of Mormon education in Mexico. *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 46: 387–404. [CrossRef]
- Eyring, Henry. 1989. Do what they think you can't do. *New Era* 19: 4–6. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1989/10/do-what-they-think-you-cant-do?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Eyring, Henry. 2002. Education for real life. *Ensign* 32: 14–21. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2002/10/education-for-real-life?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Fawcett, Stanley, James Brau, and Amydee Fawcett. 2005. Perceptions of the Teacher–Leader in Modern Society: Insights from the Master Teacher's Pedagogy. *International Journal of Public Administration* 28: 465–87. [CrossRef]
- Garrett, Matthew. 2016. *Making Lamanites: Mormons, Native Americans, and the Indian Student Placement Program, 1947–2000*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Goodman, Michael. 2021. "Oh Say, What Is Truth?": Approaches to Doctrine. *BYU Studies Quarterly* 60: 3.
- Grant, Heber. 1939. Knowledge must be put into practice. *Conference Report* 43: 13–19.
- Hales, Robert. 2015. Meeting the challenges of today's world. *Ensign* 45: 44–47. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/10/meeting-the-challenges-of-todays-world?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Harrell, Charles. 2011. *"This Is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology*. Sandy: Greg Kofford Books.
- Hilton, John. 2015. Core curriculum in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. *Religious Education* 110: 16, 23. [CrossRef]
- Hinckley, Gordon. 1989. Rise to the stature of the divine within you. *Ensign* 19: 94–98. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1989/11/rise-to-the-stature-of-the-divine-within-you?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Hinckley, Gordon. 1999. Inspirational Thoughts. *Ensign* 29: 2–5. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1999/06/inspirational-thoughts?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Hinckley, Gordon. 2001. The perpetual education fund. *Ensign* 31: 51–53. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2001/04/the-perpetual-education-fund?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Hinckley, Gordon. 2007. Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly. *Ensign* 37: 115–17. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2007/05/let-virtue-garnish-thy-thoughts-unceasingly?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Hough, Merrill. 1960. Two school systems in conflict: 1867–1890. *Utah Historical Quarterly* 28: 112–28. [CrossRef]
- Isaacson, Thorpe. 1963. Need for great teachers. *Conference Report* 67: 95–99.
- Kimball, Spencer. 1980. Acquiring Spiritual Literacy. *BYU Speeches*. Available online: <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/spencer-w-kimball/acquiring-spiritual-literacy> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- King, Farina. 2016. *The Earth Memory Compass: Diné Educational Experiences in the Twentieth Century*. Tempe: Arizona State University.
- Knowlton, David. 1998. The glory of God? Education and orthodoxy in Mormonism. *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31: 1–13. [CrossRef]
- Krippendorff, Klaus. 2013. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, 3rd ed. Newcastle upon Tyne: Sage.
- Lee, Harold. 1974. *Stand ye in Holy Places*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co.
- Lloyd, Scott. 2012. Understanding, Knowledge Crucial Elements in Joseph Smith's Faith. *Church News*. Available online: <https://www.thechurchnews.com/2012/5/20/23225559/understanding-knowledge-crucial-elements-in-joseph-smiths-faith/> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Lyon, Edgar. 1967. Religious Activities and Development in Utah, 1847–1910. *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35: 292–306. [CrossRef]
- Maeser, Karl. 1898. *School and Fireside*. Provo: Skelton.
- Marquardt, Michael. 1999. *The Joseph Smith Revelations: Text and Commentary*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books.
- McConkie, David. 2010. Gospel Learning and Teaching. *Churchofjesuschrist.org*. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2010/10/gospel-learning-and-teaching?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- McKay, David. 1967. Why Education? *Improvement Era* 70: 2–3.
- Merrill, Ray, Joseph Lyon, and William Jensen. 2003. Lack of a secularizing influence of education on religious activity and parity among Mormons. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42: 113–24. [CrossRef]
- Metcalf, Warren. 2019. "Which Side of the Line?": American Indian students and programs at Brigham Young University, 1960–1983. In *Essays on American Indian and Mormon History*. Edited by Jane Hafen and Brenden Rensink. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Millet, Robert. 2007. What do we really Believe? Identifying doctrinal parameters within Mormonism. In *Discourses in Mormon Theology: Philosophical and Theological Possibilities*. Edited by James McLachlan and Loyd Ericson. Sandy: Greg Kofford Books.
- Monson, Thomas. 1979. Decisions determine destiny. *New Era* 9: 4–9. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1979/11/decisions-determine-destiny?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Monson, Thomas. 2007. Three goals to guide you. *Ensign* 37: 118–21. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2007/11/three-goals-to-guide-you?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Morgan, Barbara. 2014. Understanding Latter-Day Saints education: Principles and resources. *Religious Education* 109: 526–42. [CrossRef]

- Morrison, Alexander. 2001. The Latter-day Saint Concept of Canon. In *Historicity and the Latter-Day Saint Scriptures*. Edited by Paul Hoskisson. Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, pp. 1–16.
- Nelson, Russell. 2010. Education: A Religious Responsibility. BYU-Idaho Speeches. Available online: https://www2.byui.edu/Presentations/Transcripts/Devotionals/2010_01_26_Nelson.htm (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Nelson, Russell. 2013. Youth of the Noble Birthright: What Will You Choose? CES Devotional. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/broadcasts/article/ces-devotionals/2013/01/youth-of-the-noble-birthright-what-will-you-choose?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Neuendorf, Kimberly. 2017. *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, 2nd ed. Newcastle upon Tyne: Sage.
- Oaks, Dallin. 1996. *Educating Zion*. Edited by John W. Welch and Don E. Norton. Provo: BYU Studies.
- Oaks, Dallin. 2010. Two lines of communication. *Ensign* 40: 83–86.
- Oman, Nathan. 2006. Jurisprudence and the problem of Church doctrine. *Element* 2: 1–19.
- Osguthorpe, Russell. 2009. Teaching helps save lives. *Ensign* 39: 15–16. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2009/11/more-diligent-and-concerned-at-home?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Oswald, William. 2008. Gospel Teaching—Our Most Important Calling. *Churchofjesuschrist.org*. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2008/10/gospel-teaching-our-most-important-calling?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Perry, Tom. 1998. Youth of the noble birthright. *Ensign* 28: 73–75. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1998/10/youth-of-the-noble-birthright?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Petersen, Melvin Joseph. 1955. A Study of the Nature of and the Significance of the Changes in the Revelations as Found in A Comparison of the Book of Commandments and Subsequent Editions of the *Doctrine and Covenants*. Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, USA.
- Peterson, Charles. 1980. A new community: Mormon teachers and the separation of church and state in Utah's territorial schools. *Utah Historical Quarterly* 48: 293–312. [CrossRef]
- Ptaszek, Robert. 2020. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and Its Doctrine: A Philosophical Approach. *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 68: 161–80. [CrossRef]
- Sikahema, Vai. 2020. Our Religious Obligation to Be Educated. BYU-Hawaii Speeches. Available online: <https://speeches.byuh.edu/devotional/our-religious-obligation-to-be-educated> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Stanton, Megan. 2019. The Indian Student Placement Program and Native Direction. In *Essays on American Indian and Mormon History*. Edited by Jane Hafen and Brenden Rensink. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Strader, Matthew. 2009. Ideal Teaching: Exploring the Attributes of an Ideal Teacher in the Church Educational System for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. George Fox University ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. Available online: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/f480c89880a29f8bbb9b13c5ca9f49fa/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Sweat, Anthony, Michael H. MacKay, and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat. 2016. Doctrine: Models to Evaluate Types and Sources of Latter-day Saint Teachings. *Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel* 17: 101–25. Available online: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/re/vol17/iss3/8> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1835. *Doctrine and Covenants*. Available online: <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/content/library/doctrine-and-covenants?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1997. Teaching of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-brigham-young?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2011a. Teachings of presidents of the Church: George Albert Smith. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-george-albert-smith/chapter-7?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2011b. Teaching of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-joseph-smith?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2011c. Teaching of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-john-taylor?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2012. Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Lorenzo Snow. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-of-presidents-of-the-church-lorenzo-snow?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2013. *Doctrine and Covenants*. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 2020. Letter from Liberty Jail (1839). Available online: <https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/content/library/letter-from-liberty-jail-1839?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. n.d. School of the Prophets. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/history/topics/school-of-the-prophets?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Tuttle, Albert. 1959. Teaching. *Conference Report* 63: 84–85.
- Uchtdorf, Dieter. 2009. Two principles for any economy. *Ensign* 39: 55–58. Available online: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2009/10/two-principles-for-any-economy?lang=eng> (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Widtsoe, John. 1949. Teach the truth. *Conference Report* 53: 147–52.

- Wong, Arch Chee Keen, Anthony Sweat, and Ryan Gardner. 2017. Pedagogy of the spirit: Comparing Evangelical and Latter-day Saint youth self-reported in-class spiritual experiences. *Religious Education* 112: 569–84. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Woodford, Robert. 1974. The Historical Development of The *Doctrine and Covenants* (Volumes I–III) (Publication No. 8027231). Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, USA.
- Worthen, Kevin. 2012. Sacred Learning. *Religious Educator* 13: 60–77. Available online: https://rsc.byu.edu/sites/default/files/pub_content/pdf/Sacred_Learning.pdf (accessed on 1 February 2024).
- Worthen, Kevin. 2022. This Is a Student. BYU Speeches. Available online: <https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/kevin-j-worthen/this-is-a-student/> (accessed on 1 February 2024).

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.