Thank you, Shane and Robin. That was beautifully done. May we, like Nephi, rejoice in God’s mercies even when the journey is toilsome. Especially when it is toilsome.

We have just sung “Come, let us anew our journey pursue” (Hymns, 1985, no. 217). Perhaps no metaphor for mortality is more ubiquitous than that of life as a journey. The image takes many forms and colorations. Some regard the journey from birth to death as an accident of biology, a purposeless passage into oblivion “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing” (William Shakespeare, Macbeth, act 5, scene 5, lines 27–28). For believers, the journey through mortality is purposeful. It does not lead merely to the grave but constitutes a pilgrimage to a promised land. And for Latter-day Saints, this pilgrimage marks a journey home, a return to a loving Father who sent His children to learn what could be learned only through trial.

Trials Along the Trail

Trials are an inevitable and necessary part of our journey home. We knew this before we came to earth. Even so, when “fiery trial” befalls pilgrims along the way, it can feel “as though some strange thing happened unto you,” as Peter wrote to the Saints facing persecution under Nero (1 Peter 4:12). It is one thing to know in principle that trials are part of the journey and quite another to experience them in practice. As Shakespeare quips, “There was never yet philosopher That could endure the toothache patiently” (Much Ado About Nothing, act 5, scene 1, lines 35–36).

This has been a trying year for me, and I fear that I have not always endured my toothaches patiently. I’ve sometimes felt weary in the journey, even though the difficulties we have faced at BYU pale in comparison to those experienced by American higher education generally. Many, if not most, universities have experienced furloughs, forced program reductions, deep budget cuts, and layoffs. If you read the Chronicle of Higher Education or even our local newspapers, you don’t need me to inform you that public and private universities across the country, including those in Utah, have taken big hits. Even the richest universities, such as Harvard, have had to engage in painful belt-tightening because so much of their operating revenues comes from their endowments.

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That BYU would also face challenges ought not to have taken us entirely by surprise. Last year, as you may recall, I showed you this big green ledger book that I had discovered collecting dust in the ASB. It contains a record of faculty salaries at BYU from 1921 through World War II. I mentioned last year that during the Great Depression salaries dipped below their 1921 level, and I said that while I did not “expect a salary cut such as was experienced during the Great Depression, . . . we need to be prepared to face the challenges of our day, whatever they may be, in a manner worthy of our forebears’ legacy of sacrifice” (John S. Tanner, “Learning in the Light,” BYU 2008 Annual University Conference faculty session address, 26 August 2008).

I am grateful that thus far during the current recession BYU has been spared draconian budget cuts and layoffs. In fact, most of you received a raise. But BYU is not immune to the consequences of the downturn. Given current conditions and projections, for example, raises may be less likely next year. We anticipate no increase to our salary budget and a modest reduction in our supplies and travel budgets. Regarding the hiring freeze, it continues in force. As the president said this morning, we simply don’t know when it will end.

Frankly, we don’t know what the future holds for either the economy or the academy, but I personally feel confident of two things: in the future, there will continue to be solid, ongoing support from the Church for us; and the future will continue to require a spirit of sacrifice and dedication from us. It always has. Therefore, I want to repeat counsel I have given in each fall address the past two years.

For two years running I have called your attention to a statement by President Spencer W. Kimball. He predicted:

“It will take just as much sacrifice and dedication to preserve these principles in the second century of BYU—even more than that required to begin this institution in the first place.” [“The Second Century of Brigham Young University,” BYU devotional, 10 October 1975]

This is a sobering statement when you recall the sacrifices made by those who built BYU and who were sometimes paid in produce and promises.

Now, in context, President Kimball was probably speaking more of the spiritual sacrifices necessary to preserve BYU’s ideals in a sea of secularism than of financial sacrifices necessary to sustain its basic operation. But whatever the nature of the trials we are called upon to face in our days at BYU, as President Kimball predicted, they will require a spirit of sacrifice and dedication. Maintaining this spirit at BYU has been a concern for all those who have guided BYU—whether in times of adversity or in times of prosperity.

It has also been a concern for me. As I said two years ago when discussing President Kimball’s prophecy: “For BYU to meet this impending test, we must keep alive the spirit of sacrifice and consecration” (John S. Tanner, “A House of Dreams,” BYU 2007 Annual University Conference faculty session address, 28 August 2007). Similarly, last year, in speaking again of President Kimball’s prophecy, I said: “I am persuaded that sacrifice and consecration are vital in preserving the Spirit of the Y” (“Learning in the Light”). The current challenges test our level of consecration.

Trials as a Test

Now I do not think for a minute that the hiring freeze, budget cuts, and other small sacrifices we have been asked to make have been concocted as a test. Nonetheless, they do test our spiritual mettle. They bear spiritual as well as temporal implications for us on our journey heavenward. For just as there is no such thing as a temporal commandment (see D&C 29:35), there is no such thing as a merely temporal trial. These current challenges test not only our
ability to manage but also our willingness to hearken.

Given this, what has BYU’s response to the current exigencies revealed about its spiritual health? From my vantage, what has been revealed to date is very heartening. In the main, BYU has met the test remarkably well so far—beginning first and foremost with the president. As always, he has acted with complete fidelity to the mandates of our trustees, whose trust constitutes one of BYU’s most precious assets in good times and bad. His iron determination to follow prophetic guidance without evasion and with exactness has increased this asset for us all.

I’ve seen a similar spirit of obedience, gratitude, and sacrifice among the faculty and staff. It’s been quite remarkable and heartwarming. I don’t believe there is another major university in the world where one would find such a spirit of commitment to the common good. Since the freeze was announced in December, over and over again I have heard heartfelt expressions of gratitude from you for the remarkable resources we enjoy, and I have witnessed your willingness to do more with less. You have come up with creative proposals to find ways to accomplish the work with reduced resources. I’ve seen departments transfer staff to help units who have lost personnel to the freeze. I have seen faculty volunteer to teach introductory classes in other departments and assume duties formerly discharged by an advisement center. I have seen faculty forego leaves, take on heavier teaching assignments, reduce travel, and accept restructuring plans with good grace. And the staff has been equally magnificent. They, too, are doing more with less. Moreover, they continue to transfer permanent positions from their side of the ledger to ours. We received three more slots from them this year, for a total of 13 over three years. Their “big, hairy, audacious goal” is to transfer 25 slots from administration to faculty. When the freeze is lifted, the positions from these transfers will be deployed to help us meet critical needs.

In short, the economic downturn has awakened an upturn in the spirit of sacrifice on campus. This has made my heart swell with joy to sojourn among such Saints. While our trials to date have been relatively modest in comparison with those of our forebears, it appears to me that their pioneer spirit still lives on today among a little band of pilgrim professors in Provo. I’ve worried in past years that our academic success might make us proud and that our generous support might make us complacent—that we weren’t prepared to walk in the footsteps of those who have gone before us. After this year, I feel more sanguine that, were we called upon to do so, we might be able to pull our wagons back to Missouri after all.

What is more, I suspect that many of you would even do so with a smile. You have frequently responded to the current conditions with good humor and good cheer, as the Lord commands: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). An example of your finding humor in adversity is a poster that one of John Rosenberg’s chairs prepared for him. It wittily captures a conversation he and many faculty leaders have been having with you over the past year: “Hope. Nope. Cope!” After the poster was mounted in the hallway, faculty have continued to have fun with its gallows humor. They now pin on the poster news clippings about conditions elsewhere in the academy as reminders that it could be worse. We’re coping. And we need to plan on continuing to cope. This is a time for all hands on deck.

A Catalyst for Good

The freeze has functioned not only as a test but as a catalyst for good at BYU. Latter-day Saint sojourners know that opposition is required for growth (see 2 Nephi 2:11) and that we are better off owing to a “fortunate fall.” Even bitter adversity can have its sweet uses
(see Shakespeare, As You Like It, act 2, scene 1, line 12). Likewise, as a result of the hiring freeze and the reduction in travel budgets, requests to fill vacancies, attend conferences, and expand programs are receiving more rigorous scrutiny than ever before. This strict scrutiny is a good thing. It needs to continue in perpetuity.

Stricter scrutiny, however, has tended to occur ad hoc rather than systematically. So I have asked every college to complete comprehensive workload analyses for each department and faculty member. Most deans report that this has been a revealing exercise, even for deans and chairs who thought they knew their units well. It will help units deploy resources more effectively and equitably, as well as hold individuals more accountable. It will also enable the central administration to respond more knowledgeably to resource requests. We are better off because we have been forced to rigorously examine our resource deployment. There is more transparency, more strategic decision making. Many college councils now regularly discuss position vacancies and frequently recommend moving positions around rather than simply proposing to continue the status quo.

Current conditions have also prompted us to look for ways to realign programs to strengthen natural synergies and streamline administrative costs. The most dramatic example of this involves the programs in Health and Human Performance, which have been realigned with other colleges. We need to continue to look for more efficient and effective ways to accomplish critical tasks. This is not easy or pain free, but if we meet the challenge wisely, this period will have been a fortunate fall for BYU. Like Adam and Eve, we’ll be better off for it. Like Christian, the hero of John Bunyan’s allegory The Pilgrim’s Progress, we’ll be encumbered with fewer burdens on our backs and a clearer vision about the way to the Celestial City.

Another example of a proposal that promises to streamline while strengthening a core university program is the potential restructuring of general education. I stress that this is only a proposal as yet. Associate Academic Vice President Jeffrey Keith and Dean John Bell have floated a revised model for general education to the Faculty General Education Council, Deans Council, and Academic Vice President’s Council. The new model promises to greatly simplify general education requirements and reduce hours while potentially increasing general education’s effectiveness. Other institutions that have adopted the model report that it has also significantly increased buy-in by faculty and students. The model allows faculty from across campus to be involved in general education. It also provides students with greater flexibility as well as more opportunities to pursue minors and interdisciplinary study. The new model also makes it easier for the university to define and measure general education outcomes, thereby ensuring that the huge investment BYU is making in the general education of our students is truly meeting its objectives. Now, I am a great proponent of general education, so I want us to look at this proposal very carefully and critically. We have not settled on this new model, but we are kicking the tires. It might be time to trade in a gas guzzler for a more efficient new model. You’ll be hearing more about this proposal in the coming weeks as we solicit faculty input.

To summarize: I believe that substantial good has come out of our efforts to cope with straitened circumstances. Being forced to ration resources has required us to be more reflective about what we’re carrying in our wagons and more creative in how we’ve organized the wagon train and distributed the load. It has brought our community together in a spirit of shared sacrifice. When some are stuck in the mud or are in dire need of food, others pitch in to pull them out and then share provisions. However, we can’t continue indefinitely to
lose members from our little band. I am grateful that the board has been willing to consider limited exceptions to the freeze to meet the most dire needs. To this point the freeze has not frozen BYU in the snows of Wyoming on its journey toward a rendezvous with its prophetic destiny.

Teaching Each Other Along the Way

In preparation for this talk, I reread John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. (Well, actually, I listened to it while participating in a 100-mile bike ride around Utah Lake.) I was struck by how much of the allegory is devoted to conversation. Bunyan’s pilgrim Christian is constantly engaged in teaching and learning from others he meets along the way on his journey to the heavenly Jerusalem. So should we on our journey home. Latter-day scriptures repeatedly enjoin the Saints to “teach one another . . . doctrine” and “words of wisdom,” “according to the office wherewith I have appointed you” (D&C 88:77, 118; 109:7; D&C 38:23). Last year I mentioned that the injunction to “teach one another” had impressed itself on my mind. I felt that we needed to think more about this as faculty. This impression has remained with me throughout the year—hence our conference theme.

I discovered last year that Karl G. Maeser had developed an explicit plan for teaching and learning at Brigham Young Academy. You may remember that he adopted as “the guiding rule for the teacher” in the Academy that “whatever can be done by the pupils, the teacher should never do himself” (Maeser, “The Monitorial System,” Church School Department, *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 March 1901, 153; see also Maeser, *School and Fireside* [Salt Lake City: Skelton and Co., 1898], 272). Thus this institution promoted active learning and peer teaching well before it became fashionable in academe. Active learning and peer teaching are part of our institutional DNA.

In fact, the practice of collaborative learning among Latter-day Saints goes back well before Maeser’s Academy to the earliest school in the Church. By revelation the School of the Prophets envisioned a porous boundary between student and teacher. As described in Doctrine and Covenants 88:122, every learner was expected to become both student and teacher at different times, “that all may be edified of all”—this has profound implications for us—“and that every man may have an equal privilege”—this, too, has deep significance for us. I sense that there is important wisdom for us yet to mine that has been deposited in such revelations about teaching one another.

We tried to bring some of these implications to light in the president’s midyear leadership meetings last December. In the lead-up to those meetings, the Center for Teaching and Learning gathered video clips of faculty engaging in active learning activities. Here are some short clips, one from the University of Massachusetts and three from BYU: Debra Himes from Nursing; Matthew Mason from History; and Janet Young from Teacher Education. [A video was shown of professors using a variety of ways to involve students in learning.]

As these video clips demonstrate, there is a wide variety of ways to engage students in active learning. The video clips also demonstrate that active learning is not rocket science. Active learning strategies may be as simple as having students capture content and critique each other’s captures. Such strategies need not replace but can effectively supplement lectures.

Let’s do a brief demonstration together of an active learning activity. [A video was shown of a professor using steel balls and a wooden track to help students learn physics.]

Now you never know when our students are going to need to be able to apply what they learn from us about acceleration. My son-in-law recently shared this from YouTube. [A video was shown of a man sliding down a
giant waterslide, launching from a ramp, and then landing in a pool of water."

Do you want to see it again? Here it is. [The video was shown again.]

Actually, the video is doctored. It generated a lot of buzz a couple of weeks ago on YouTube before it was exposed as a hoax. When I saw it, I was reminded of the steel ball demonstration, so I couldn’t resist sharing it. Real or fake, it is the kind of prank some nut like Evel Knievel might actually try.

**Faculty Teaching One Another**

Teaching each other entails more than faculty teaching students or students teaching students. It goes beyond what we categorize under “teaching” in our annual stewardship reports. We fulfill the scriptural mandate to teach one another when faculty teach and learn from other faculty. Certainly we teach one another when we publish scholarship, especially in high-impact journals. Faculty also teach one another when they share and discuss research and creative work among departmental colleagues. I have noticed that departments with strong research cultures are generally places where faculty share and critique works in progress. They engage in lively conversations about each other’s research and creative work. In such departments, faculty mentor not only students but each other. They engage in robust conversation about developments in the disciplines. I strongly encourage this form of teaching one another here at BYU.

I also encourage and commend your efforts to learn from each other across college boundaries. I was heartened to hear in resource planning several deans speak about plans they have to collaborate with other colleges. I have long believed that this sort of collaboration ought to be more prevalent than it is at BYU, in both our teaching and our research. We ought to look for ways to learn from each other across our silos. Advances in knowledge often take place at the intersection of the disciplines.

**Taking Stock of Our Progress**

In *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Christian and his fellow travelers frequently take stock of their progress toward the Heavenly City. We’re also taking better stock of our progress toward our goal of helping students achieve stated learning outcomes. To this end, we’re talking a lot more with each other about what our students are actually learning, not just about what we think we are teaching them. Assessment is no longer a hiss and a byword on our journey; it’s merely a rubric for the many ways we’re trying to measure our effectiveness. Some colleges have instituted assessment days and retreats. One college calls its retreat “Camp Assessalot.”

We are in the middle of a paradigm shift from teaching to learning. Our focus is shifting from “my course” to “our program.” We are beginning to reconceptualize teaching as a public part of our profession—like our research—rather than as what we do in private behind closed classroom doors.

Increasingly, faculty are also taking stock of their courses in medias res by soliciting formative midcourse student feedback. The new tool developed by the Center for Teaching and Learning has made this easier than ever. It is proving to be effective in raising student teaching evaluations. Evidently, students like to know that we care about what they think. More to the point, midcourse evaluations are helping faculty make adjustments that actually improve learning—which is the whole point. We assess not merely to understand, nor to increase popularity. We take stock to improve learning, to get better.

One of my favorite lines in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* occurs when Christian encounters Mr. Talkative. As his name indicates, Mr. Talkative loves to talk, especially about salvation. Everything for him becomes an occasion to expound the gospel, but never an occasion to repent and live it. Bunyan shrewdly observes:
Some cry out against sin, even as the Mother cries out against her Child in her lap, when she calleth it [a] naughty Girl, and then falls to hugging and kissing it. [John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), part 1; *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 67]

Likewise, it is not enough for us to gather assessment data only to excuse familiar faults by saying, “Oh, students always complain about my organization. I’m just a free spirit. They need to learn to roll with the punches when there is no syllabus or I don’t return assignments.” We must use what we learn from program and course assessments not like a fop to preen and admire ourselves but like an engineer to measure performance and improve it.

**Remembering Those in the Last Wagon**

In our interactions with students and colleagues, we need to remember those in the last wagons (see J. Reuben Clark, Jr., conference address, 5 October 1947; *To Them of the Last Wagon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1947]; also “They of the Last Wagon,” *Improvement Era*, November 1947, 704–5, 747–48). The president has detailed what remarkable students we have at BYU, and indeed we do have great students. The best could go anywhere and no doubt will go places after they leave us that we and they scarcely dream of, bringing honor and renown on themselves and their alma mater. But there will always be some who don’t finish first, indeed, who struggle to finish at all. I do not advocate lowering standards for stragglers, but I do implore us all to assist those who plod along in the last wagons just hoping to complete the trek. You and I would also struggle in some classes. We admit only students who can succeed, but not necessarily who can succeed equally in every subject. Each student has different aptitudes. As Eliot Butler used to say, quoting Will Rogers, “Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects” (*New York Times*, 31 August 1924; quoted in *The Will Rogers Book*, comp. Paula McSpadden Love [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961], 138). Likewise, everybody has something to teach us if we are willing to learn from one another.

Some of our students will not go on to become prominent professionals in law, medicine, or business, much less follow our paths to graduate school and the professoriate. They won’t grow up to be just like us. Imagine that! Yet they too are beloved sons and daughters of the King we serve and whose throne is the object of our pilgrimage. What is more, they have equal potential to grow up to become like Him. We therefore ought to value and attend to the needs and futures of all those we travel with. For, to paraphrase Chaucer, “pilgrims are we all” (see Geoffrey Chaucer, “General Prologue,” *The Canterbury Tales* [c. 1387], lines 26–27).

I commend and encourage the initiatives that I am beginning to see bubble up all across the university to pay attention to those who don’t immediately go on to a career or graduate school in their major disciplines. Attention to them is a healthy effect of the economic downturn. As financial storms rage and cold economic winds blow, it is important to consider what lies in store for those who don’t have the prospect of immediate shelter in the form of a career or graduate school. Well might we echo King Lear’s words in the storm as he confessed his failure to notice the downtrodden: “O, I have ta’en Too little care of this!” (Shakespeare, *King Lear*, act 3, scene 4, lines 32–33). It is salutary for us to turn attention to the needs of all our students, not just the high achievers. It is also the prudent thing to do. More often than not, our future donors will come from the ranks of those who haven’t gone on to pursue academic careers but who loved their experience with us at BYU nonetheless.
Conclusion: Stones and Storms

In conclusion, let me tease out lessons for our journey from one of the great epic journeys in scripture. The Book of Mormon tells of many migrations to the promised land. None is more evocative than the exodus of the Jaredites. Lehi’s group evidently crossed the sea in sailing ships that could be steered and were open to the light of day (see 1 Nephi 18:22). The Jaredites, by contrast, crossed the fearful deep in barges that could not be steered but were completely at the mercy of the tempests and tides. As if this weren’t terrifying enough, the Jaredites also faced the prospect of traveling in darkness for a journey that would last almost a full year (see Ether 6:11). The Lord solved these twin challenges of light and steering in two very different ways—through stones and storms.

As you will recall, He touched with His finger clear stones presented to Him for that purpose by the brother of Jared. As a result of the Lord’s touch, the stones shone forth welcome light to illuminate the dark passage across the deep. We generally remember this divine intervention that helped the Jaredites on their epic voyage. But what about the lack of steering? The Lord addressed this problem with a rougher remedy. He “caused that there should be a furious wind blow upon the face of the waters, towards the promised land; and thus they were tossed upon the waves of the sea before the wind” (Ether 6:5). The Lord’s hand was in the storms that “buried [the barges] in the depths of the sea” (Ether 6:6) just as it was in the stones that lighted them.

Brothers and sisters, I believe that God is likewise in both stones and storms on our pilgrimage to the promised land. We take with us on our journeys bright memories of times when His finger touched our lives. These testimonies light the dark way home, warming us with memories of sacred encounters with a personal God who cannot withhold Himself from those who love Him. The touch of His finger in our lives provides both a promise and a foretaste of the Lord’s full embrace. God is in the glowing stones.

But God is also in the storm. He says to the brother of Jared that the winds and the rains and the floods “have gone forth out of my mouth” (Ether 2:24). He sends his “furious wind” to blow the little band of Jaredite pilgrims toward a new and better home (Ether 6:5). It takes faith to find God in the tempests, but He is there too.

The Book of Mormon records that “the wind did never cease to blow towards the promised land while they were upon the waters” (Ether 6:8). In a moving epilogue to a very wise book entitled My Grandfather’s Blessings, the Jewish physician Rachel Naomi Remen refers to this verse in the Book of Mormon. She writes:

In the course of any lifetime there are times when one has to sail into the unknown without a map or compass. These can be times of despair and terror; they can also be times of discovery. Having accompanied many people as they deal with the unknown, I find that the most moving part of the Mormon exodus story is a single line. Despite the challenges and great difficulties of this sea journey, “the wind always blows in the direction of the promised land.” I have seen many people spread their sails and catch this wind. [Rachel Naomi Remen, “Epilogue,” My Grandfather’s Blessings: Stories of Strength, Refuge, and Belonging (New York: Riverhead Books, 2000), 376]

I pray that we can be wise and faithful enough to catch this wind.

Our closing musical number is entitled “Pilgrim Song.” The Apostle Paul says that we are to teach one another not simply through words but through hymns and spiritual songs:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. [Colossians 3:16]
In the closing song, I hope you feel the grace in our students’ hearts as they sing of their faith that we are going to live forever.

Someday we shall reach the harbor and be “out of the swing of the sea” (Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Heaven-Haven” [1918]). Someday God shall wipe away every tear. This is the promise every pilgrim clings to and holds in his heart, as recorded so beautifully in the book of Revelation:

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

. . . And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. [Revelation 7:13–17]

Brigham Young provided a similar perspective for our early pioneer pilgrims who suffered so much on their mortal journeys. He said:

We talk about our trials and troubles here in this life: but suppose that you could see yourselves thousands and millions of years after you have proved faithful to your religion during the few short years in this time, and have obtained eternal salvation and a crown of glory in the presence of God; then look back upon your lives here, and see the losses, crosses, and disappointments, the sorrows . . . , you would be constrained to exclaim, “But what of all that? Those things were but for a moment, and we are now here.” [ JD 7:275]

I am grateful for the knowledge shared by pilgrims and pioneers alike, that in eternity “all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well” (Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love [c. 1373–1388; also called A Book of Showings], Thirteenth Revelation, chapter 27). The choir shall now sing “Pilgrim Song,” whose chorus supplies a coda for these remarks:

My soul doth long to go where I may fully know the glory of my Savior.

And as I pass along I’ll sing the Christian song: I’m going to live forever.

[“Pilgrim Song,” arranged by Ryan Murphy (2000); lyrics adapted from “The Christian’s Song,” The Golden Harp; or, Camp-Meeting Hymns, Old and New (Oneida, New York: George W. Henry, 1857), 26–27]