

Instruments in His  
Hands:  
Doing This  
Great  
and Marvelous  
Work

This Annual  
J. Reuben Clark Law  
Society Fireside  
address was  
given on January  
25, 2013, in the  
Conference Center  
of The Church of  
Jesus Christ of  
Latter-day Saints  
in Salt Lake City.

I am humbled to have been invited to speak at this 2013 J. Reuben Clark Law Society Fireside. I do not see myself worthy to follow in the footsteps of past speakers like President James E. Faust; President Boyd K. Packer; Elders Dallin H. Oaks, Quentin L. Cook, and D. Todd Christofferson; and others. But I am nevertheless honored that the J. Reuben Clark Law Society extended the invitation to me to speak at this annual fireside.

ELDER LARRY ECHO HAWK  
OF THE QUORUM OF THE SEVENTY

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ILLUSTRATION BY JOSEPH ADOLPHE



Although I have feelings of inadequacy, I am comforted in knowing that I am among friends this evening. I had the privilege of teaching at J. Reuben Clark Law School for 14 years. Thus, present this evening are several members of the Law School faculty and staff with whom I have worked. There are also many graduates of the Law School whom I had the privilege of teaching who are either physically present or watching the broadcast at various locations throughout the world.

As I thought and prayed about this assignment, the impression came to me that I should simply speak about my spiritual roots, about why I became a lawyer, and about why I have felt blessed to work improving the lives of people I love. I have titled my remarks “Instruments in His Hands: Doing This Great and Marvelous Work.”

I will reminisce about my foundations in faith and the law. I trust that sharing some personal experiences will be helpful in reminding members of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society about our unique purpose of pursuing spiritual goals and improving the society in which we live. As I conclude my remarks I will recount some of the lessons I have learned that I believe will be particularly helpful to law students and young lawyers.

#### “This Great and Marvelous Work”

As a foundation for my remarks I turn to the Book of Mormon.

Beginning in chapter 17 in the book of Alma there is an account of the sons of Mosiah, who refused the kingdom their father desired to confer upon them and went up to the land of Nephi to preach to the Lamanites for 14 years. They had much success in bringing many to a knowledge of the truth.

Afterward Ammon recounted to his brothers the great success they had achieved, but his brother Aaron rebuked him, saying: “I fear that thy joy doth carry thee away unto boasting” (Alma 26:10).

Alma 26:11–15 sets forth Ammon’s response:

*But Ammon said unto him: I do not boast in my own strength, nor in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God.*

*Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things; yea, behold, many mighty miracles we have wrought in this land, for which we will praise his name forever.*

*Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; and they are brought to sing redeeming love, and this because of the power of his word which is in us, therefore have we not great reason to rejoice?*

*Yea, we have reason to praise him forever, for he is the Most High God, and has loosed our brethren from the chains of hell.*

*Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation; and they are encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love; yea, and we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work.*

While serving as the assistant secretary of Indian Affairs in the United States Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C., I received a call one morning informing me that Phillip Baldwin, a 21-year-old Marine Corps corporal from the Fort Hall Indian Reservation in Idaho, had been severely wounded in combat in Afghanistan and was being cared for at the Bethesda Naval Hospital. Because I knew his family, I decided to cancel my appointments for the day and travel to the hospital to visit him. When I arrived I learned that he had lost both of his legs. After waiting for him to be brought out of surgery, I was able to visit briefly with him and lift his spirits.

A few months later Church members in Pocatello, Idaho, honored this young marine by selecting him to be the grand marshal in the 2012 Pioneer Day Parade. A luncheon in honor of Corporal Baldwin was held after the parade at the Bannock County

Fairgrounds, and I was invited to speak in my capacity as a General Authority.

In the process of walking into the fairgrounds that day and trying to make my way through a crowd of hundreds of people who were enjoying a variety of activities being held there, a young woman walked up to me. She looked up at me and said, “Are you Elder Echo Hawk?”

I responded, “Yes.”

Then she said, “My name is Leah Pearson. I was named after my grandfather.” A surge of emotion shot through me.

I will explain that surge of emotion by relating another experience I had about six weeks earlier. On the first Thursday of each month the General Authorities of the Church gather in a special room on the fourth floor of the Salt Lake Temple. June 7, 2012, was my first opportunity to attend this meeting as a new General Authority. As I entered that sacred room I sat down on the back row. A few minutes after the meeting started I heard my name called. President Thomas S. Monson asked me to come forward and bear my testimony. I arose, walked to the front of the room, stood next to the First Presidency—facing the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the seven presidents of the Seventy, the Presiding Bishopric, and the members of the Seventy who serve at Church headquarters—and bore my testimony.

I said that as a convert to the Church in my teenage years, it was beyond my wildest dreams to think that I would ever be called upon to serve as a General Authority and to stand in the Salt Lake Temple and bear my testimony before the prophets, seers, and revelators and General Authorities of the Church. I then said that this moment would not have been possible if it were not for Lee Pearson and Boyd Camphuysen, missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who came into my home in Farmington, New Mexico, and taught my family the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those missionaries gave me a precious gift that changed my life.

### Spiritual Roots: The Book of Mormon

At age 17, in response to a challenge from my priest quorum advisor, I committed to read the Book of Mormon. This was no small task. I was not a good student, and I did not



Echo Hawk and his wife, Terry, (center) with family in 1992. Front, left to right: Emily (daughter), Braeden (grandson), and Jennifer (daughter). Back, left to right: Michael (son); Mark (son) and his wife, Dianna; Matt (son); and Stephanie and her husband, Paul (son).

read large books. But I promised the Lord in prayer that I would read at least 10 pages every day until I finished the book.

On the title page of *The Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, I read that it is “written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile.” In the introduction it says that the Lamanites “are the principal ancestors of the American Indians.” As I read the Book of Mormon, it seemed to me that it was about my American Indian ancestors.

The Book of Mormon is an account of God’s dealings with these ancient inhabitants of this land of promise. Over the course of more than 2,000 years they fell away from the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their prophets foretold that many multitudes of Gentiles would eventually come to this land of promise, that the wrath of God would be upon the Lamanites, and that they would be scattered, smitten, and nearly destroyed (see 1 Nephi 13:10–14).

My Pawnee forefathers were forcibly removed from their homeland in what is now Nebraska. The population of Pawnee people declined from over 12,000 to less than 700 upon their arrival into the Oklahoma Indian Territory in 1874. The Pawnee, like other tribes, were scattered, smitten, and nearly destroyed.

As I read the Book of Mormon I learned that it has a special message for descendants of the Lamanites, a remnant of the house of Israel. Nephi expressed this message while interpreting his father’s vision of these latter days:

*And at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved. [1 Nephi 15:14]*

I kept my promise to the Lord. I completed my reading of the Book of Mormon in less than two months. As I finished, I focused on Moroni’s promise:

*And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. [Moroni 10:4]*

As I knelt in prayer I received a powerful spiritual witness that the Book of Mormon is true. That witness has helped me chart my course through life.

For many years thereafter I annually read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover by reading at least 10 pages per day. Some years I have read it more than once, because when I had a major challenge facing me, I felt I needed the spiritual strength that comes from reading this sacred scripture.

The Book of Mormon was not the only source of inspiration and direction I received in those formative years of my life. President Spencer W. Kimball had a profound influence on my life, and he became my greatest mentor. I knew he had a deep and special love for the descendants of the people of the Book of Mormon, and I listened carefully to his words of counsel.

I kept in my Book of Mormon this excerpt from a talk he gave to a group of Indian students:

*In 1946 . . . I had a dream of your progress and development. Now, this is precisely what I dreamed; this was my vision for the people of the Lamanites. I got up from my bed and wrote my dream. . . . This is what I wrote:*

*As I looked into the future, I saw the Lamanites from the isles of the sea and the Americas rise to a great destiny. I saw great numbers of Lamanites and Nephites in beautiful homes that have all the comforts that science can afford. . . .*

*I saw the people of Lehi as engineers and builders, building lofty bridges and great edifices. I saw you in great political positions and functioning as administrators over the land. I saw many of you as heads of governments and of the counties and states and cities. I saw you in legislative positions, where as legislators and good Latter-day Saint citizens you were able to help make the best laws for your brethren and sisters.*

*I saw many of your sons becoming attorneys and helping solve the world's problems. I saw your people as owners of industries and factories. . . .*

*I saw [you as] doctors as well as . . . lawyers looking after . . . your people. . . .*

*Now, that was my dream. Maybe it was a vision. Maybe the Lord was showing to me what this great people would accomplish. [In Official Report of the Mexico City Area Conference*

*of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Held in the Sports Palace in Mexico City, Mexico, February 13, 1977 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 31]*

### A Foundation of Law

I am now a General Authority of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am a former Law School faculty member. I am also a Pawnee Indian who has spent many years of my life advocating for the rights of the first Americans and trying to lift them as a people.

I went to law school so that I could help my people. My first opportunity to serve Native Americans as a lawyer came at age 24. I worked for California Indian Legal Services in Berkeley, California. I subsequently developed an Indian law practice in Salt Lake City. At age 28 I achieved my goal of becoming a tribal attorney when I was retained as chief general legal counsel for the largest Indian tribe in Idaho, which is located on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation in southeast Idaho.

A new dimension in my efforts to protect and advance the rights of Native Americans started at age 34, when I was elected to the first of three public offices in state government in Idaho—as a member of the House of Representatives, as Bannock County prosecuting attorney, and as attorney general of the state of Idaho.

After serving 11 years in elective office, at age 46 I decided to run for governor of Idaho. I faced Phil Batt, a former lieutenant governor, in the general election. I had a lead in the polls all the way up to the November election.

The day before the election, Cecil Andrus, a four-term governor of Idaho, walked into my office in the State Capitol Building. He extended his hand and said, “I want to shake your hand. When you decided to run for governor, I thought you didn’t stand a chance. I was wrong. Tomorrow you will be elected governor of Idaho.”

However, the next night I found myself making a call to my opponent and congratulating him on his victory. Thereafter I stood before a large group of supporters and conceded the election. Strangely enough, at a



Echo Hawk sits at his desk on the chamber floor of the Idaho House of Representatives during his first session in 1983.

time when I should have been filled with great disappointment, I was filled with great peace.

The morning after the election I received a call from Reese Hansen, dean of J. Reuben Clark Law School. He said, “Sorry you didn’t win the election.” Then it seemed that in the next breath he said, “We would like you to come teach at the J. Reuben Clark Law School.” Dean Hansen recently told me that earlier that morning he had received a spiritual prompting to call me and invite me to join the faculty at the Law School.

Thus, following my unsuccessful campaign for governor of the state of Idaho, in January 1995 I became a professor of law at Brigham Young University. This suspended my active practice of law, but it gave me an opportunity to teach and influence a new generation of lawyers. I was particularly blessed to be able to teach Federal Indian Law in addition to Criminal Law, Evidence, and Criminal Procedure.

I have described my 14 years teaching at the Law School as the “perfect life.” I love Brigham Young University. I love J. Reuben



Echo Hawk poses with Idaho governor John V. Evans in 1984 at the signing of legislation creating the Indian Affairs Committee.

Clark Law School. I love the law. I love my colleagues. But most of all I loved my association with the students.

### Lifting a People of Promise

The beginning of the end of this full-time love affair at J. Reuben Clark Law School occurred in early January 2009. The people of the United States of America had elected a new president 10 weeks earlier. Barack Obama was nearing his inauguration as the 44th president of the United States. On January 13 I received a call from the Presidential Transition Team. The caller simply said, “We have an airline ticket for you, and we want to talk to you in Washington, D.C.” Since I had not had anything to do with Barack Obama’s campaign and I had not applied for any jobs, this was a complete surprise to me.

A few days later I sat in an office in Washington, D.C. Three men peppered me with questions for about an hour. No jobs were mentioned. Later that night I received a phone call, and the voice on the line said some very powerful words: “Your country is

calling you into service.” I was offered the nomination of the president of the United States to serve as assistant secretary in the Department of the Interior with responsibility for Indian Affairs.

To my wife’s credit, she immediately said, “We must do this.” But I hesitated. I hesitated because I knew that if I said yes, I would become “the face of the federal government” in Indian country, and there have been some dark chapters in American history in how the federal government has treated American Indians.

When I returned to Utah I went into my study and took a book off the shelf. I first read this book right after I graduated from law school at the University of Utah. It was a national best seller written by Dee Brown and titled *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. I immediately read it again. I wanted to be reminded about those dark chapters in American history. The book covers the years from 1860 to 1890 and chronicles the military campaigns launched by the federal government to separate Indian tribes from their lands. Each chapter of the book describes how a particular tribe was treated unjustly.

Day after day that January, I was called from Washington, D.C., and asked if I would accept the nomination. Still pondering this appointment, I felt a need to talk to my priesthood leader. Serving as president of the BYU Seventh Stake, I reported to Elder Russell T. Osguthorpe of the Area Seventy. Calling him, I explained that I needed to speak to him because I was considering something that potentially could disrupt my service as a stake president. Elder Osguthorpe immediately came to my Law School office.

I remember that as I told Elder Osguthorpe about the struggle I was having in trying to decide if I should accept the call to serve, he raised his hand as a sign for me to stop talking. He then said, “I don’t think you know that I served as president of the South Dakota Rapid City Mission from 2003 to 2006.” He described how he had been on all of the Indian reservations located in his mission and was well aware of the terrible problems the people living in those communities faced. He then said, “You have to do this.”

After he left my office, I remember standing by the window looking out at Y Mountain. The thought came to my mind: “This is not about me. This is a chance to do a great amount of good for people in need.”

I accepted the call to serve.

As assistant secretary for Indian Affairs, I had the responsibility to represent the president of the United States in dealing with 566 tribal nations. I exercised authority over the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I had trust-management responsibility over 56 million acres of Indian lands. I also presided over the Bureau of Indian Education, which included responsibility over 183 schools (grades K–12), 27 tribal colleges, two technical colleges, and two universities. I had authority over nearly 10,000 employees and a budget of \$2.5 billion.

On my first day on the job I walked down the Hall of Tribal Nations, where my office was located in the Department of the Interior, feeling like an endangered species. I felt that insecurity because, in the eight years prior to my arrival, seven people had held the job of assistant secretary for Indian Affairs (either as Senate confirmed or in an acting capacity).

It was the most difficult job I have ever had. But it was also the most satisfying job I have



Echo Hawk (*second from left*), assistant secretary for Indian Affairs, in 2010 with (*to his left*) Mike Black, director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Ken Salazar, secretary of the Interior; Keith Moore, director of the Bureau of Indian Education; and staff.

ever had because of the enormous opportunity to actually do things that would help people who had suffered for generations.

I was empowered by my knowledge of law. I had taught Federal Indian Law 23 times. I could sit in meetings and hold my own because I had a good understanding about the powers of the federal government and the rights of tribal governments and Indian people.

I was also emboldened by the fact that Brigham Young University had granted me leave—I knew that I would be able to go right back to teaching at the Law School if I was forced to leave my position in Indian Affairs. Consequently, I was not afraid to do what was right. I was fearless and committed.

I wanted to do what was right and just, not only for the first Americans but for America itself. I wanted to help write new and brighter chapters in American history.

Perhaps, more important, I had vision and purpose. Shortly after taking on this challenge, I did what I had done many times before in my life: I read the Book of Mormon—again and again. This strengthened my determination to do all I could to lift a people of promise.

Tribal leaders and Indian Affairs employees knew I was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I was glad they did. I tried my best to uphold high standards of personal conduct and to show them I truly cared through my actions in their behalf.

From 2009 through 2012 Democrats and Republicans worked together to deliver an impressive array of accomplishments in an extraordinarily difficult time. I do not have time to lay out everything we did, but suffice it to say that great strides were made in restoring lands to Indian tribes, settling historic Indian claims against the United States, enacting comprehensive legislation to make Indian communities a safer place to live, building new schools on tribal homelands, spurring economic development and job creation, and resolving several contentious disputes over Indian water rights. Thus, President Obama and the United States Congress will likely go down in history as having the strongest record of achievement on behalf of Native Americans within any four-year period.

This was not about partisan politics. This was a matter of living up to the self-imposed promises and legal obligations of the United States of America. As I advocated

for American Indians, I often quoted Justice Hugo Black: “Great nations, like great men, should keep their word.”

I do not know exactly how or when all the prophecies concerning the descendants of the people of the Book of Mormon will be realized, but I felt like the work I was doing as assistant secretary for Indian Affairs was helping to fulfill the promises of the Book of Mormon.

I intended to serve through President Obama’s first term and then return to teach at J. Reuben Clark Law School. However, on February 3, 2012, President Henry B. Eyring extended the call to serve as a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. After I said we would accept the call to serve, President Eyring said that he sensed I had feelings of inadequacy. I acknowledged that was true. He said, “We all felt like that when we received our call to serve.” He then assured me that there was a reason the Lord had called me to serve as a General Authority and that the Lord will qualify whom He calls.

### Instruments in His Hands Through the Practice of Law

My brothers and sisters, as I stand before you tonight “I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak,” but I have faith that in the strength of the Lord we “can do all things” He asks us to do (Alma 26:12).

Terry and I love the Lord, and we will give Him our best efforts. Our lives are now consecrated in His service. We love all of God’s children, and we stand ready to serve them all, wherever we are called to serve.

If the Lord sees fit for me to use my many years of experience and knowledge of the laws affecting Native Americans, I will be especially pleased to continue to follow the “blueprint” that was given to me nearly 40 years ago by Spencer W. Kimball, a prophet of the Lord.

As members of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society, we all need to have a divinely inspired blueprint so that we can use our talents and education to fulfill the Lord’s purposes. We have “the power of his word [within] us” (Alma 26:13). We have also been blessed to have the power of a legal education.

Where much is given much is expected. The Lord needs spiritual men and women



“Today’s action should give American Indians and Alaska Natives assurance that the Obama administration is serious about preserving and protecting their cultural property,” said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk at a press conference in 2009 after 24 were indicted for theft of American Indian artifacts. Left to right are Utah FBI Field Office Special Agent in Charge Timothy Fuhrman, U.S. Attorney in Utah Brett Tolman, Echo Hawk, Secretary of the Interior Kenneth Salazar, and Deputy Attorney General David Ogden.

who are trained in law. Spiritual power, coupled with the power of a legal education, prepares us to accomplish the Lord’s purposes. We can and should be “instruments in his hands [in] doing this great and marvelous work” (Alma 26:15).

We will be accountable for what we have done or not done for the Lord’s cause. We must be willing to give of our time, talents, and legal expertise to build the kingdom of God on the face of the earth.

President Marion G. Romney stated that a principal purpose of J. Reuben Clark Law School is to facilitate the study of the “‘laws of . . . man’ in the light of the ‘laws of God’” (“Becoming J. Reuben Clark’s Law School,” opening remarks on the first day of classes at J. Reuben Clark Law School, 27 August 1973; quoting Doctrine and Covenants 93:53).

The mission statement of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society states: “We affirm the

strength brought to the law by a lawyer’s personal religious conviction. We strive through public service and professional excellence to promote fairness and virtue founded on the rule of law.”

President James E. Faust stated that “there is a higher standard of conduct expected of the graduates of the Law School and members of this Law Society.” He also said: “Our lawyers need to be more than successful advocates. We need to bring our sacred religious convictions and standards to the practice of law” (“Be Healers,” *Clark Memorandum*, spring 2003, 3, 5).

There is great power in having members of the J. Reuben Clark Law Society participating in the processes of government and public service. We have a responsibility to try to improve the society in which we live. We must be willing to participate in the processes of federal, state, and local

government in pursuit of worthy causes and appropriate spiritual goals.

Finally, as we are now receiving much public attention, it is vitally important that we be good examples of what it is like to live a Christlike life. We must hold to our values and truly be lights unto the world.

I have shared my personal journey of service as a lawyer, professor, and public servant with the intent to issue a special challenge to law students and young lawyers to have a spiritually based blueprint to guide you toward a meaningful life of service to God and His children.

As we come unto our Savior, Jesus Christ, and purify our hearts, we will all be instruments in fulfilling God’s great plan of salvation for all mankind and the mighty promises of the Book of Mormon. Of this I testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.